

Teacher-trainee Perceptions of Coeducation in a Microteaching Context in the Sultanate of Oman

Submitted by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my amazing mother: for all that you are, for all that you were, for all that you were meant to be.

Acknowledgement

As I stand on the threshold of fulfilling a dream and keeping a promise, I extend my thanks to my Omani male and female teacher trainees for entrusting me to be your voices. It has truly taken a village to raise this thesis and I thank you most of all for being my teachers on this journey!

I also wish to thank my family, friends and fellow doctoral travellers, in Oman, South Africa and further afield for never giving up on me. Your gentle encouragement, love and support, in every sense of the word, over these many years has left me humbled and forever in your debt.

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Abstract

Since 1970, the Sultanate of Oman has undergone rapid development, modernisation and educational reform within which a policy of coeducation has been introduced in grades 1 to 4, cycle 1, Basic Education schools and in most state-run and private higher education institutions. Situated within a coeducational tertiary college, a critical interpretive case study was conducted on 25 male and 85 female third-year English teacher trainees. Informed by a social-constructionist framework this study seeks to understand their perceptions of coeducation in the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme. This study also provides a platform for the voices of these teacher trainees to be heard. Due to the accepted and practiced large-culture norms discouraging male and female interaction between non-family members in the Arabian Gulf, it was found that the coeducational microteaching classes are sites of struggle through which, drawing on the work of Barkhuizen (1998), six perceptions emerged: sustainments, emotions, predictions, reflections, evaluations and transformations, represented by the acronym, SEPRET. While there is only a slight difference in their perceptions of coeducational microteaching, the male and female trainees are both fostering stereotypical gender roles through which small cultures of 'romance' and 'laddishness' are being perpetuated. As a result of coeducation, they are experiencing a negative 'mirror'-effect where they are masking, inhibiting, and repositioning aspects of their performance, participation and identities. The large- and small-culture constructs of Holliday (1999) are evidenced inside and outside the coeducational microteaching classroom walls and a new model of learner actions on their perceptions of coeducation is presented. The study ends with the voices of the teacher trainees calling upon the powers that be to understand their behaviour and recommends single-gender rather than coeducational microteaching spaces in this particular Omani initial teacher education context.

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Abbreviations

AUS	American University of Sharjah
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CHE	Council of Higher Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
KU	Kuwait University
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Educational reform and modernisation in the Sultanate of Oman – an Arab and Islamic monarchy situated on the Arabian Gulf in the Middle East – have resulted in increased instances of coeducation. For example, at present, most state-run and private tertiary institutions are coeducational in organisation: men and women are taught together in the same class. While this might not appear out of the ordinary to an observer beyond the Arabian Gulf, the fact that coeducation has been introduced into a society where the norm, tradition, and culture encourage gender separation, could pose challenges, raise some interesting questions and invite further investigation, which this thesis proposes to do.

Having worked at the tertiary institution at which this study took place as a TESOL practitioner and English teacher trainer for more than ten years I noticed two things. First, coeducation appears to be affecting the men and women, particularly in the microteaching component of their teacher education programme, as they are not able to operate within the bounds they have created to accommodate the phenomenon of coeducation. In their other classes, for example, in keeping with traditional customs, the Omani male and female trainees maintain a physical distance by sitting in separate areas that they themselves have designated within the classrooms; they refrain from mixed-gender interaction by working in single-gender groups only; and they shun any instances of overt communication between males and females during their lessons. However, in microteaching – which forms an essential part of their teacher education programme because it provides the trainees with the opportunity to practice aspects of teaching in a simulated classroom environment before they go out and teach in schools – the genders are not able to ‘avoid’ each other. Due to the phases involved in teaching their lessons, the trainees now have no option but to speak to, interact with, stand closer to, make eye contact with, monitor and engage with the opposite gender as they participate and perform in the microteaching class.

The second observation is that many decisions are taken during educational reform, whether it be introducing coeducation, renewing the curriculum or deciding which activities and tasks will be effective for learners (Barkhuizen, 1998), where the very people for whom the changes are intended are seldom included in the decision-making process. They are not asked for their opinions, their points of view are not elicited and their “perspectives are too often missing” (Goodson & Numan, 2002, p. 274).

Therefore, my study will respond to “the dearth of research on the perspectives of student-teachers, on the premise that their voices should be heard” (Roberts, 2006, p. 9) by asking the Omani males and females about their perceptions of coeducation within the microteaching component of their teacher-education programme. Not only is the seeking-out of student voices critically empowering for learners, but it also provides insights for TESOL educators wishing to enrich their cultural knowledge and understanding in order to avoid any misinterpretations about student behaviour and interaction in coeducational settings (Gunn, 2007). It could be coeducation, not other factors such as ability, that may explain a lack of performance or interaction or unwillingness to work together: Thus, the central focus of my thesis is on the phenomenon of coeducation in Oman with microteaching as a 'context' through which the trainee-teacher perceptions will be viewed as presented in the rationale and purpose for the study below.

1.1 Rationale and Purpose of the Study

The rationale and purpose of this study is to consider, explore and understand the impact of coeducation on the Omani men and women in the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme within the further context of an Arab and Islamic culture. I can see that in my home context in South Africa, a benefit of coeducation would be to prepare the genders to socialise together in later life; therefore, coeducation would be encouraged. However, the benefit of coeducation in a culture

where socialisation between the genders is discouraged is not so easily identifiable and, in this region of the world, coeducation is certainly not without “controversy” (Walsh, 2009, p. 101). From a Western perspective, coeducation “may not seem like a startling innovation except that it occurs in a Muslim society where male and female students have traditionally been educated separately” (Hughes, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, I believe it is important to investigate this topic by eliciting perceptions in order to better understand my trainees, particularly in my position as an outsider to the Omani society and culture.

Furthermore, while coeducation has been around for well over a hundred years in the West, it is a phenomenon that has yet to be widely written about in the Gulf Arab States, possibly reflecting the fact that it is seen as too controversial and sensitive a topic to be discussed openly and critically. In this thesis I am interested in addressing this lack of focused discussion by seeking to develop a critical understanding of coeducation in the Omani setting through an examination of male and female teacher-trainee experiences and practices of microteaching. Questions about differences between the male and female perceptions of coeducation within this microteaching environment will also be asked and the reasons for seeking out these differences, if any, will be addressed in Chapter Three. Instances of controversy and opposition to coeducation, as well as descriptions of what microteaching entails, will be presented in more detail in Chapter Two.

The reason why I have chosen to investigate coeducation specifically within the context of microteaching is that the trainees reported on in this study don’t teach children in their microteaching sessions, they teach each other. In effect, they are “peer” teaching (Sen, 2009, p. 165) because they are teaching to their classmates. However, the trainees in this study also take on the role of teachers of a specific grade in the microteaching classes and their peers either role-play or simulate the ages of the children in that particular grade for which the lesson is planned. Within their various roles, or “multiple” identities (Skinner, 2012, p. 47) as “teacher” of the lesson, as the “child” being taught to and also as the “trainee” giving and receiving feedback from their peers as well as the teacher trainer, the males and females are having to actively engage with each other

and cross the gender divide. In Oman, where interactions between males and females occur within very clear frameworks of restriction underpinned by prescriptive socio-cultural norms, microteaching in a coeducational environment can certainly pose challenges and have an effect on the male and female trainees. I believe the suitability of coeducational microteaching classes should be addressed in order to assess if they are negatively impacting the participation and performance of the trainees.

In seeking out the perceptions of my students as regards coeducational microteaching classes, it is hoped that this thesis will also provide a platform for the voices of trainee teachers in Oman to be acknowledged and heard from within a context where less-than-participatory decrees and top-down decisions – not only regarding educational reform, but about life in general – have seriously, vociferously and sometimes even violently, been called into question.

The final reason and purpose for this study is my belief that as our world becomes smaller and more international students find themselves in environments different to their own, we, as TESOL educators, teachers and trainers need to be aware of the dynamics of teaching outside the zone of comfort with which we are familiar and what is within keeping with our own cultural beliefs and behaviour as well as those of our students. Therefore, by examining Omani trainee-teacher perceptions of coeducation within a microteaching context this study hopes to achieve these three main aims as outlined below:

1.2 Research Aims

1. To identify male and female perceptions of coeducation and their perceived effect on the microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme
2. To see if there is a difference between the male and female perceptions of coeducation within a microteaching context

3. To consider the implications of this study with regard to a deeper, more critical, understanding of the suitability of coeducation within the microteaching setting.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve my purpose and aims I have formulated three main research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of female and male English teacher trainees as regards coeducation in the microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?
2. To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of female and male English teacher trainees differ as regards coeducation in the microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?
3. According to their perceptions, how has coeducation affected the microteaching of third-year English teacher trainees in an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?

1.4 Significance of the Study

I see the significance of my study as centring around five key aspects:

Firstly, this study is contributing to a wider debate on the topic of coeducation in tertiary institutions from an Omani and Arabian Gulf perspective. There is a general lack of research into coeducation from this corner of the world so my study is providing empirical evidence on this phenomenon, thereby adding to the literature and filling the gap about trainee-teachers' perceptions of coeducation and the specific interactions between the teacher and the "class" in a coeducational microteaching context.

Secondly, this study is significant from a critical perspective, where the topic of coeducation is being problematised by asking probing questions and eliciting perceptions, thereby giving a voice to the trainees who were never asked for their input and who have to follow what is dictated to them by the powers that be. The theoretical underpinnings of what is meant by 'a critical perspective' will be expounded in Chapters Three and Four.

Thirdly, significant issues about research on educational reform in Oman are being raised in terms of cautions. Al-Zedjali & Etherton (2009, p. 155) remind us that "education systems need to evolve and develop to keep up with the changing world and with changing understanding". However, with change comes risk, "because what might work in one context and culture might not work so effectively in another" (p. 150). Coeducation might seem like a positive and progressive move, however data gathered from the trainees will at least document their perceptions of coeducation from this particular Omani population, in this particular educational setting in the Arabian Gulf, possibly challenging its perception as a "suitable" way of organising the classroom, especially within a microteaching context.

In terms of the immediate significance of this study in the TESOL world, the trainees are working in a coeducational EFL (English as a foreign language) environment in a microteaching context that falls outside the parameters of their cultural norms. Therefore, as TESOL teacher trainers we need to become more fully aware of these contexts and cultures. Furthermore, Troudi (2005, p. 122) drawing on Holliday's (1999) distinction of culture (which will be addressed more in Chapter Three) advises that in terms of large culture, foreign TESOL teachers in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf states, need to become not only aware of their students' linguistic and social culture, these teachers should also familiarise themselves with the major tenets and practices of Islam as it provides the framework for "their students' lives and attitudes". Thus, by investigating the perceptions of our trainees we can at least understand and, at best, try to adapt our situations to suit the specific socio-cultural contexts and needs of our students (Gunn, 2007).

Lastly, as a broader significance, the TESOL world involves a globalised, multi-cultural experience. So, while this study is relevant to practitioners in Oman and the Arabian Gulf, it may also have something to offer people working in institutions in other parts of the world where socio-cultural traditions prevent coeducation or any type of male and female interaction. While, in the West maybe, faculty could find themselves teaching international students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, such as students from Oman or other countries in the Arabian Gulf or wider Middle East, for whom the concept of coeducation is foreign, unwelcome or maybe even unacceptable.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

I will now conclude this chapter with a brief synopsis of what each of the six chapters in this thesis will contain:

Chapter One introduces the study and provides the rationale and purpose, aims, research questions and significance of the study.

Chapter Two details the context of the study by providing relevant background information. The setting and population of the study is also presented.

Chapter Three explains the conceptual framework for the thesis and reviews literature relevant to the study.

Chapter Four describes the research methodology, design, methods and procedures including the theoretical underpinnings for each of the particular choices made.

Chapter Five presents the results of the data analysis as well as a discussion and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter Six concludes with a summary of the main findings: implications are discussed, recommendations are made, the contribution of the study is presented and areas for future research are suggested in the final personal reflection on the thesis journey.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Oman is the third-largest country in the Arabian Gulf and is bordered by three neighbours: Yemen in the south, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the north and Saudi Arabia in the West (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2006). Since the discovery of oil in the late 1960s and a change in leadership in 1970, a relatively young country has “modernized” very rapidly (Riphenburg, 1988, p. 166). Where development in the West took over 200 years to accomplish, Oman’s has happened within the last 45 years, particularly in education where reform is ongoing. In this chapter information will be presented so that the reader can better understand the context within which my exploration of coeducation against the backdrop of microteaching takes place. First, a brief overview of modernisation and development in Oman will be presented, including ongoing educational reform and the new Omani curriculum. Second, the policy of coeducation will be discussed in terms of rationale, tertiary institutions and opposition. Third, reform and ‘Omanisation’ in English teacher education will be described, as well as the English language teacher preparation programme and importance of microteaching. Lastly, the setting and population for this study will be introduced before the chapter concludes.

2.1 Overview of Modernisation and Development in Oman

The period heralding the start of modernisation and development in Oman has been described as the “dawn of the modern Omani Renaissance” (MOE, 2006, p. 24) and, in conjunction with royal directives from 1976 till present, the development of Oman has been based on five-year plans drawn up by advisors and ministers from the Ministry of National Economy (MOE, 2008).

2.1.1 Ongoing educational reform

The current strategy for achieving economic development and sustainable growth in Oman emerged from the 1995 conference entitled “The Future Vision Conference for the Omani Economy (Oman 2020)” (MOE, 2001b, p. 8). One of the “Oman 2020” conference conclusions was that the Omani education system would play an important part in the “future economic well-being of the country” (MOE, 2006, p. 13). Therefore, one of the government’s first commitments was the development of a public or state-run education system “that would reach all parts of the country and would include all sections of the society” (Atkins & Griffiths, 2009, p. 1), as prior to 1970, for example, girls were excluded from formal education. Since then educational reform in Oman has been continuous.

Three aspects of the educational system were initially improved. First, the Ministry of Education, which had overseen all educational matters in the country up until 1995, passed the responsibility for tertiary institutions over to a newly established Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) (El- Shibiny, 1997). Subsequently, a number of major higher education reform initiatives have been undertaken, such as: the contribution of private higher education to the educational system; the development of studies to degree level in state-run and private tertiary institutions; the establishment of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) to plan and make policies regarding education at the tertiary level and to address “issues related to standards and quality” (Al Shmeli, 2011, p. 185); and, last, but not least, the prioritisation of research in Oman. Indeed, it is hoped that this thesis will, in some small, way add to the development of this research culture, particularly in English language teaching (ELT) in Oman as well as to the broader international TESOL community.

Second, the state-run school curriculum – previously known as ‘General Education’ – was replaced by a new system called ‘Basic Education’, where boys and girls are taught together by female-only teachers from grades 1 to 4. From grades 5 to 12, males and females are educated separately until they enter tertiary institutions, the majority of

which, both state-run and private, are coeducational. This new curriculum is defined as a “unified education for all boys and girls, based on the premise that they all are fellow citizens of one society, bound by common aims and ambitions, requiring a common core of education and culture, and ensuring solidarity in society according to Arab-Islamic identity” (MOE, 2001b, p. 6). Changes from the previous system include: a more student-centred approach; ten years of free schooling for all boys and girls divided into two cycles of grades, 1–4 (cycle 1) and 5–10 (cycle 2); two years of free post-basic education; coeducational cycle 1 classes taught by female teachers only; and English taught as a foreign language from grade 1 onwards (Al-Zedjali & Etherton, 2009).

Third, through the policy of Omanisation – defined as “the replacement of expatriate labour with similarly skilled, trained and highly educated Omani nationals” (MOE, 2006, p. 31) – efforts have been concentrated on developing suitably qualified Omani teachers (Atkins & Griffiths, 2009). Over the last 45 years Oman has made major efforts to bring about economic stability, social development and educational reform. Furthermore, the Sultanate can be distinguished from its Arabian Gulf neighbours by what I regard as two pioneering efforts: first, economically, in terms of Omanisation; and second, educationally, as regards the policy of coeducation, which I will address in the next section.

2.2 The Policy and Rationale for Coeducation

In Omani cycle 1 schools, coeducation is now a documented, deliberate policy of the Ministry of Education and all the teachers are female. The rationale for the feminisation of administrative and teaching personnel is based on the view of the school as “an extension of the family” and the notion that children will “suffer less from being away from their mothers” (MOE, 2001a, p. 3). Furthermore, it is envisioned that female teachers “make the learners feel secure psychologically at this early age” and that women are more adept at meeting the needs of these young learners “especially during this critical period of transition from home to school” (MOE, 2001b, p. 17). The teaching of young boys and girls together in the same class, where they mostly sit side by side in

mixed-gender groups, stops in grade 5 when cycle 2 and gender separation begins – with the exception of some schools located in remote areas of the Sultanate, or where very few children are enrolled (MOE, 2006). Whether coeducation will be phased in at the higher-grade levels, such as in cycle 2 state-run schools, in Oman remains to be seen.

While the policy of coeducation and rationale for feminisation is clearly written for schools by the Ministry of Education, the same cannot be said for higher education where coeducation is the rule rather than the exception in state-run tertiary institutions. Requests for documentation remain unanswered and there was even reluctance on the part of the powers that be to discuss the topic with me either face-to-face or via e-mail. What follows therefore, is based largely on: anecdotal evidence gleaned from newspaper articles; my own personal experiences and observations, including living and working in the UAE and Qatar before coming to Oman; as well as information provided through personal communications with former colleagues and friends in other tertiary institutions in Oman and elsewhere in the Gulf.

There is very little written information available as to a policy or rationale for coeducation in Oman and there are neither documents available in English nor any Arabic sources explaining why coeducation has been introduced in tertiary institutions to date. Therefore, I can only speculate on the reasons for the growth of the coeducational phenomenon in higher education. The general feeling is that economic reasons are the major factor in the transformation from single-gender to coeducational institutions. By having coeducational campuses it would no longer be necessary to 'double up' on staff and other resources and facilities as had been the case in the past. In the next section I will provide examples of how coeducation is experienced at some of the tertiary institutions in Oman.

2.2.1 Experiences of coeducation in tertiary institutions

Oman's first and only public national university opened in 1986 (Al Shmeli, 2011). It has been mixed gender since its inception. From personal observation, it appears that the women usually sit at the back of the classrooms and the men in front, there are separate walkways and entrances for males and females and there are specially designated male-only and female-only areas in locations such as the university library.

Reports from the southern areas of Oman indicate that in most of the state-run higher education institutions female students also sit at the back of the classrooms and males sit in the front. There are separate cafeterias and stairways. However, students seem to communicate openly and do interact with each other across genders both in and out of their classes.

At a private university, situated a two-hour drive from Muscat (the capital city of Oman) students are segregated into male-only and female-only classes in their first year only. Although the classes are coeducational from their second year onwards, the students sit in separate places in the classroom, like males on the right and females on the left, but they do talk to each other if directed by the teacher.

At one private college in Muscat I'm told that although students sit on separate sides in the classroom they do interact with each other, and outside of the class the students do "hang out" together. However, at another private college, also located in Muscat, the females generally sit in groups and usually at the back of the classroom. During pair or small-group work they have been "forced" to work with the males. This becomes easier the higher the level – for example with third or fourth years, as opposed to first or second years – but in my informant's experience, it is rarely voluntary. While it would seem then that tertiary institutions in Oman have adapted themselves to coeducation, it does not mean that mixing the genders is always welcomed. There has been opposition to coeducation as well, examples of which will be provided in the next section.

2.2.2 Opposition to coeducation

Oman is a “Muslim and Arabic” -speaking country (Al-Zedjali, 2010, p. 276) in which gender separation is practiced: clearly defined roles for males and females are prescribed and interaction with the opposite gender, unless they are family, prior to marriage, is discouraged. However, describing the social fabric of Oman in the late 1980s, Rippenburg (1988, p. 165) notes that “most changes concerning gender relations have been accommodated and absorbed into the existing traditional social patterns. These changes have not posed a challenge to religious authority and have gained approval and acceptance through their grounding in religious doctrine”. Despite this, the policy of coeducation has met with a certain amount of opposition and raised some concerns. For example, since working in two Arabian Gulf states prior to living in Oman and the start of writing up my thesis, many changes have swept through the Middle Eastern region as a result of the so-called (and not unproblematic term) “Arab Spring” (Toumi, 2011). In Oman, a list of demands was presented to the leadership during the 2011 protest movement in which a call to end the system of coeducation and a return to separation was made (Vaidya, 2011). Student strikes and protests also took place at the institution where this study was conducted. I was on leave at that time, but am told by a reliable source that students actively called on the educational powers that be to end the policy of coeducational tertiary institutions.

It is not documented how widespread the “Arab Spring” objection to coeducation was or how representative it was of the whole of Oman. However, in the preceding years, concerns had been raised by commentators. For example, Al-Harhi (n.d., p. 114) in discussing globalisation and the necessity of educational reform in Oman, includes as one of the difficulties: “the local community’s objection to the idea of coeducation”. While, according to Issan (2010, p. 132) a “study prepared by Al-Aghbari, Al-Hashimi, and Al Salimi (2000) investigated the opinion of 177 female secondary school students and 113 university females” and found that negative attitudes towards coeducation were one of the possible hindrances to women wishing to pursue higher education. More recently, newspaper articles caused alarm by reporting that coeducation in tertiary

institutions has resulted in an increase of unmarried women getting pregnant because males and females are now able to meet and have relationships on mixed-gender campuses (Al Shaibany, 2012). Returning to state-run schools, the issue of coeducation was raised again in 2013 when teachers at around 1000 schools went on an extended strike (Al Mukrashi, 2013). Similar to the 2011 protests, a call for gender segregation in schools was included on the list of demands. At the time of writing this chapter, many of those demands made by the protestors in 2011 and 2013 have been met and reforms have been made. However, the position as regards males and females being taught together in cycle 1 schools and at tertiary institutions in Oman, brought about as part of the reform process in education, remains unchanged despite opposition.

2.3 Omanisation and Reform in English Teacher Education

According to Al Bandary (2005), while expatriate Arab teachers helped Oman at the outset of educational reform, it has always been understood that through Omanisation, Omani children would be taught by Omani teachers, as soon as could be managed, hence the establishment of tertiary-level teacher education institutions and a new English teacher education programme. At the post graduate level, many Omanis travel abroad to complete Master degrees and then return to the Sultanate to take up assistant instructor positions on foundation English programmes, for example, in tertiary institutions around the country. It is envisioned that these Omani instructors will eventually replace the expatriate staff, in keeping with the policy of Omanisation.

The ongoing educational reform in the Sultanate also brought about changes in the English language curriculum and in the teaching of English (Al-Zedjali & Etherton, 2009; Borg, 2006). Reform was thus needed in English teacher education to meet the specific needs brought about by these changes and developments. Therefore, as part of the reform and Omanisation process, plans were made in 2001 to establish the English Language Teacher Preparation Programme to train Omani teachers of English in Basic Education schools from grade 1 to grade 10 (MOHE, 2006).

2.3.1 The English language teacher preparation programme

In 2002 a team was set up to design and develop this new English teacher education programme. It would be a four-year degree course entitled 'The English language teacher preparation programme', on successful completion of which the trainees would receive a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in English, or BEd (English). The first cohort arrived in 2003. In essence it is a five-year course as the first year comprises a foundation year of intensive English study followed by the four-year degree programme (MOHE, 2006). I trained Omani men and women studying to become English teachers on this initial teacher education programme. "After their studies they will become teachers of the new English curriculum, utilising the textbook series entitled "English For Me" (EFM) in Omani Basic Education schools" (MacKenzie, 2009, p. 144).

The BEd (English) study plan in Appendix 1 details all the courses the trainees take on the programme. The non-credited foundation year in English taken prior to the BEd is not shown. The degree course comprises theoretical, but predominantly practical components to prepare the trainees for the Omani classroom, such as practicums 1 and 2, which are campus-based methodological courses, of which 70% is dedicated to microteaching; and practicums 3 and 4, which are school-based field experiences.

2.3.2 The importance of microteaching in the teacher preparation programme

Al Bandary (2005) identified the school-practicum or field-experience part of the teacher education programme as a challenge facing teacher-education institutions in Oman. With the goal of 'Omanising' teachers in state-run schools as quickly as possible, the teacher-education institutions at that time had the maximum number of students permissible. Even though they were located in different geographical areas in the Sultanate, there were a limited number of schools and school teachers able to accommodate trainees for their practical field work. A solution was to use microteaching as a way for the trainees to prepare and practice their teaching skills in front of their

peers with trainer, peer, as well as self-evaluation taking place before going out to schools.

At the tertiary institution reported on in this study, the trainees go out on school experience (practicums 3 and 4) in their final year of the teacher education programme. Starting in their second year they do a few courses that contain a microteaching element, which culminates in the third-year campus-based practicum courses that comprise two hours of theory and four hours of microteaching a week for a full year. During practicums 1 and 2 each trainee will plan and teach lessons to their peers. Over the course of the year they will in fact teach four times (twice in the first semester and twice in the second semester). The trainees are also exposed to microteaching in at least six other courses during their time at the college. Certainly microteaching is an important component of the programme. In the section that follows I will introduce the setting and those participants on the English language teacher preparation programme comprising the population for my study.

2.4 The Setting and Population of the Study

The setting for this study is at a coeducational state-run tertiary institution that offers the English language teacher preparation programme for future Omani male and female teachers in the Sultanate of Oman. I joined the programme in 2004, when the first cohort of women-only trainees were in their first year of the degree plan and the second cohort, also women-only, were in their foundation year. The first cohort graduated from the programme in 2008 and the second cohort in 2009. The population for my study arrived at the college in 2005 as the first coeducational group of trainees fresh from male-only and female-only secondary schools. Separate spaces, such as student computer labs, work spaces in the Learning Resource Centre, cafeterias and prayer rooms, as well as recreation and rest rooms, were demarcated for the males and females on campus and the phasing out of the female-only classes began.

This first fully coeducational cohort graduated in 2010 and it is their perceptions when they were in the third year (2008–2009) of their degree plan and in their fourth year in

total at the college that are reported in my study. My investigation focuses specifically on those third-year trainees within the microteaching component of their campus-based practicum course (practicums 1 and 2). The population comprised 104 females and 49 males from all parts of the Sultanate, including the Musandam in the north and Salalah in the south. I had known them since their first day at the college, having taught all of them in the three years leading up to the study, thereby building a close relationship with them based on trust and mutual respect. I chose this particular cohort as they were the pioneering coeducational students at the college. I was eager to seek out their opinions as they had experienced a major change on arrival at the college without much preparation or consultation, having come from segregated secondary schools. While it appears they adapted to coeducation in open public spaces, such as walk-ways and stairwells, by keeping a noticeable physical distance from each other, and in classrooms, where they basically ignore each other – in the confines and constraints of the microteaching classes the men and women have not been able to avoid each other.

Even though in the time it has taken to complete my thesis the population for my study has since graduated (and a few more coeducational cohorts as well), I have found that, contrary to a common-held belief that gradually over time attitudes and practices change in societies, the trainees, till the time I left the college in September 2015 (and beyond then until the present, as I have been told by my former colleagues) maintained the same distance, avoidance and lack of interaction as that very first coeducational microteaching class. Maybe individual perceptions have changed privately over the course of time with the newer cohorts, but I observed, and it has been reported to me, that publicly their performance and participation have remained the same and there is very little evidence of overt change. In this regard, I look forward to introducing the sample for my study in Chapter Four and presenting their perceptions of coeducational microteaching classes in Chapter Five, as I believe that what they had to say then is still, and maybe even more, relevant now.

2.5 Conclusion

The recent history of Oman can be characterised by the words 'renaissance' and 'reform' and much has transpired over the last 45 years socially, politically and economically. Educational reform has taken place and is ongoing. This is happening not only at schools, but also at the tertiary level where five-year plans are driving the reform as well as the vision of "Oman 2020" with its move towards globalisation and modernisation. Omanisation, too, has increased as a result of the reform in English-teacher education and the English language teacher preparation programme.

Coeducation has been introduced, including the feminisation of grades 1 to 4 and is a documented policy in Basic Education schools in Oman. Written evidence of coeducation as a policy in state-run tertiary institutions has not been made available. However, it would appear that they became desegregated for economic reasons and in a society and culture where gender separation is the norm, there have been instances of opposition to coeducation.

The importance of microteaching has been established, as it is within this specific context that the trainee perceptions of coeducation will be investigated, and the chapter concludes with a description of the setting and population of the study. In Chapter Three I will introduce my conceptual framework and review literature relevant to my study.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in Chapter One, section 1.1, the purpose of my study is to explore and understand trainee-teacher perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context in the Sultanate of Oman and in doing so to provide a platform for their voices to be heard. In essence then, this is not a study wholly about coeducation, but rather about perceptions of coeducation that appear to be affecting the male and female teacher trainees within their microteaching class. There are thus three main constructs embedded within the area under my research: perceptions, coeducation and microteaching. I will address each of these constructs in turn, but first I will begin this chapter by explaining my understanding of social constructionism, which forms the overarching conceptual framework for my study.

3.1 Social Constructionism

A conceptual or theoretical framework that embraces social as well as cultural aspects seems to be an appropriate lens through which to interrogate perceptions of trainee teachers about coeducation in a microteaching context, because in this thesis I will be looking “beyond the immediate context of the classroom for explanations of patterns and interaction” as regards my participants (Troudi, 2010 p. 317). Therefore, I have elected a social constructionist position.

On initial reading, the term ‘social constructionism’ appears problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, there seems to be no one all-encapsulating description or definition of it and, secondly, it is sometimes used “interchangeably” with the term “social constructivism” (Andrews, 2012, p. 39; Brooks, 2002; Burr, 2003; Crotty, 2003; Gergen, 1994). For the purposes of this thesis, my understanding of social constructionism will be fashioned after Gergen (1985, 1994, 2009), Brooks (2002) and Burr (1995, 2003), also and Schultheiss and Wallace (2012, p. 2) who suggest that “any approach that has

at its foundation one or more of the following key assumptions can be loosely grouped together as social constructionism”: a critical stance towards taken-for-granted assumptions, historical and cultural specificity, knowledge is sustained by social processes, and knowledge and social action go together. I will now explore each of these four key assumptions, or tenets, of social constructionism, highlighting further constructs and notions within each that are also relevant to my study.

3.1.1 A critical stance towards taken-for-granted assumptions

Social constructionism emerged against the intellectual and cultural movement of postmodernism some thirty-odd years ago (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 1995) to challenge the scientific positivist perspective of knowledge as being objective and something that is attained through observation (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985). Instead, social constructionism invites us to question taken-for-granted ways in which to experience and understand the world around us and even ourselves, by being critical (Brooks, 2002; Schultheiss & Wallace, 2012). This type of critical stance, that is the calling into question of one’s own assumptions, suspending the “obvious” (Gergen, 2009, p. 12), entertaining multiple other options and “different accounts of many psychological and social phenomena” (Burr, 2003, p. 3), is regarded as the first tenet of social constructionism. Adopting such a critical stance towards taken-for-granted assumptions is also called “critical reflexivity” by Gergen (2009, p. 12). While an outcome of assuming a critical stance, according to Schultheiss and Wallace (2012) is often transformation. In the next section I will briefly explain why I have chosen this particular conceptual framework for my study.

3.1.1.1 Critical reasons for adopting social constructionism

I align myself with social constructionism for three main reasons. Firstly, because it complements the philosophy of where I situate myself both as a teacher and a researcher: namely within the critical research paradigm. I will discuss this paradigm,

including the practice of calling into question or problematising, in more detail in Chapter Four. Secondly, because I believe this framework is missing from the literature in terms of what it can offer, particularly as regards an alternate possibility of viewing perceptions, coeducation and microteaching from a more critical stance. Thirdly, this position underscores the role culture plays in our understanding of the world and thereby provides support for what has become more and more anecdotally apparent to me over the last 15 years abroad as an expatriate educator. That is, in order to be successful as TESOL practitioners in foreign lands, we need to really understand the contexts in which we are teaching, which are often enormously different from the social and cultural contexts within our home countries. Social constructionism, like other sociocultural perspectives, can help to bring about an increased “awareness and sensitivity to local contexts” (Zeungler & Miller, 2006, p. 51).

3.1.2 Historical and cultural specificity

The second tenet of social constructionism refers to its historical and cultural specificity. In other words, social constructionism views knowledge, experience and understandings as culturally and historically situated through “interchanges among people” (Gergen, 1994, p. 49). Therefore, the ways in which people come to understand the world are derived from social encounters with other people, “both past and present” (Burr, 2003, p. 7). Following on from this tenet, I will outline various understandings of culture in the literature in the section below including the conceptualisation of culture pertinent to my study.

3.1.2.1 Understandings of culture

As stated in Chapter One, Oman is an Islamic country in which culture, customs and traditions guide the way the world is viewed. Mindful of calls to avoid cultural stereotyping in the TESOL world (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), I will first address a number of conceptualisations of culture and then introduce the one I embrace in this thesis. In some definitions of culture, it has been “reduced to different behaviors of our students” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 96), while in much research it is presented as “largely modernist

and 'western' in its psychological, social and cultural values and presuppositions" (Breen, 2001, p. 178). Essentialist and non-essentialist understandings of culture have also been discussed, with Holliday (2005, p. 17) distinguishing between the "most common essentialist view of culture" as being "coincidental with countries, regions, and continents" and a non-essentialist view where culture is not portrayed in terms of a nation or location, but rather is described as the "small culture approach" where "any instance of socially cohesive behaviour" (p. 23) is considered as culture. A further position cautioned against in more recent literature is that of "neo-essentialism" (Rich, 2011, p. 64, as cited in Holliday, 2010) where researchers embrace non-essentialist views of culture, but through choices of specific research tools and methods their work results in "conclusions which are essentialist in their articulation".

Therefore, in order to take heed of the cautions outlined above, essentialist views of culture should be problematised. Instead, culture should be acknowledged as "multi-dimensional" (Breen, 2001, p. 178) and viewed as "dynamic and in a state of flux" (Rich, 2011, p. 65). I will now outline the understanding of culture that has informed in this study below:

3.1.2.1.1 Large culture and small culture

I will be invoking Holliday's (1999, p. 237) conceptualisation of culture in this thesis where the "default" notion of culture or "large" culture, includes "entities" such as ethnicity and nationality, while "small" culture "signifies any cohesive social grouping". Holliday's (1999) distinction between 'large' and 'small' cultures partly remedies Breen's (2001) as well as his own (2005) cautions about Western presuppositions and articulates what I have observed over a number of years at the college in which this study is situated: that both large culture and small culture are at work in the coeducational microteaching classrooms. Thus, both notions will be considered in my investigation, despite Holliday's (2002) recommendation that qualitative research should try to avoid the large view of culture.

3.1.3 Knowledge is sustained by social processes

The third tenet of social constructionism describes how knowledge is sustained by social processes. Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, the manner in which the world is described, explained and understood is constructed by people through their active engagement with each other (Schultheiss & Wallace, 2012). In other words, knowledge and understanding can be seen as “outcomes of relationship” (Gergen, 2009, p. 6). Knowledge is constructed “through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life” (Burr, 2003, p. 4). An example of such a daily social interaction is language.

3.1.3.1 The role of language in social constructionism

Reworking the much quoted Descartes philosophical statement to “communicamus ergo sum” (roughly translated as ‘I communicate or say, therefore I am’), Gergen (1994, p. viii) underlines the pivotal role language plays within social constructionism and invites us to consider a change in the way language is understood. Schwandt (2000, p. 198) concurs by claiming that we are all self-interpreting beings and that “language constitutes this being”. Thus, language is seen as “the basic tool of constructionism” (Schultheiss & Wallace, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, it is through language that discourses are constructed. Within this conceptualisation of social constructionism “the term ‘discourse’ refers to the situated use of language in social interactions” (Burr, 2003, p. 62). In essence everything from thoughts to speech to who we are in terms of our identity is “constructed through language, manufactured out of discourses” (Burr, 2003, p. 105). Even our emotions are removed from our inner selves to become products of discursive processes (Gergen, 1994). This social constructionist view of language “as the prime site of the construction of the person” aligns closely to a post-structuralist view of language (Burr, 2003, p. 53). In the section that follows, more overlap between social constructionism and post-structuralism can be seen, particularly regarding understandings of identity, which is a further construct pertinent to my study.

3.1.3.2 Understandings of identity

From a social-constructionist point of view identity is conceived of as socially constructed through discourse (Burr, 2003). Like language, there is a close alignment to a post-structural view of identity, which refers to how people understand their relationship in the world, how this relationship is constructed over time and space and how people understand their futures in terms of links to material resources in society and power (Norton, 1997). There are also different ways in which identity can be framed, including social identity, socio-cultural identity, voice or human agency, cultural identity and ethnic identity (Norton, 1997). A post-structuralist would characterise identity as “subject to change” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 9), multiple, constructed through discourse, and a site of struggle (Pennycook, 2001). Identities can also be “imagined” when seen in relation to the concept of the “imagined community” as described by Norton (2001, p. 166). These communities are “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). For example, trainee teachers can imagine that they are members of, or participants in, “future imagined communities of teachers working in classrooms and schools” and in doing so they can “construct imagined identities in those communities” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 31).

Social constructionists also “struggle” with identities and refer to positioning as the “practice of locating oneself or others as particular kinds of people through one's talk” (Burr, 2003, p. 204). In other words, positioning is “the process by which our identities and ourselves as persons come to be produced by socially and culturally available discourses” (Burr, 1995, p. 96). From a critical perspective, Pennycook (2000, p. 99) contends that once it is understood that cultural politics occur outside the classroom, inside the classroom, and also “in the heads of our students, then we have to see classrooms as sites where identities are produced and changed”. These three understandings of identity (social constructionist, post-structuralist and critical) inform my study in the following way: from a non-essentialist, small culture point of view, the

TESOL classroom, which in this case is my microteaching class, now moves from a mere learning environment to become a “community where ideologies and meanings are co-constructed and personalities are developed” (Troudi, 2005, p. 123). These personalities or “identities are multiple and shifting” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 99) and these meanings or perceptions are co-constructed in and through the coeducational microteaching classroom and are articulated or voiced through language. In terms of Norton (1997, p. 411), when the right to speak, or power, intersects with identity this gives rise to the concept of “investment” where, in my context the teacher trainees may also claim ownership of imagined communities or, if circumstances prevent them from doing so, they might resort to practices of “non-participation” (Norton, 2001, p. 150) that could include a refusal to speak.

3.1.4 Knowledge and social action go together

The fourth and final tenet of social constructionism addresses the relationship between knowledge and social action and how they go together. Because knowledge is socially constructed by people through interaction or relationships, it can take many forms and these constructions become meaningful through “social utility” (Gergen, 2009, p. 10) or various different kinds of actions for the different kinds of constructions (Brooks, 2002; Burr, 2003). It is also possible for some social actions to be encouraged and some to be discouraged and this idea of what is permitted and what is excluded, or not permitted, introduces the notion of power and power relations in social constructionism (Burr, 2003). It is here that agency, which is described as the “capacity to make choices and to act upon them” (Burr, 2003, p. 201), is located. I will be addressing aspects of choice and power again in Chapter Four when I outline the paradigmatic position of my study as regards criticality. I will now end my explanation of social constructionism by first offering a caution or problematising it, in section 3.1.5, and then distinguishing social constructionism from social constructivism, in section 3.1.6.

3.1.5 Problematising social constructionism

In the preceding four sections I outlined the four basic tenets, or assumptions, regarding social constructionism. The first tenet urges a critical or problematising stance, which I do so now by offering a caveat: while social constructionism has underpinned my study as a theoretical position, it is not without criticism. Even proponents of this approach themselves have cautioned that it is a field of enquiry “in a state of flux” (Burr, 2003, p. 200). However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into that discussion more fully, suffice to say that future research studies could explore further possible theoretical frameworks that are considered more in vogue, including ecological- and complexity- / dynamic-theory driven perspectives. The way that teacher-trainee perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context are unpacked within these other frameworks could offer up different, new, or more varied clues and explanations on this topic, but for this thesis I will be adopting a social constructionist, not a social constructivist lens.

3.1.6 Social constructivism versus social constructionism

Regarding the interchangeability of the terms social constructivism and social constructionism, mentioned earlier in section 3.1, both Young and Collin (2004) and Gergen (2009) draw a clear distinction between them. In social constructionism meaning emerges historically and culturally through social relationships among individuals and action. However, in social constructivism, even though social context and social interaction are important (Williams & Burden, 1997), its distinguishing feature is the focus on meaning that is constructed individually and emerges cognitively, where “meaning is seen as created by the mind rather than existing independently of it” (Hayes, 2012, p. 58). Furthermore, social constructionism stresses the impact of culture on the way in which we view the world (Crotty, 2003, p. 58) to such an extent that “it can be said that constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit, while constructionism tends to foster it”. This thesis will adhere to the constructivist-versus-constructionist distinction outlined above and mention will be made of it again, in section 3.2.6, when I outline my

social constructionist understanding of perceptions. I will now turn to the first of the three main constructs in my topic, namely perceptions.

3.2 Perceptions

I will begin this section by addressing the importance of seeking out perceptions as well as the importance of student voices. I will then identify some challenges with investigating perceptions before providing a brief overview of perceptions in the literature. Following the overview, I will introduce the Barkhuizen (1998) and social constructionist conceptualisation of perceptions informing this study.

3.2.1 The importance of seeking out perceptions

This study is arguing for the importance of seeking out perceptions for three main reasons. First, they account for the apparent effect coeducation is having on the male and female trainees in their microteaching classes. Second, they act as a bridge connecting the two other main constructs in my study, namely coeducation and microteaching. Third, perceptions provide a platform for the voices of the trainee teachers themselves to be heard, not only as a medium of expressing their opinions (Kourieos Angelidou, 2011), but also as a way of enabling them to be empowered. This enabling and empowering of learners will be addressed in Chapter Four when I discuss aspects of the critical research paradigm underpinning my study. Not only is it important to seek out perceptions, it is also important to recognise the student voices expressing them.

3.2.2 The importance of student voices

There is a growing call in the literature to include the perceptions or voices of students in decisions about various factors in English language teaching, such as improving the quality of teaching (Raymond, 2001), preventing “potential conflicts between student beliefs and instructional practices” (Schultz, 2001, p. 244) and to look less at teachers’

perceptions and more at pupils' in order to better comprehend classroom learning (Hofman, Hofman & Guldemond, 2001).

There is also a concern amongst researchers that with “many of the educational changes and reforms currently being undertaken with accelerating speed round the world,” (Goodson & Numan, 2002, p. 274) the voices of those directly impacted by these reforms are often not represented in decisions that are taken. Further studies on participant voices include Rudduck and Flutter (2000) and Cook-Sather (2002, pp. 3–4) who claim that “authorizing student perspectives recognizes and responds to the profound and unprecedented ways in which the world has changed and continues to change and the position students occupy in relation to this change”. I find these words particularly relevant given the “Arab Spring” climate where people openly protested against regimes that had been in power for many years. Oman did not escape this phenomenon as I outlined in Chapter Two, section 2.2.2. Although the crowds have long since been dispersed, their voices and messages have not been forgotten, particularly those calling for “boys and girls to study separately” (Vaidya, 2011).

The calls to garner student perceptions, the focus on student voices, and the cautions in doing so are not entirely new to the literature. Christison and Krahnke (1986, pp. 63–64), for example, warn that teachers might interpret what students are saying “through a filter of personal belief”. Lincoln (1995, p. 93) suggests the mutual benefit of helping learners find their voices is that teachers “will discover that their own voices are clearer and stronger in the process”. Barkhuizen (1998, p. 85) recommends that teachers should “constantly monitor their learners’ perceptions of classroom life”. Rudduck and Flutter (2000, p. 75) point to the “difficulties in directly eliciting” perceptions that are reiterated in more recent research, such as learners misinterpreting items on a questionnaire (Bernat, 2008), or participants giving answers that they think their teachers will want to hear, rather than what they really want to say (Wesely, 2012).

Some scholars also warn that in listening to student voices sometimes certain voices are omitted or should be included. For example, Ismail (2011, p. 1046), exploring female-only perceptions, suggests “future studies that include male participants may

generate data that are more diverse”. My thesis not only supports this suggestion, but my second research question, regarding any differences between male and female perceptions, can be seen as a direct response to Ismail (2011) and my own recommendation in an earlier study about coeducation (MacKenzie, 2011) to include male perspectives as well. By eliciting both male and female perceptions the impact of coeducation on the initial teacher trainees in their microteaching classes can be more fully understood. Not only is it important, it is also “time to hear and listen more to the voices of the learners” (Candlin, 2001, p. xx) through their perceptions. However, commentators have also identified a number of challenges in seeking out perceptions, which will be considered below.

3.2.3 Challenges investigating perceptions

Challenges when investigating perceptions include confusions over definitions, which I will address in section 3.2.4.3, ways of eliciting perceptions, and how best to represent them. These “unobservable attributes” of learners (Wesely, 2012 p. S98) and “unobservable social phenomena” (Karmani, 2010, p. 57) are most commonly elicited through questionnaires often composed of Likert-scale items (Wesely, 2012) which, if not carefully checked, researchers warn, could lead to some perceptions being misrepresented, misinterpreted or simply left “unrepresented” (Elghotmy, 2012, p. 250). Also, not all perceptions about a phenomenon are the same and they may be influenced by a large number of factors such as “past experiences, feelings, imagination, values, memories, beliefs and cultural settings.” (Hadla, 2013, p. 71). Notwithstanding these challenges, I would like to borrow from Pajares (1992, p. 329) and instead of talking about beliefs, I wish to contend that perceptions, when clearly defined, conceptualised, elicited, investigated, reported and understood might be the “single most important construct in educational research”. In the section that follows I will give a brief overview of perceptions in the literature before focusing in on the conceptualisation of perceptions specific to this thesis in sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.6.

3.2.4. An overview of perceptions in the literature

In this brief overview of perceptions, I will address the following three aspects: differing conceptualisations of perceptions, concerns about conceptualisations of perceptions, and concerns about definitions of perceptions.

3.2.4.1 Differing conceptualisations of perceptions

Research on perceptions in the literature can be found in a number of areas in language learning and teaching (Bernat, 2008) including second language acquisition (SLA) (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005) and in interdisciplinary fields such as psychology (Gergen, 1985). Perceptions also fall into areas of educational research, for example, in classroom research investigating anxiety, motivation and competitiveness or “receptivity” (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p.158) as well as in teacher education where Matoti, Junqueira and Odora (2013), as an example, explore trainee-teacher perceptions regarding teacher efficacy beliefs.

Within these various research areas perceptions have been conceptualised in three main ways (Bernat, 2008). Firstly, they are identified as individually and cognitively constructed (a cognitivist approach). Secondly, as socially and culturally constructed (a socio-cultural approach) and thirdly, an ecological approach, which is “a relatively recently emergent field of enquiry” (Bernat, 2008, p. 14). Here systems are studied that are not usually linear, not necessarily cause-and-effect, complex, unpredictable and are associated with chaos and complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Van Lier, 2004).

Following on from these three conceptualisations of perceptions above, Wesely (2012, p. S98) identifies three main ways in which studies about perceptions have been conducted or oriented. Firstly, there are studies that concentrate on how perceptions relate to learners themselves, called “trait” or “learner” oriented research. Here the focus is on learner perceptions, which are investigated without taking into account their learning environment or context. Perceptions in these studies are seen as mostly

unchanging. An example of learner-oriented research is Sönmez (2015) who looks at what pre-service teachers think of microteaching as a tool to help them become effective teachers.

Secondly, there are studies that relate perceptions to specific learning contexts, called “state” or “environmental” investigations where the impact of the environment affecting learner perceptions is emphasised. Researchers in this domain suggest that perceptions should not be investigated separately from the learning context (Rifkin, 2000). Furthermore, as a result of the context, it is possible for perceptions to “change” (Wesely, 2012, p. S105). Examples of studies that are environmentally oriented include: Skinner (2012), who addresses the changing identities of teacher trainees within a microteaching context; Trinder (2013) and Magolda (2014), who both urge for more voices to be heard especially from university or college environments and from within specific disciplines or subject areas within those tertiary contexts.

Thirdly, there are studies that look at perceptions of learners interacting with specific learning contexts, known as “dynamic” or “complexity” oriented research. These investigations “focus on the dynamic, constantly negotiated, embedded, and interconnected nature” of learner perceptions (Wesely, 2012, p. S99). Norton (2000) is cited as an early example of research within this orientation by Wesely (2012, p. S108) who describes the study as a “complex relationship between power, identity and language learning”.

3.2.4.2 Concerns about conceptualisations of perceptions

A number of problem areas or concerns have been identified regarding conceptualisations and orientations of perceptions. I will discuss four. Firstly, a weakness of the cognitivist approach has been the reliance of questionnaires to elicit data, especially where the items under investigation are listed by the researcher rather than elicited from the participants themselves. There is a concern that “normative statements” might be misunderstood by the participants thereby opening up the possibility “for misinterpretation” (Bernat, 2008, p. 12). Secondly, a weakness of socio-

cultural orientations, is that these studies, although not intended to be generalisable, may result in a lack of application to broader contexts because of their “context-specificity” (p. 14). Thirdly, while not necessarily a weakness of this conceptualisation of perceptions per se, an area of concern is that not much research has been carried out from an ecological perspective (p. 18). Therefore, more research from this perspective is called for in the literature. A fourth problem area concerns suitable definitions of perceptions as I will explain in the section below.

3.2.4.3 Concerns about definitions of perceptions

Just as there is no one single definition of social constructionism, so too appears to be the case with perceptions and seemingly interchangeable constructs such as beliefs and attitudes in educational research. There are indications that due to the complex nature of these concepts or “fuzzy usage” (Borg, 2001, p. 186), definitions have proven to be “messy” (Pajares, 1992, p. 329) and problematic (Bernat, 2008). There are also cautions that not only the literature, but also the ensuing discussions are often “hindered by unclear definitions” (Wesely, 2012, p. S101). Some scholars do not distinguish between the terms ‘beliefs’ and ‘perceptions’ at all, such as Bernat (2008). On the other hand, some, such as Pajares (1992) and Wesely (2012), do. In earlier research, for example, Pajares (1992, p. 308) describes beliefs as a “psychological” construct usually associated with teacher thinking, while perceptions are more “socially” defined and focus on experiences in the classroom (1992, p. 314). Borg (2001) also associates beliefs with teacher thinking and incorporates aspects of evaluation and emotion into definitions of teachers’ pedagogic beliefs.

Recent studies have also been carried out about perceptions, including how learners experience various aspects in the classroom, such as writing (Wesely, 2012), and Kamil (2011), who recommends that perceptions or voices of students should be heard in an investigation of EFL trainee-teacher perceptions towards writing and methods of teaching and learning writing in an EFL context in Kuwait.

In sum, there are definitions that use the terms 'beliefs', 'attitudes' and 'perceptions' interchangeably – I do not. I investigate perceptions only. Some definitions of perceptions fall within more social constructivist frameworks with the emphasis on their cognitive construction, while my definition focuses more on social and cultural aspects of construction. For the sake of clarity, Bernat (2008, p. 9) suggests researchers “adopt definitions that suit the purposes of their own empirical frameworks and reflect personal ideological viewpoints.” Therefore, I will now explain how the Barkhuizen (1998) definition (in section 3.2.5) and how the social constructionist conceptualisation of perceptions (in section 3.2.6) suit my research framework and personal viewpoint.

3.2.5 Barkhuizen’s conceptualisation of perceptions

The research study under discussion in this thesis emerged from two previous small-scale studies I carried out as part of my doctoral preparatory work. One study investigated perceptions; and the other, coeducation. In the earlier study about perceptions (MacKenzie, 2009) I invoked a definition of perceptions as outlined by Barkhuizen (1998). The initial choice of his conceptualisation was made because it suited, firstly, the framework of my study, secondly, my ideological position that voices of learners should be heard so they become involved in classroom decisions and processes about their learning, and, thirdly, the recommendation of Barkhuizen (1998, p. 85) that by continuously eliciting perceptions of life in the classroom, teachers, as they become “aware of them, they can, if necessary, plan and implement alternative practices”.

Once again, for the purposes of the present study under discussion, I am invoking Barkhuizen (1998), for the same reasons I have just given and also because his definition and explanation fit my present investigation with its context or environmental orientation. Barkhuizen (1998) situates his definition of perceptions within a theoretical framework fashioned after Holahan (1982) that focuses on how it is the environment that shapes our perceptions. In his explanation Barkhuizen (1998, p. 89) suggests that pedagogical, social, and personal influences inform these perceptions, which are affected by “the teaching/learning situation in which learners find themselves”. Thus,

with this focus on the classroom as the context, state or environment, forming, informing and affecting the learner perceptions, Barkhuizen's (1998) perceptions fall within the environmental orientation of Wesely (2012) to which my study also subscribes.

In the diagram below, Barkhuizen (1998) outlines the impact of learner perceptions on the processes occurring in the classroom as well as introducing three types of perceptions.

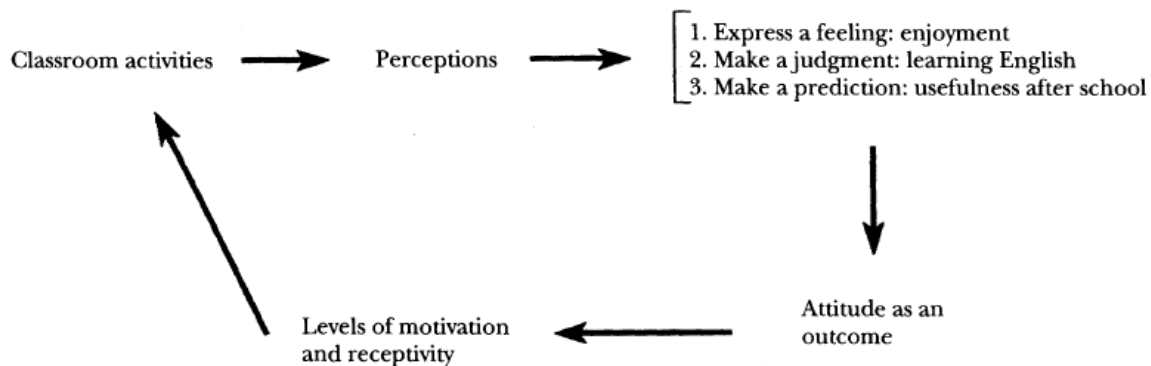


Figure 1 Barkhuizen's (1998, p.89) diagram of learners' actions on their perceptions of classroom activities

As a result of the influences, experiences and perceptions in the classroom setting, Barkhuizen (1998) identifies three interrelated actions or types of perception that occur, namely: the learners may express feelings, make judgements and / or make predictions.

Looking at the direction of the arrows in the Barkhuizen (1998) diagram it would appear that there is both a cyclical and cause–effect relationship between the learner perceptions and the learner actions in the classroom. I will examine if this type of process is occurring in my microteaching classroom, as well as consider additions and adaptations to this model, when I present the implications of my study in Chapter Six. This model demonstrates the important effect and powerful impact perceptions have on experiences and learner actions in the classroom and when a social constructionist lens is added to this depiction by Barkhuizen (1998) my conceptualisation and orientation of perceptions in the context of my study can be broadened below as follows:

3.2.6 A social constructionist understanding of perceptions

While it seems that much of the literature situates perceptions and accompanying terms like beliefs within more social constructivist frameworks (Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992; Williams & Burden, 1997) I am calling into question these taken-for-granted assumptions that perceptions are formed individually and cognitively by offering an alternate possibility. For example, a more constructivist approach would suggest that attitudes, beliefs and emotions emerge from inside an individual (Burr, 2003). On the other hand, a social constructionist view would advocate that they emerge through “the social practices engaged in by people, and their interactions with each other” (Burr, 2003 p. 8). When situating perceptions within a social constructionist framework they are then no longer viewed as being created in our minds. My conceptualisation of perceptions thus provides a narrower focus with which to interrogate research about coeducation and microteaching.

A social constructionist perspective invites us to be critical and calls into question certain assumptions about perceptions of coeducation. This framework allows us to recognise the importance of history and culture in shaping these perceptions; it focuses on how these perceptions of coeducation are critically co-constructed through social processes and interactions within the context of a microteaching environment. I will be addressing microteaching in section 3.4, but first I will explore the second main construct in my study, coeducation, in section 3.3. Finally, a social constructionist framework accounts for the actions that take place in the microteaching classroom and that through language the teacher-trainee perceptions about coeducation can be verbalised, thus empowering their voices to be heard.

3.3 An Exploration of Coeducation in the Literature

In this section about research into coeducation I begin by first defining the phenomenon, then I provide a global overview of studies before investigating studies that focus on perceptions of coeducation, including those conducted in Western, non-Western and an

Arabian Gulf setting. Following that, I discuss five themes as a further exploration of coeducation in the literature: the single-gender versus coeducation debate; the chilly-climate construct; the culture of laddism; the culture of romance; and the culture of classroom context. I conclude this section by considering differences between my study and those in coeducation literature.

3.3.1 Definitions of coeducation

My own personal experience and understanding of “coeducation” both as a student and a teacher in South Africa, where I was born and raised, was of schools consisting of mixed classes of male and female students taught by male and female teachers. Within the class, the students interact and work with each other in mixed-gender groups, may sit next to members of the opposite gender in terms of classroom arrangement, and often chat with the opposite gender socially both inside and outside the classroom. For certain subjects, though, such as physical education, the classes are separated into males-only and females-only and are then taught by a teacher of the corresponding gender. I refer to this description as the default definition of coeducation as it is the one most often and commonly referred to in the literature, certainly from a Western perspective.

However, through my TESOL travels and further reading, coeducation has come to include a number of varieties. For example, with classroom arrangement I experienced males and females in the same class, but separated, with males sitting on the left of the class and females on the right in a senior high school in Japan. Another variation was on a post-graduate teacher preparation course in Qatar with males and females present in the same building, and at the same time, but choosing to remain separated and refusing to share any classes at all. A further variety of coeducation that I have been told of, but not experienced personally, is where the school building is shared by both genders, but not at the same time. For example, the males come to school in the

morning and leave after their classes and then the female 'shift' begins in the afternoon, as happens in some more rural places here in Oman.

While these varieties and maybe others not described here exist, for the duration of this thesis I will be invoking the default definition of coeducation.

3.3.2 Global overview of coeducational studies

Coeducation has often been synonymous with reports of modernisation and educational reform since it first became a documented phenomenon in the United Kingdom (UK) and America (USA) more than a century ago (Delamont, 2006). Offering an American perspective in her account of women students' experiences in single-gender and coeducational higher education colleges, Miller-Bernal (2000, p. *) notes that "single-sex education came to be viewed as anachronistic, coeducation as progressive" and that there are still lots of people who "assume that coeducation is superior" even though there are many who challenge this notion. Focusing on the British schooling system, Arnot (2002, p. 97) suggests "the issue of co-education and single-sex schools is not just a contemporary but also a historical debate."

The topic of coeducation and related issues such as coeducation versus male-only and female-only (which I will refer to as 'single-gender' education) has been written about across the globe, from the USA where Mael, Smith, Alonso, Rogers and Gibson (2004) present critiques and explanations as part of arguments for and against coeducation versus single-gender education; to Europe where the relatively recent phenomenon of coeducational schools – introduced in Flanders in the 1990s – is investigated by Van Heule (2000). The particular concern in Flanders is if the teacher-education institutions have adequately prepared teachers, or not, to deal with coeducation. The trainee teachers in my Omani context were not prepared at all, let alone even informed that the female-only teacher education college was accepting male trainees. We returned after the summer break to discover we were now coeducational.

In the UK, Younger and Warrington (2006), explore single-gender classes in coeducational state schools as a way of potentially increasing the performance and participation levels for both males and females. Down under in Australia, Gill (2004, p. 7) urges the discussions centred around single-gender and coeducational settings “to be connected to their physical and cultural context”, and McKnight (2015) talks about designing specific curricula for females in coeducational classes. In the Far East, links to feminism and modernity are described in Japan (Usui, Rose & Kageyama, 2003); while across in Africa, Morrell (2000) calls for single-gender schools as a way of protecting young women in South Africa from violence directed against them in many coeducational schools. Moving closer to my region of the world, in the Middle East, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) discusses issues of modernity versus tradition in her study of Bedouin females dropping out of coeducational schools in the Negev, and in the Arabian Gulf, the Gunn (2007, p. 65) examination of coeducational group work warns “that tensions, many of them derived from cultural norms, exist between the genders”.

However, while coeducation may have been addressed globally, Riordan (1994, p. 486) describes it in the early 1990s as “one of the least studied of all major topics in education”. Another aspect of the topic that begs further investigation in educational research is “the taken-for-granted assumption that coeducation is always beneficial” (Riordan, 1994, p. 505). I always thought coeducation was beneficial and it seems that many Western expat teachers in my context seem to share this view too. When I have discussed this topic informally with colleagues they seem very positive about coeducational colleges here in Oman and some have even echoed Riordan (1994, p. 505) by suggesting that gender separation is viewed with “skepticism in democratic societies”.

3.3.3 Studies on perceptions of coeducation

I will now narrow the focus of this global review by presenting studies that specifically address perceptions of coeducation in Western settings and non-Western, including an Arabian Gulf setting.

3.3.3.1 Perceptions of coeducation in Western settings

There are not many recent studies that address student perceptions of coeducation directly. However, the following papers do focus on certain aspects of coeducation and do elicit perceptions in this regard from a Western perspective: In Belgium, Brutsaert (1999) reports on secondary school students' perceptions in coeducational environments. Miller-Bernal (1993) and Umbach, Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer and Kuh (2007) investigate women's experiences in single-gender and coeducational colleges. Jackson (2002) looks at perceptions of single-gender classes in coeducational schools, and Smith, Morrison and Wolf (1994) research college as a gendered experience. Miller-Bernal and Poulson (2004) study women's experiences in formerly men's colleges, and Yates (2004) looks at male perceptions after a change from male-only to coeducational schools. Morgan (2005) also focuses on male perceptions in research on a single-gender college leadership course. It was found that while the males felt more relaxed and less distracted working in an all-male environment, they thought a female perspective would have enriched discussions about leadership. My study is calling into question the elicitation of perceptions from one gender only and instead asks both the male and female teacher trainees for theirs and then compares the results to see if there are any differences in their perceptions of coeducation.

3.3.3.2 Perceptions of coeducation in non-Western settings

In terms of more recent work, Abuya, Onsomu and Moore (2014, p. 383), researching in Kenya, found that girls attending coeducational schools face "barriers" that can be explained "both from an economic point of view and from a cultural and gendered view of being either masculine or feminine". Conducting interviews with their female participants they further found that "traditional, historical, colonial, and patriarchal influences" account for the way they are perceived in society (Abuya et al., 2014, p. 390). I also consider the role of tradition and culture in my thesis, however, in contrast to Abuya et al. (2014), I seek out both male and female perceptions, while the absence of male perceptions is listed as one of the limitations in the Kenyan study.

Moving closer geographically to Oman, two studies addressing perceptions of coeducation have been carried out in the Middle East: Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) and Khuwaileh (2000). In research on female Bedouin dropouts from the Negev region in Southern Israel, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, p. 3) found a conflict between the imposed modernised Western coeducational public school system and the traditional values and “cultural ethos” of the girls’ fathers, which sought separate education for men and women. There are major differences between this study and mine including: the participants are high school females as opposed to my tertiary college females and males; Bedouin women in an Israeli state-run institution, as opposed to Omani men and women in an Omani state-run institution; as well as the researcher’s ‘insider’ position as a Bedouin female teacher in the community, as opposed to my ‘outsider’ position as a South African female teacher in an Omani coeducational microteaching classroom (Davis, 1995, p. 437). Notwithstanding these differences, this study is particularly relevant to my research not only with respect to the discussion of culture and coeducation, but also by “challenging the grand theory of modernism and emphasizing the particular and the local” (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006 p. 15) and by suggesting separate spaces to accommodate traditions of both large and small culture. Subsequently, this Negev study has challenged me to review my own preconceived ideas and lived experiences by exploring and questioning coeducation in my particular context, and its perceived effects not only on the female but the male trainees as well.

Khuwaileh (2000) does elicit both male and female views. Although this case study set in Jordan does not focus directly on students’ perceptions of coeducation (and a different sampling procedure is applied) aspects of coeducation pertaining to group-work activities are considered in a discussion of cultural hindrances to language teaching and learning in tertiary classrooms. There are five similarities, though, that make this study particularly relevant to mine. Firstly, both Oman and Jordan are Arab and Islamic countries. Secondly, both studies are undertaken at state-run tertiary level institutions using English in an EFL context where coeducation is the norm. Thirdly, the populations in both studies arrive at their coeducational tertiary institutions from a

background of separated female-only and male-only schools. Fourthly, in terms of data, both studies rely on questionnaires and interviews as the main data collecting tools. Lastly, both studies address factors, including culture, religion and society as influencing students' participation and interaction in the classroom. For example, a male participant in the Jordanian study cited that religion prevented him from speaking to females in his class, while a female participant suggested that it was being a "Muslim girl" and society preventing her from working directly with her male colleagues or "strangers" as she called them (Khuwaileh, 2000, p. 284). Thus, interaction in terms of unrelated males and females speaking to each other "is not acceptable in Islam, as seen through the eyes of the students interviewed" (Khuwaileh, 2000, p. 285).

3.3.3.2.1 Perceptions of coeducation in an Arabian Gulf setting

The study closest to mine in terms of location and context is the Gunn (2007) investigation of student perceptions regarding coeducational group work at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the UAE. In contrast to Oman, where coeducation is the rule rather than the exception, there are only "a very few coeducational higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates" (Gunn, 2007, p. 65). In the UAE study, mixed male and female groups work together in tertiary classrooms, unlike the setting for my study where there are large spaces and even whole rows left open between visibly segregated male-only and female-only groups. Outside of the AUS classrooms though, segregation does occur in terms of separate, fenced-off dormitories and separate times for using certain facilities like the gymnasium and swimming pool. At the Omani college the men are housed completely off campus and there are separate areas such the cafeterias, separate work spaces in the library and even computer labs designated for males-only and females-only.

Similarities with my study include firstly, the acknowledgment of culture as an important consideration "regardless of where in the world" TESOL teachers are teaching (Gunn, 2007, p. 68). Oman and the UAE share an Arab and Islamic background where the social role or position as regards men and women appears "more defined" as different

(Gunn, 2007, p. 68). Therefore, an understanding of the context is crucial in recognising why the genders behave as they do in coeducational settings, and it should further be understood that cultural influences from outside the classroom have a direct impact on what takes place within the classroom walls. Secondly, in terms of sampling, both studies were conducted on male and female participants who had been at their respective institutions for almost four years. Thirdly, both researchers also teach their respective classes and, fourthly, a questionnaire was used in both studies to collect data from the students. The manner in which some of the questions on the Gunn (2007) survey influenced not only the wording on my questionnaire, but also informed my letter of consent and interview framework will be discussed more explicitly in Chapter Four. The results of the UAE study as to whether multicultural coeducational groups are a creative collaboration or problematic partnership remain inconclusive. However, Gunn (2007, p. 76) does confirm “the importance of social and cultural factors and the need to take them into consideration” in the classroom – as do I.

I will end this section on perceptions of coeducation from an Arabian Gulf setting with the major differences between the UAE study and mine. First, my trainees do not and, in fact, refuse to work in mixed-gender groups. Second, Gunn (2007) uses a survey as the only data collection tool while I conducted interviews as well. Third, my Omani trainees’ perceptions of coeducation fall within a microteaching context in a state-run tertiary institution, whereas Gunn (2007) looks specifically at group work in a privately run university with a multinational student body.

3.3.4 Further exploration of coeducation in the literature required

Certainly, a lot has been written about coeducation and coeducational versus single-gender schools from around the world, but the studies that are probably the most relevant to my enquiry from a Western perspective are the studies about women’s colleges, for three main reasons. Firstly, the college investigated in my study was female-only and then phased-in coeducation, so that context is similar. Secondly, I’m coming from a perspective that originally thought of coeducation as positive and a more

effective way of organising the classroom, similar to the views held by these women's colleges. Thirdly, it is mainly within female colleges that studies focusing on eliciting perceptions as regards coeducation have been carried out. Similar to my trainee responses, the college students perceive that coeducation is affecting their participation in class and their confidence. However, after reviewing the literature thus far, especially from non-Western settings, after asking the participants in my study for their perceptions on the topic, and after taking into particular consideration the role that culture plays, I'm slowly beginning to question coeducation in my Omani context. I believe further investigation of the phenomenon of coeducation in the literature is needed. Therefore, I will discuss some of the themes that have emerged around coeducation before moving on to explore microteaching in section 3.4.

3.3.5 Thematic overview of coeducational studies

I will report on five main themes, which I have identified in the literature on coeducation, that have informed my study in the following order: the single-gender versus coeducation debate; the chilly-climate construct; the culture of laddism; the culture of romance; and the culture of classroom context.

3.3.5.1 The single-gender versus coeducation debate

An important point I would like to make at the outset of this section is that while a lot of the literature on the single-gender versus coeducation debate is either for single-gender classes or schools and against coeducation, or vice versa, it is not my intention to take sides in this specific debate. Blue (2009, p. 4) found that "research both supports and opposes single sex education", the results of many studies are therefore not conclusive, and suggests that maybe there are factors other than gender that "impact the outcome of education". Further review articles also pointing to inconclusive findings in this debate include Riordan (1994), Mael (1998), Mael et al. (2004) and Jones and Dindia (2004).

My study takes place at tertiary level so I will focus mainly on literature in this context, but mention will be made of studies that have been conducted at schools that also

support the themes. From a historical perspective, Riordan (1994) provides background information on the topic in terms of the emergence of interest in coeducation and its growth from an American perspective. It seems that, at first, the schools (primary and secondary) are mainly coeducational, but there are single-gender universities and colleges. These first tertiary institutions were single-gender male-only institutions. Single-gender female colleges were established later so that women could also have access to education. Slowly a move towards coeducation took place, primarily for economic reasons and to a lesser degree for reasons of equity and modernisation. This movement, according to Langdon (2001, p. 8) "was not a decision based on ideology, pedagogy, or educational equity, nor was it based on data proving coeducation to be a more conducive learning environment" but rather it was a matter of economics. Student numbers were declining and colleges needed money to survive. A small number of women's colleges have remained though in the USA.

However, in the early 1980s, research emerged showing bias against women, particularly in coeducational college classes. Studies revealed that the self-confidence of females may be undermined and they may not receive equal treatment within these classrooms. For example, Hall and Sandler (1982) found that coeducational colleges in the USA provided a "chilly classroom climate" which, among other things, negatively affected the way the female students participated in class. I will discuss the notion of the chilly climate in the next section.

As a result of these findings, studies focusing mainly on feminism, gender issues and equality call once again for single-gender schools for females. Salomone (2006), for example, focuses specifically on the single-gender debate including issues such as single-gender female schools and suggests single-gender classes in coeducational schools. Other scholars supporting single-gender classes within coeducational institutions include Hughes (2006–2007), Younger and Warrington (2006) and Gray and Wilson (2006).

More studies that have been conducted within the single-gender versus coeducational debate theme include investigations of women-only colleges (Kim, 2001, 2002; Kim & Alvarez, 1995); gender and coeducation and the transformation of identity (Poulson & Higgins, 2003); single-gender schools (Herr & Arms, 2004); and a call for single-gender schools from certain faith communities such as concerned Muslim parents who prefer single-gender education for their children based on cultural and religious grounds (Halstead, 1991; Haw, 1994; McCreery, Jones & Holmes, 2007). In a study using “women’s voices”, Hamdan (2010, p. 375), interviewing Canadian Muslim women about single-gender versus coeducational school experiences, makes three important observations: first, a dearth of research on coeducational and single-gender schooling within the “Arabic literature” (p. 377); second, the “value” of single-gender classes in coeducational schools (p. 387); and third, the importance of understanding “the intersection of gender with education within a cultural context” (p. 376).

As stated earlier, it is not my intent to say whether single-gender or coeducational classes are better, but rather I would like to draw on Shah and Conchar (2009) who suggest that, depending on the context, a particular type of gender organisation is preferred. I do believe, though, that we have come full circle in this debate as in the latter 1990s and heading into the 2000s research findings suggest that single-gender institutions are being called for again to aid the perception that males are underachieving. Thus, the focus has moved away from bias against females towards investigating single-gender classes in coeducational schools as a strategy to improve the educational and social needs of males (Martino, Mills, & Lingard, 2005). In the UK, Delamont (1999, p. 3) investigates debates surrounding the perceived issue of schools “failing boys”. Jackson and Smith (2000) tackle male underperformance by looking at single-gender versus coeducational schools, and single-gender versus coeducational classes in coeducational schools in Australia and England. The call for more single-gender male classes as a way of addressing problems such as under-achievement in coeducational schools has been made particularly in Australia and New Zealand (Martino & Meyenn, 2002; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Younger & Warrington, 2005).

It is possible that single-gender versus coeducation literature still to come could turn again towards females, but what is certain though is that this debate will continue on. I would like to echo Younger and Warrington (2008, p. 429) who urge arguments away from “essentialist approaches related to ‘boy-friendly’ pedagogies and strategies” towards more “gender-inclusive approaches”. Perhaps future research around this debate should talk more about males and females rather than distinguishing between them and we should aim to organise our classrooms “to better serve all students regardless of gender” (Blue, 2009, p. 93).

3.3.5.2 The chilly-climate construct

Although written in the 1980s and based on research in colleges in the USA, Hall and Sandler’s (1982) seminal paper on the classroom climate in coeducational classes informs my research in terms of the chilly-climate construct. Their central idea is that the climate is chilly for women primarily as result of the different ways, some subtle and some overt, in which faculty treat their male and female students. Hall and Sandler (1982) impact my thesis in the following ways: Firstly, I, too, ask questions of my trainees as to their perceptions of how they are treated by their teachers or faculty. In my college the teaching staff are called “doctors”. Secondly, I also ask how the trainees treat the males and females in their microteaching classes when they take on the role of the teacher or doctor. Thirdly, like me, Hall and Sandler (1982) acknowledge external factors such as society at large which may affect the participation and performance of students. Fourthly, while the focus of their paper is on women, Hall and Sandler (1982, p. 3) consider that “men students are also affected” by the classroom climate. Serex and Townsend (1999, p. 528) suggest a chilly classroom climate is one “in which students of one sex are valued differently and therefore treated differently than are students of the opposite sex”. Therefore, I will be investigating both the male and female perceptions in this regard. Lastly, while Hall and Sandler (1982) collect data from a much wider variety of sources than I do, theirs are also one of the first and few studies on coeducation that specifically use a questionnaire to garner student perceptions on

the topic. This notion of a “chilly climate”, particularly after Hall and Sandler (1982), is thus central to my thesis.

More recent studies that investigate the classroom climate after Hall and Sandler (1982) include Crombie, Pyke, Silverthorn, Jones and Piccinin (2003), and Allan and Madden (2006). Student perceptions of their teachers’ interactions with them as well student perceptions of their own participation were elicited through self-reports by Crombie et al. (2003). They steer away from the earlier more conventional chilly-climate data collection tools of observing classes and measuring interaction rates and teacher behaviours, while Allan and Madden (2006, p. 707) found that data collection instruments, research methods as well as “conceptual frameworks guiding interpretative decisions” are all factors that influence claims made about the chilly climate in classrooms.

Some researchers, such as Myhill and Jones (2006) and Zedan (2010), do not mention the chilly-climate construct per se, but do allude to aspects influencing the classroom learning environment that include teacher–student relationships and gender inequality. Zedan (2010) used a questionnaire to investigate the mathematics classes of over 3000 Arab elementary school children in Israel and found the results contradicted those of Sadker and Sadker (1986) who found that teachers pay more attention to male students than to female students. The results from Myhill and Jones (2006), on the other hand, indicate a strong perception that males are treated more negatively by their teachers than females. Their research was part of a “larger, cross phase study investigating underachieving boys” (Myhill & Jones, 2006 p. 99). Their study is of particular significance to mine because like me, Myhill and Jones (2006, p. 105) invoke the critical paradigm and focus on eliciting perceptions as a way of giving students “a voice”. However, while they in schools, and others such as Langdon (2001) in colleges, explore issues of gender such as equality, this (equality) is not a central concern in my study. Instead, my contention is that it could be coeducation – and not a teacher or doctor – that is creating the chilly climate in the microteaching class and, if so, then this chilly climate could impact both the females and the males. Indeed, while most of the

literature on the chilly climate leans towards the negative experiences of female students there is a growing concern that maybe the chilly climate has “now become overheated to the detriment of boys” (Kimmel, 2006, p. 66).

3.3.5.2.1 Limitations of chilly-climate research

Three limitations have been identified as regards studies focusing on the chilly-climate construct: the use of observations; the use of questionnaires; and research that focuses on the overall college experiences of students rather than targeting specific subject areas. Firstly, there have been reports that measuring rates of participation and student teacher interactions through observation might be different to how students actually perceive of what is taking place in the classroom. Therefore, Crombie et al. (2003, pp. 56–57) stress the need for investigating student perceptions as “these perceptions (even if not congruent with reality) have been shown to influence students' judgments, decisions, and development in a variety of contexts”. Secondly, a number of studies use questionnaires, mine included. However, Serex and Townsend (1999, p. 535) suggest that those perceptions “collected at one point in time” could differ over time. I used interviews as well, but the argument that perceptions change over time could be applied to most data collection tools. Allan and Madden (2006, p. 707) suggest instead, the use of focus groups. They found, for example, that participants shared “stories” they might have thought “irrelevant” when responding to questionnaire items (p. 707). Thirdly, some research results appear to have contradictory “claims of chilly climates” (p. 686). However, on closer inspection it has been found that while some students do not perceive their whole school or college experience to be chilly, there are certain subjects or courses in which “chilling practices” were experienced (Serex & Townsend, 1999, p. 536). Very recent research is now focusing on three specific areas: more specific courses, such as Walton, Logel, Peach, Spencer and Zanna (2015) who report on two interventions to counteract the chilly-climate effect on females studying engineering; more specific participants, such as Maranto and Griffin (2011) who move the focus

away from female students to examine the chilling experiences and perceptions of female teaching staff in higher educational institutions, and more specific contexts: such as the microteaching context in my study.

Following on from these studies about the 'single-gender versus coeducation debate' as well as the 'chilly-climate construct' three more themes informing my thesis can be identified in literature pertaining to gender in the classroom. I will refer to them as: the culture of "laddism" (Jackson, Dempster & Pollard, 2015, p. 300); the "culture of romance" (Langdon, 2001, p. 17); and the culture of classroom "context" (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 137).

3.3.5.3 The culture of laddism

The terms "laddish" (Jackson, 2002, p. 48), "laddish behaviours" (Skelton, 2002, p. 78), "laddish culture" (Younger & Warrington, 2005, p. 77), "laddishness" (Younger & Warrington, 2008, p. 436) and "laddism" (Jackson et al., 2015, p. 301) can be found in the literature focusing primarily on the concern for the underachievement or underperformance of male students. The terms refer to a certain type of behaviour, usually seen to be disruptive in class and often, although not exclusively, associated with males (Dempster, 2009; Jackson et al., 2015; Younger & Warrington, 2005). Examples of lad behaviour or strategies include making a noise in class, late arrivals, laughing a lot and acting as "class clowns" (Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanik, 2013, p. 196; Jackson et al., 2015). Most of the studies investigating male underachievement have been carried out at schools, but more recently studies focusing on the culture of laddism have been carried out at tertiary institutions where the examples of lad behaviour appear more extreme and can include examples of aggression and abuse (Dempster, 2009; Jackson et al., 2015).

3.3.5.4 The culture of romance

In my descriptions of laddism above and now, as regards the culture romance, I realise there is the inherent “danger of perpetuating rather than interrupting stereotypes” along essentialist genderist lines (Herr & Ames, 2004, p. 551). While I believe these cultures will be useful in interpreting the perceptions of my trainees, it is not my intention to condone them. That being said, Langdon (2001, p. 17), referring to the work of Holland and Eisenhart (1990) argues “there is still evidence that college women are caught up in a “culture of romance” that encourages them to downplay their intelligence and achievements to be more attractive to men”. Not limited to females only, Zook and Russotti (2012, p. 781) report what they call a worrying result as regards their research into popularity at schools: “eighth-grade students were most likely to believe that excellent students should downplay their academic effort to be popular”. There is a tendency in the literature though, where more cases of females playing down their achievements than males are found. The females in the study carried out by Pomerantz et al. (2013, p. 199) describe themselves as having “dumbed down” so they could be seen in a certain way, such as “cool”, by the males. In this thesis I will be using the term ‘culture of romance’ to describe any instances in my microteaching classes where the females in particular downplay, hide or mask certain attributes, such as intelligence, so that they appear more attractive to men. Further behaviours included in this culture of romance for the purposes of my study include examples of acting in an overly modest manner, exaggerated gentleness, an unusually quiet voice, or an air of demureness.

3.3.5.5 The culture of classroom context

Research into gender, particularly in coeducational settings, has also been addressed in studies about classroom interaction. Canada and Pringle (1995, p. 161), for example, investigate the “social construction of gender differences” in interaction patterns in a college that was transforming from a female-only to a coeducational environment. Also working in the mid-1990s, Tannen (1996, p. 341), highlights research in the area of TESOL “examining gender-related patterns of behaviour” in classroom interaction, and

Rashidi and Naderi (2012), explore patterns of interaction between teachers and adult EFL learners in Iran. All three studies found that while gender is a significant factor, it is not solely responsible for influencing the way teachers and students interact with each other or the way students interact with other students in classrooms.

Instead, amongst a number of factors such as class, age or “individual personality” (Tannen, 1996, p. 341) the context of the classroom has been identified as important in influencing classroom interaction and affecting participation (MacKenzie, 2011; Rashidi & Naderi, 2012). Canada and Pringle (1995, p. 166) use the term “social context” in this regard, which they describe as “an ever-widening series of concentric circles that define the ever-broadening historical, geographic, social-cultural, and circumstantial perspectives one can bring to bear on the particular classrooms that are observed”. Unlike Canada and Pringle (1995), I did not use an observational tool to gather data, I did not focus on only females in my study and I did not compare the single-sex and coeducational classes. However, it is their theoretical framework drawing on the social context approach, which acknowledges classrooms existing in context as well as their regarding of coeducation “suspiciously” and questioning it as an effective way of organising certain classes, that have informed my study (Canada & Pringle, 1995, p. 161).

Also exploring the social context of classroom interaction Breen (1985, p. 142) offers a metaphor of the classroom as “coral gardens” and suggests that in this conceptualisation the classroom can be perceived of as “a genuine culture and worth investigating as such”. Social practices within the classroom can include “taken-for-granted but significant practices such as how the furniture is organized” (Breen, 2001, p. 132). Allan and Madden (2006, p. 685) pursue the social notion by describing classrooms as a reflection of the “larger society in which they are situated”. Pennycook (2000, p. 90), on the other hand, offers a more critical view of the classroom as a social political and cultural political space that exists “in a complex relationship to the world outside”. Hall and Sandler (1982) and Auerbach (2000, p.149) also refer to the world outside the classroom impacting on what is taking place inside the class by suggesting

they “do not exist in a vacuum”. Pennycook (2000, p. 92) extends this idea by offering that “the walls of classrooms become permeable” where what is happening outside the class can affect what is happening inside in terms of “social relations” and what happens inside affects social relations outside the class as well. In essence the classroom, particularly the TESOL classroom, is not just a context for learning, it is “a microcosm of the larger social and cultural world” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 102). I have already explained in section 3.1.2.1 how culture is defined in this thesis, so in keeping with Holliday (1999), and including ideas fashioned after Breen (1985; 2001) and Pennycook (2000), I will be using my term “culture of classroom context” to refer to not only my coeducational microteaching classroom, “but also the social and cultural norms within and beyond the physical walls” (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 137) that underpin, inform and impact the trainee-teachers’ perceptions of coeducation.

3.3.6 Differences between the coeducation literature and my study

I will conclude this exploration of coeducation by highlighting four major differences between the literature and my study. Firstly, most of the research has been undertaken in the West, which is a context very far removed from the culture and traditions of the Arabian Gulf (see Hall & Sandler, 1982; Jackson et al., 2015 as examples). Perceptions of coeducation in Western settings are often different from those in non-Western settings for varying reasons, such as the role of culture and gender roles, which are viewed differently especially in Islamic countries (see Hamdan, 2010; Malik, 2013; Shah & Conchar, 2009). Secondly, many of the schools where studies were carried out are either primary or secondary schools, while my study was carried out at a state-run tertiary institution (see Martino et al., 2005; Pomerantz et al., 2013). Thirdly, a lot of the studies have been quantitative and statistical, such as Rashedi and Naderi (2012), whereas mine is qualitative and interpretive in nature. Lastly, many of the studies have been observational and have not elicited student perceptions such as Canada and Pringle (1995) and Sunderland (2004). There could be differences between researcher-observed behaviours and the actual perceptions of participants (Crombie et al., 2003) and this is why I have chosen to focus primarily on those studies that elicit student perceptions in my exploration of microteaching in the next section.

3.4 An Exploration of Microteaching in the Literature

The third construct under discussion in this chapter is microteaching. I will first examine a critical social view of teacher education before explaining what I mean by microteaching, after which positive and negative reactions to microteaching will be revealed. Then I will present research on participants' perceptions of microteaching in Western and non-Western, including Arabian Gulf, settings. Lastly, themes emerging in the literature will be explored, specifically those of changing roles and identities and the artificial versus authentic classroom. I will conclude this section by looking at differences between the microteaching literature and my study.

3.4.1 A critical social view of teacher education

The Omani coeducational microteaching classes are part of an initial teacher education programme and thus my study can be included in the literature on teacher education in general and TESOL in particular. In keeping with the social constructionist framework I outlined earlier, as well as my conceptualisations of culture, identity and the culture of classroom context, I will be examining teacher-education research that has taken a more socio-cultural turn, particularly in the world of TESOL (Zeungler & Miller, 2006; Johnson, 2006, 2009) as well as literature from a more critically social perspective (Pennycook, 2000). Learning to teach is an “extremely complex” process (Johnson, 2000, p. 4) and one of the implications of a socio-cultural turn is that teacher education takes into account “the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers learn and teach” (Johnson, 2006, p. 245). Pennycook (2000, p. 91) suggests the terms “sociopolitical” and “cultural political” to refer to the classroom where “political” means identifying “questions of social and cultural relations from a critical perspective”. I will explore more what it means to be critical in Chapter Four, but it is important to state here that while my study seeks to understand the perceptions of coeducation as experienced by the participants, I will also be subscribing to a “critical social view of education” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 93). From this perspective everything that takes place within teacher education should be understood “socially and

politically” where the “micro-politics” of the classroom, in my context a microteaching classroom, is a reflection of “large-scale social structure” and can become “a site of cultural struggle over preferred modes of learning and teaching” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 98). I will now offer definitions of microteaching which as I described in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2 is an important strategy used in initial teacher education programmes in Oman to help prepare future EFL teachers.

3.4.2 Definitions of microteaching

Microteaching originated at the University of Stanford in 1963 as a strategy to assist pre-service teachers to practice a micro skill or smaller part of a lesson on campus before venturing out on school experience (Allen & Eve, 1968; Perlberg, 1972). The four main stages in the microteaching process include first, teacher trainees spending time planning the specific skill or smaller aspect of a lesson they wish to teach (Mergler & Tangen, 2010); second, they will then teach what they have planned to children or their peers in a designated room (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). The microteaching session may or may not be recorded but, third, after the lesson has been taught, there is time for feedback and reflection (Elghotmy, 2012), and then the last step is an opportunity to teach again – either a new lesson, aspect or skill – or to re-teach the same aspect or skill to the same or different children or peers (Chatháin, 1985). Over the last 50 years or so there have been a number of variations with regards to these stages as the microteaching technique has evolved. For example, Albrecht and Carnes (2006) describe their microteaching process as follows: each trainee will plan and teach four lessons to their peers that will increase in length and number of elements taught per lesson as the trainee progresses through the semester. Each lesson will be recorded after which both peer and instructor feedback is provided. Before the next microteaching lesson, the individual trainee will watch the video of their own teaching, read the feedback they have received and write a reflection. Mergler and Tangen (2010, p. 200) characterise microteaching as “one activity wherein pre-service teachers can engage in both vicarious and mastery learning experiences”. In other words, not only do the trainees plan, teach, receive feedback and reflect on

their own lesson, they also give feedback to their classmates and, by watching their peers teach, it is possible that the strategies, manners of delivery and activity types that they are observing can help inform and guide the way they will teach their own lessons.

For the purposes of this study, I will define microteaching as the planning and teaching of a lesson to peers in an initial teacher education course (Bell, 2007) where said lesson has been limited in length or components (Skinner, 2012), after which the trainee will receive both peer and course-instructor feedback (Mergler & Tangen, 2010), and finally they will provide a written self-reflection of their microteaching experience (Ismail, 2011), which they will then use to help them re-teach a new or different lesson (Sen, 2009). In terms of my coeducational microteaching class, the trainees plan and teach a lesson of 10 to 20 minutes for their first session and a different lesson of 20 to 30 minutes for their re-teach. They are free to choose any lesson from the prescribed English syllabus that is taught in the state-run schools. The school lessons last for a total of 40 minutes so they choose the activities, tasks or aspects of the lesson they wish to focus on for their reduced microteaching lessons.

3.4.3 Positive and negative reactions to microteaching

Microteaching has been found to “provide positive learning experiences” (Skinner, 2012, p. 47) and has advantages such as helping trainee teachers practice their skills in a “safe, non-threatening learning environment” (Albrecht & Carnes, 2006, p. 156). Furthermore, l’Anson, Rodrigues and Wilson (2003) and Amobi (2005), investigating the feedback and reflection stage within microteaching, suggest this stage could prepare trainee teachers to become reflective practitioners. However, the microteaching technique or process is not without negative reactions. Some pre-service teachers, for example, have felt anxious about teaching their friends (Bell, 2007), some students do not like to be videotaped (Benton-Kupper, 2001) and many complain that microteaching does not reflect the “real classroom environment” (Sen, 2009, p. 170). I will return to these reactions under the thematic overview section in this chapter, but now I will address research that specifically investigates trainee-teachers’ perceptions of microteaching in a number of geographical settings.

3.4.4 Research on perceptions of microteaching

Studies on perceptions of microteaching are highly relevant to my research as microteaching is the context within which my participants generate their perceptions of coeducation. In the following sections I will address research that looks at perceptions of microteaching from varying geographical perspectives and then I will explore some of the themes that have emerged in the literature that are relevant to my study.

3.4.4.1 Perceptions of microteaching in Western settings

Microteaching has its roots in the USA and it is not surprising therefore that a lot of research about the topic has taken place in that part of the world. Albrecht and Carnes (2006, p. 154) describe how the voices of their initial teacher trainees “came to life” in their exploratory case study of the impact of critical reflection in microteaching on teacher preparation. They found that their pre-service teachers had begun transforming from students to becoming “more teacher-like” (Albrecht & Carnes, 2006, p.157). Elsewhere in America, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from secondary school trainee teachers across a number of disciplines including English, Art and Math eliciting their perceptions of microteaching by Benton-Kupper (2001). Peer observation was found to be beneficial because the trainees learnt new ideas and approaches from each other; the trainees felt positive about microteaching and even though it was not the “real thing”, they felt it was an effective way to practice teaching strategies and techniques (Benton-Kupper, 2001, p. 835). My trainee teachers are undergraduates, however, in Australia, Mergler and Tangen (2010) report on the positive results of post-graduate education students’ perceptions of teacher efficacy after completing microteaching activities. Also examining post-graduate perceptions of microteaching, Skinner (2012, p. 46) in the UK, adds to research on teacher identity, classroom interaction and teacher development as well as the “relatively under-researched area of the microteaching classroom”.

Further to this dearth in microteaching classroom research, I found no studies that address either coeducation or gender differences in the classroom. Certainly there are

gaps in the microteaching literature especially from a Western perspective. However, in a study investigating trainee-teacher perceptions of the school-based practicum or teaching-practice component of their teacher education programme in Portugal, Caires, Almeida and Vieira (2012) found there were gender differences in the way the school-based experience affected the trainees psychologically and emotionally. For example, in comparison to their male counterparts, the women “reported higher levels of tiredness, stress and weariness” (p. 173). Furthermore, social and emotional intelligence are proposed as “key values” in developing and educating teacher trainees (p. 165). I also address the role of feelings or emotion in my study and while Caires et al. (2012) do not consider microteaching in their study it is one of the few pieces of teacher-education research in which male and female perceptions are compared and contrasted and, as such, it is especially relevant to my second research question.

3.4.4.2 Perceptions of microteaching in non-Western settings

A number of recent studies regarding student-teachers’ perceptions of microteaching have been carried out in non-Western settings including Malaysia (Yahya & Mohd Salleh, 2008), Turkey (Gürbüz, 2006; Seferoğlu, 2006; Şen, 2009) and Egypt (Elghotmy, 2012). I will briefly address each of these studies as they pertain to aspects of my study.

Yahya and Mohd Salleh (2008) offer a Malaysian perspective on prospective TESL-teachers’ perceptions as to the efficacy of microteaching in preparation for their teaching practice experience in schools. The Malaysian study was carried out after the trainee teachers had returned from teaching practice, in contrast to my study, which was carried out before the trainees had had any experience in schools at all. It appears that most studies on perceptions of microteaching are carried out, what I call, “retrospectively”, i.e. after school experience. Similarities with my study, however, include the use of both quantitative and qualitative data (collected through questionnaires and interviews) and the use of both male and female participants.

Another example of a retrospective study is Gürbüz (2006) who gathered data using open-ended questionnaires from school-based experience (practicum) as well as microteaching sessions in Turkey and compared the perceptions of the trainees with those of the school-based mentors and university supervisors. I used semi-structured questionnaire and interview data from the teacher-trainee coeducational microteaching experiences only. However, there are three similarities between the microteaching context of Gürbüz (2006) and mine. First, in both studies, perceptions of microteaching are elicited from pre-service EFL teacher trainees. Second, for the participants in both studies, not only is microteaching their first teaching experience, it is also the only teaching experience they will have before they leave the campus and venture out to school-based practicum. Third, they will practice teaching to their peers rather than to real children in both microteaching contexts.

Seferoğlu (2006) is a second example of a qualitative study undertaken in Turkey. The purpose was to explore teacher-trainee perceptions about the various components of their pre-service English teacher training programme. It was found that the trainees desired more experience “first in artificial [microteaching] and then in a real classroom atmosphere” (Seferoğlu, 2006, p. 372). Even though, as in Gürbüz (2006), microteaching was recognised as not being authentic classroom teaching, the trainees still felt that it had the most impact on them becoming teachers because, despite the fact that the teaching time of the lesson was reduced to a few to minutes only, in the words of one participant, “for the first time we became like teachers. I liked that very much” (Seferoğlu, 2006, p. 374).

In a third qualitative study undertaken in Turkey, where data were collected through semi-structured interviews from both male and female trainees, Sen (2009, p. 165) reports on the effectiveness of “peer microteaching” on final-year secondary science and mathematics students. Sen (2009) distinguishes between classical microteaching, where real children are brought on campus and are taught by trainee teachers, and peer microteaching, where the children are replaced by the trainee-teacher peers who may either act like children, or remain themselves, when they are in the microteaching

class. There are no real children in my microteaching class either: at the start of each microteaching lesson each teacher will indicate if they want their peers to act like children in specific grades, or whether they want them to just simply participate in the lesson as themselves.

In all the research reported thus far, and similar to the situation in Western literature, no one has investigated coeducation or gender in the microteaching class from a non-Western perspective. Although Elghotmy (2012) found mixed-gender groups had an impact on the trainee teachers in the microteaching component of their EFL teacher education programme in Egypt, this result was not explored further in the discussion section of the thesis. Instead, Elghotmy (2012, p. 207) comments on the “sensitive” nature of gender relationships in the Egyptian context and merely reports that the females found mixed-gender groups “uncomfortable”. Similar to the system in Oman, Elghotmy (2012) describes the majority of the trainees as being educated in single-gender schools before arriving at the coeducational university. Unlike the trainees in the Egyptian study though, mine do not work in mixed groups at all in the microteaching lessons. I will now explore three studies carried out in the same geographical context as Oman, namely the Arabian Gulf.

3.4.4.2.1 Perceptions of microteaching in Arabian Gulf settings

The first two studies under discussion – Al-Methan (2003) and Ismail (2011) – were carried out in different countries within the Arabian Gulf, but both investigate participants’ perceptions of microteaching as the central focus of their research. Researching in Kuwait, Al-Methan (2003) discusses the microteaching perceptions of student teachers majoring in science at Kuwait University (KU) and found microteaching positively affected their planning, personality and teaching competencies. There are similarities with my study in the way microteaching sessions are conducted at KU such as planning a 20-minute lesson segment, teaching to peers, feedback, reflection and teach again. There are also differences with my investigation, including the use of video

recordings in the Kuwaiti study, it is a quantitative investigation and it does not mention gender in terms of the sample demographic, but does use the pronouns “his/her” (Al-Methan, 3003, p. 68) to indicate males and females took part in the study.

In the UAE, Ismail (2011) carried out a study about trainee perceptions of microteaching in the English language section of a pre-service teacher training programme. The purpose of the study was to show how microteaching could impact beliefs and attitudes of trainee teachers. Our studies share a number of similarities, including: both collect quantitative and qualitative data; both use two data collection tools (questionnaires and interviews); and both ask a specific question regarding feelings towards microteaching on the questionnaires. However, differences include the interview protocol and gender of participants. For example, my interviews were semi-structured and conducted with female and male trainees, while Ismail (2011) used focus groups with an all-female sample. Although conducted at a single-gender female university, Ismail (2011) lists the fact that no males were included in the sample as one of the limitations of the study. My study, on the other hand, answers the call for further research into coeducation and gender by asking if there are any differences between the male and female perceptions of coeducation within a microteaching context.

A third study, conducted a little before the Ismail (2011) investigation in the UAE, suggests microteaching as an effective approach “to practice the teaching of reading in a foreign language context” (Hyland & O’Brien, 2007, p. 42). Using course evaluations and observational analysis data Hyland and O’Brien (2007, p. 50) report that at first, “students were self conscious” about teaching their classmates, however, “they fully immersed themselves” after it had been explained to them that microteaching was an opportunity to practice and prepare themselves before going out on teaching practice. This is also one of a very few studies that investigates microteaching before trainees embark on teaching practice or school experience. In Oman, my study was also carried out on trainees who experience microteaching first and then, in the following year, they go to schools to practice teaching in real classrooms. However, in this UAE study the

trainee perceptions are elicited from within a reading methodology course not a microteaching context like mine. Also, my study is located in a coeducational tertiary institution, while the state-run higher education system is gender segregated in the UAE, so those trainees teach to same-gender peers, whereas mine teach to both males and females. I will now discuss themes that I have identified as being pertinent to my research in the next section.

3.4.5 Thematic overview of microteaching studies

There are some studies that report on the efficacy of microteaching as used in teacher education programs in general, such as Mergler and Tangen (2010). Some focus on microteaching within specific subjects, such as Sen (2009), investigating perceptions of prospective teachers in a secondary science and mathematics education department, and Al-Methan (2003) looking at perceptions of student teachers majoring in science. Of particular significance to my topic are those studies that have been carried out in language teacher education departments especially, EFL departments, because they are similar in context to mine, such as Gürbüz (2006). Set within these programmes, or individual courses, research into microteaching has also focused on different aspects of the microteaching process (or stages) giving rise to a number of themes that can be identified in the literature including: how microteaching enhances classroom interaction (Chatháin, 1985; Skinner, 2012); the opportunities for reflection during and after the microteaching lesson (l'Anson et al., 2003; Amobi, 2005; Albrecht & Carnes, 2006); the way that microteaching prepares trainees for practicum or school-based teaching practice (Yahya & Mohd Salleh, 2008; Mergler & Tangen, 2010; Elghotmy, 2012); the effectiveness of microteaching in preparing future teachers for real classroom teaching (Al-Methan, 2003; Bell, 2007); and the use of video recordings in the microteaching lesson (Kpanja, 2001). I will now address two more themes that are particularly significant to my study: first, changing roles and identities and, second, the artificial versus authentic classroom.

3.4.5.1 Changing roles and identities

Bell (2007, p. 24) investigates how trainees “simultaneously negotiate the roles of teacher, student, classmate, and peer/friend” by looking at the interactions that take place during the microteaching lesson. This constant changing of roles or identities can be complex, according to Bell (2007), especially when the roles of evaluator and evaluated are considered in the microteaching context. The evaluation of the microteaching lesson could add anxiety and stress to the experience. On a positive note, Skinner (2012) offers a further role or identity by suggesting that throughout teacher education programmes, and therefore through the microteaching experiences that are embedded within those programmes, the trainee teachers are also busy constructing their future identities as professional teachers. On a more negative note, Skinner (2012, p. 47) found that some teacher trainees “felt a bit ‘awkward’, ‘confused’ and ‘uncomfortable’ because they had to ‘pretend’” or take on different roles in the microteaching lesson. However, Bell (2007, p. 39) suggests that by taking on or playing these various roles in the microteaching class, the trainee may feel less anxious, because often stress “derives from the tension of trying to maintain a “real” identity during an activity that is patently not “real”.

3.4.5.2 The artificial versus authentic classroom

The artificial microteaching environment – teaching peers versus the authentic classroom teaching real children – is a recurring theme in much of the microteaching literature (see Gürbüz, 2006; Seferoğlu, 2006 as examples). Benton-Kupper (2001, p. 835) found that microteaching is an effective tool to help prepare trainee teachers for the classroom, despite it not being “real”, and Sen (2009, p. 173) recommends that the microteaching class should be organised in such a way so as to best reflect what the “real” teaching environment will eventually be. This is a very important point for my study and is one of the reasons why I wanted to investigate the topic of coeducation in a microteaching context. I want to understand how the trainees feel, given that the coeducational microteaching class does not mirror the real classroom teaching situation

where the men will teach only males and the women will teach coeducational grades 1 to 4 classes and then female-only classes from grades 5 to 12. In the next section I will address some of the differences between my study and those in the microteaching literature before concluding this chapter.

3.4.6 Differences between the microteaching literature and my study

There are two main differences between the microteaching literature in general and my study in particular. First, my research questions centre on the trainees' perceptions of coeducation and how it affects their participation (in their roles as children) and performance (in their roles as teachers) in the microteaching lesson. However, there are not many qualitative enquiries that address performance and participation in a microteaching context; rather, most studies focus on microteaching efficacy using quantitative data collected from Likert scales such as Ogeyik (2009) and Al-Humaidi and Abu-Rahmah (2015).

Second, as stated in section 3.4.4.1, no one has investigated perceptions of coeducation within a microteaching context before. Therefore, I have had to look at literature and studies that examine the various aspects of my topic separately. Of course in single-gender institutions such as those in the UAE the topic of coeducation would not be raised. However, even in coeducational colleges and universities, apart from sometimes mentioning the number of male and female participants in a study or "problematic" mixed-gender groups (Elghotmy, 2012, p. 207), neither coeducation nor gender differences have been investigated in any depth within a microteaching context, prior to this thesis.

3.5 Conclusion

In describing the socio-cultural context of teaching English in the Arabian Gulf at that time, Syed (2003) bemoans the dearth of research in the region. At present, more than a decade on, the same cannot be said. With organisations such as TESOL Arabia

thriving in the area – hosting international conferences and publishing numerous peer-reviewed articles – as well as a significant numbers of doctoral candidates, like me, from large mainly Western universities (some of which have campuses in the UAE and Qatar, for example) carrying out studies in the region, it can be said that research is very much alive and well in the Gulf. However, as stated in Chapter One, there appears to be a general lack of research about coeducation in the Arabian Gulf in general, and in the Sultanate of Oman in particular, despite scholars such as Profanter (2011, p. 1259) writing about educational reform in the Gulf, stating that “issues around co-education versus gender segregation” seem to be the most pressing concern.

Therefore, it is hoped that my study will contribute to a growing body of research work being carried out, particularly in the Arabian Gulf, and will fill gaps in the literature by introducing a new topic and a new perspective, namely: trainee-teacher perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context in the Sultanate of Oman. The design and methodology of my Omani coeducational microteaching study follows in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will first re-introduce my research questions from Chapter One and then I will explain my research design and methodology under the following headings: theoretical underpinnings; methodology; sampling and participants; methods of data collection; data analysis; ethical considerations, and, finally, limitations of the study.

4.1 Research Questions

In order to achieve my research purpose and aims outlined in Chapter One, I have formulated three main research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of female and male English teacher trainees as regards coeducation in the microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?
2. To what extent do the perceptions of female and male English teacher trainees differ as regards coeducation in the microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?
3. According to their perceptions, how has coeducation affected the microteaching of third-year English teacher trainees in an initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman?

In the ensuing sections of this chapter I will describe each component of the research design and methodology I have adopted in order to best answer these questions.

4.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

In this section I will explain in paradigmatic terms the theoretical position underpinning my research design and methodology. I will begin by first defining the term 'paradigm'

and then I will describe how and why my work appears to be positioned both within the interpretative and the critical paradigm.

4.2.1 Definition of paradigm

The theoretical underpinnings of a study are usually described in terms of the researcher's choice of paradigms (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). These paradigms are the "intellectual" (Richards, 2003, p. 28) and "philosophical" (Crotty, 2003, p. 3) positions that inform the research. Troudi (2011, pp. 211–212) defines a paradigm as a "research approach that informs the researcher's choices of methodology based on one's understanding of the nature of knowledge, epistemology, and the nature of social reality known as ontology". However, according to Richards (2003, p. 41), a researcher doesn't usually begin a study by deciding on a paradigm first, rather the choice "will depend on the sorts of issues raised by our research and perhaps also on our personal disposition". Furthermore, methodological choices will be made, which are also informed by the research questions as well as the purpose for the research (Crotty, 2003). In the following two sections below (4.2.2. and 4.2.3) I will reiterate the purpose of my research and will discuss the nature of knowledge and the nature of reality within the interpretative and critical paradigms informing my study. I will discuss the issues and where I stand personally and professionally within each of these two paradigms. While I am aware that some might call into question a research position that straddles two paradigms, I will show how both support and inform my study in a complementary rather than opposing manner after Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 201) who cautiously agree that it is possible "to blend elements of one paradigm into another" as long as the elements share similarities and are not "contradictory and mutually exclusive".

4.2.2 Interpretive paradigm

The purpose of my study is to understand the teacher-trainee perceptions of the phenomenon of coeducation within a microteaching context. Research that is “primarily concerned” with understanding falls within the interpretative research paradigm (Ernest, 1994, p. 24; Cohen et al., 2000; Richards, 2003). A variety of terms are used in the literature to describe this paradigm, including “constructivism (aka constructionism, interpretivism, or naturism)” (Richards, 2003, p. 36). I will be using the term interpretative throughout when referring to this particular paradigm within which my study is situated. Ontologically speaking, reality is viewed as a human construct, focuses on the relationship between individuals and the environment, is subjective, multiple perspectives are considered, and the local context is emphasised (Wellington, 2000; Ernest, 1994; Richards, 2003; McGee 2002). The epistemological position within the interpretive paradigm argues that knowledge is not objective (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013) and is “created rather than discovered” (Richards, 2003. p. 39). Also, meaning is constructed through interactions with others (Creswell, 2009), which helps to explain how the world is interpreted and understood (Richards, 2003).

I have already outlined the conceptual framework for my study in Chapter Three, namely social constructionism. The issues and assumptions raised within that framework are consistent with those raised within the interpretative paradigm, which “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 2003, p. 67). In the next section I will illustrate how social constructionism is also consistent with the critical paradigm as well as what it means to be critical.

4.2.3 Critical paradigm

As already stated in Chapter One, a significance of my study, through eliciting the trainee perceptions of coeducation is first to problematise the phenomenon of coeducation and, second, to give a voice to the very people that coeducation appears to

be impacting. Therefore, my study also falls within the critical paradigm which seeks to “give participants a voice” (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013, p. 259), thereby empowering the “ignored and silenced” (Sanassian, 2011, p. 66) and bringing about “an agenda for change to improve the lives of the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9).

Reality, within the critical paradigm, focuses on persons in society (Ernst, 1994); exists in changing historical, social and political contexts (McGee, 2002); and is also viewed as “coercive”, because the researcher seeks to bring about change and not only understanding (Richards, 2003, p. 40).

From a critical perspective, knowledge is socially constructed (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013), is subjective and value laden (McGee, 2002) and is not neutral because it serves different interests determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge (Cohen et al., 2000).

According to Creswell (2009, p. 9) critical researchers also address specific issues that “speak to important social issues of the day”. I believe that coeducation is one such specific issue in my specific context and, by calling into question the suitability of this particular way of organising the microteaching classroom through interrogating the phenomenon of coeducation as experienced by the participants in my study, I believe I am being critical. I will examine what this critical stance means in more detail in the next section.

4.2.3.1 What it means to be critical

Pennycook (1999; 2001; 2004a; 2004b) outlines a number of approaches to what it means to be critical. First, there is the notion of ‘critical’ as used in critical thinking, for example. Pennycook (2004b, p. 329) refers to this type of criticality as “liberal ostrichism”. This suggests a view of being critical which ‘buries its head in the sand’ of objectivism and does not link its questioning to broader social agendas. A second attempt at being critical, “liberal pluralism”, has to do with correlating language to social

context, or making things socially relevant, but where more emphasis on social critique is needed (Pennycook, 2004a, p. 20; 2004b, p. 329).

A third approach to being critical is described as “emancipatory modernism” (Pennycook, 2004b, p. 329). It is clear in its social critique and agenda for change, but its assumptions about social and political relations are regarded as static. This is the view of criticality that has become dominant in TESOL and applied linguistics in recent times in areas such as critical-discourse analysis, critical pedagogy, critical literacy and critical views on language policy. Not only are questions of power, inequality, rights and injustice asked, but concepts, including emancipation, awareness, democracy and transformation are also critiqued. However, with critiquing, it can in fact reproduce at the same time (Pennycook, 2004b). This dilemma has given rise to the “postmodern”, “postcolonial” concern calling for a problematising practice that involves “always turning a skeptical eye towards assumptions, ideas that have become ‘naturalized’, notions that are no longer questioned” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 7; 2004b, p. 329). In this fourth approach, work in fields such as feminism, antiracism, postcolonialism, postmodernism and queer theory has been drawn on in the search for constant questioning (Pennycook, 2001). Moreover, a problematising position that results in constant questioning leads inevitably to questions being raised about one’s self. This results in a very necessary part of criticality: a self-reflexive stance (Pennycook, 1999; 2001; 2004a). It is with this fourth approach that the social-constructionist notions of problematising and reflexivity (as outlined in Chapter Three) are particularly aligned.

However, Pennycook (2001, p. 8) notes that critical work “has often been criticized for doing little more than criticize things”. Thus a notion of “preferred futures” is offered as an argument against such criticism (Pennycook, 2001, pp. 8–9). Pluralisation is suggested as a strategy, a way of thinking and a way of moving forward, for example: knowledge gives way to knowledges. However, there is the caution that such preferred futures need to be grounded in ethical arguments. Pennycook (2001 p. 9) thus suggests not only a language of critique, but also “an ethics of compassion and a model of hope and possibility”.

As a result of this critical direction new topics are being explored in TESOL literature such as “learner identity, teacher beliefs, teaching values and local knowledge” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 71). Researchers are exploring, for example, how identities like “gender, race, ethnicity, or one’s immigrant and “nonnative” status impact language learning” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 17). It is my hope that, in its own small way, this thesis, with the focus on coeducation in a microteaching context, will come to be regarded as a new topic in the TESOL literature.

However, being critical refers not only to the way of depicting concepts of power and inequality and relating them to issues of gender, class, race and religion; it also means broadening the scope of previous domains by focusing on areas that include sexuality, ethnicity, and the representations of Otherness. Being critical also addresses how issues in TESOL, such as methodology, syllabus design, materials selection and student assessment, link to broader social and political relations (Pennycook, 1999; 2001; Troudi, 2005).

Although criticality addresses big issues and big things, it is “more about a way of thinking and being than about a series of issues” (Pennycook, 2001 p. 163). It involves an attitude, a way of thinking and a way of teaching (Pennycook, 1999, p. 340). A further approach is therefore addressed: “critical as in a critical moment, a point of significance, an instant when things change” (Pennycook, 2004b, p. 330).

My study is informed not only by the critical and interpretative paradigm, but also by my own position of being critical. Interpretative research seeks to understand, while critical research seeks to bring about change (Crotty, 2003; Richards, 2003; Troudi, 2015). However, by occupying a position in both paradigms I believe I can achieve the purpose and significance of my research study, namely to understand the trainee perceptions of coeducation, and hopefully to bring about a change in the participants themselves by empowering them through the voices of their perceptions being heard, by bringing about a change within myself, and maybe other TESOL teachers, in understanding why the participants participate and perform in the way that they do. Lastly, as regards the powers that be that decide on and implement policies like coeducation, maybe a change

could be brought about in the way they organise microteaching classes in this particular context in the future.

According to Crotty (2003 p. 7) our theoretical perspective should also include an explanation of how we view “the human world and the social life within that world”. I have chosen these particular interpretive and critical lenses as they best describe how I see and make sense of the world: they best match with my view of knowledge (epistemology), being ontology, as well as the way I have approached my study in terms of purpose, significance and research questions. In the next section I will illustrate how these two paradigms have informed the methodical choices and approaches I have made.

4.3 Methodology

According to Crotty (2003, p. 1), “fledgling researchers - and, yes, even more seasoned campaigners - often express bewilderment at the array of methodologies and methods laid out before their gaze”. It seems that the terminology used within research literature itself exacerbates this confusion (Crotty, 2003; Holliday, 2002; McGee, 2002; Richards, 2003). Therefore, a clarification of terms is necessary to avoid uncertainty (Richards, 2003).

4.3.1 Clarifying terminology

I will draw on Ernest (1994, p. 21) who distinguishes between methods and methodologies by defining a methodology as “a theory of which methods and techniques are appropriate and valid to use to generate and justify knowledge, given the epistemology”. Troudi (2015, p. 92) further distinguishes between methods, which are “techniques of data collection and can be either quantitative or qualitative”, and methodology, which is the “overall strategy and design” guiding the study.

Methodologies and the subsequent methods researchers choose, as part of their research designs, will also be informed by the paradigms they subscribe to (Crotty, 2003). For example, ethnography and case studies are methodologies associated with the interpretive paradigm (Troudi, 2010), while action research and critical-discourse

analysis are associated with the critical paradigm (Troudi, 2015). However, this does not necessarily mean that researchers working within specific paradigms may only call upon those methodologies usually aligned with those paradigms, nor does it “necessitate the researcher selecting a single paradigm only” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 135). Instead, methodologies are chosen for a number of reasons including the researcher’s philosophy, the rationale for the study, the specific context of the study and “the question being investigated” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 23).

4.3.2 Case-study methodology

I have chosen the case-study methodology to investigate the teacher-trainee perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context because it is the most appropriate methodology “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). My third research question asks **how** coeducation has affected the microteaching of the trainee teachers; I exercise little control in eliciting the trainee perceptions and the focus of my study is on the phenomenon of coeducation in the real-life context of the microteaching classroom. In the next section I will consider case-study methodology in more detail and I will also show why it is a suitable choice for my study. While I am aware that case study is also sometimes considered to be a method within the literature on research (see Crotty, 2003, p. 5, as an example) I, too, after Troudi (2010), Creswell (2009), and Ernest (1994) consider it as a methodology.

“Qualitative case studies” (Ernest, 1994, p. 29) are a methodology within the interpretive paradigm where qualitative data are viewed as the “essence of interpretive research” (Radnor, 2002, p. 29) so much so that not only is case-study research “strongly associated” with qualitative research (Lewis, 2003, p. 51), it is also referred to as qualitative research within the interpretive paradigm (Troudi, 2015). Meanwhile, critical research, as has been discussed previously, differs from qualitative interpretive research in its purpose, however both approaches may use “the same qualitative research instruments” (Troudi, 2015, p. 90) or methods for collecting data. In this way

these two different paradigms complement each other at the level of similar methods. I will discuss the data-collection methods used for my study a little later, but first I will explore case-study research in more detail and demonstrate its applicability to this thesis.

4.3.2.1 Reasons for choosing case-study methodology

A case-study approach is usually selected when researchers “believe contextual features are highly relevant to their research questions” (McKay, 2009, p. 286). In my study, the impact of the social and cultural context of Oman is considered highly relevant in answering my research questions. I discussed at length in the previous two chapters not only the context and setting for my study, but also the culture of classroom context and the roles that big and small culture play within and beyond the walls of the coeducational microteaching classroom. Case studies are also used when the researcher wishes “to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2003, p. 2) or to study “a phenomenon (the “case”) in its real-world context” (Yin, 2011, p. 17). The rationale and purpose of this study, clearly stated in Chapter One and reiterated throughout my study thus far, is to understand the impact of coeducation on the trainees in their particular microteaching context. Thus, case study is a suitable methodology for this thesis as it “deals especially with people and their social world” (Sanassian, 2011, p. 69). In dealing with people, the case study may “focus upon particular individual actors or groups of actors and their perceptions” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 317). I elicit and focus on the perceptions of the teacher trainees as regards coeducation in my study. While case studies are mainly concerned about people, it is also possible for institutions or communities to be considered (Dörnyei, 2007) and, like other methodologies within the interpretive paradigm, the research is often carried out in natural settings including classrooms (as in mine), homes or playgrounds (Wellington, 2000). Case-study research then may begin with an in-depth description of the setting or people, after which data are analysed “for themes or issues” (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). Furthermore, a case study is also suitable for providing a detailed description of “a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155), especially where that issue remains “unresolved” (Kirk, 1998, p. 49). I detail and

describe the complex, even controversial, issue of coeducation within the Omani context in my case study.

4.3.2.2 Exploratory case study

Yin (2003) distinguishes between three types of case study: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. According to Creswell (2009, p. 177), case studies can be used to “explore processes, activities, and events”. In addition, when “very little is known about a phenomenon”, then the exploratory nature of qualitative case-study research would be a suitable way to investigate the topic further (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 39). Exploratory research may be preoccupied with “why” a particular phenomenon occurs (Ritchie, 2003, p. 28). Therefore, researchers investigating how- and why-type research questions use exploratory approaches such as case study to answer them (Wellington, 2000). For these reasons, my study can be considered as exploratory. However, Gerring (2004, p. 350) urges caution when adopting case-study research, which is exploratory in nature, suggesting that, despite its strengths, it can be considered “undertheorized, by methodologists”.

4.3.2.3 Intrinsic and instrumental case study

Concerns have been raised in research literature about case study as a research approach. Dörnyei (2007), for example, contends that case studies may be vulnerable to criticism, so suggests compensating case-study research by adding another approach. One of the weaknesses that has been discussed is the generalisability or applicability of case studies to other research contexts (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Wellington, 2000). However, Yin (2011) argues that the uniqueness of case studies is a particular strength of this approach and suggests, if generalisability is a concern, researchers could choose between intrinsic case studies – where there is no desire to apply findings to other similar cases – and instrumental case studies – where, despite the uniqueness of the situation, the intention is to see if they can be applied to other similar situations. I have found that the choice between either an intrinsic or an instrumental approach is not so clearly cut. For example, in terms of Stake (2005, p. 445), there are elements of intrinsic case study with my focus on a “better

understanding of this particular case” of trainee-teacher perceptions. However, there are also elements of instrumental case study with my wish to “provide insight” into the “issue” of coeducation and its impact and there is also the possibility that my findings could be considered “a generalization” should they be applicable to other coeducational classes in a similar context to Oman (Stake, 2005, p. 445).

Certainly, there is doubt about the way case study is defined (Stake, 2005), for example as a method or a methodology (Gerring, 2007), and Creswell (2012, p. 617) even describes it as a “variation of an ethnography”. The term ‘case study’ can also be used in a number of different ways, “but the primary defining features of a case study are that it draws in **multiple perspectives** (whether through single or multiple data collection methods) and is **rooted in a specific context** which is seen as critical to understanding the researched phenomena” (Lewis, 2003, p. 76). In the next section I present the specific context, by introducing the participants in my study, followed by a discussion of the data-collection methods, namely a questionnaire and interview in section 4.5.

4.4 Participants and Sampling

In Chapter Two the setting and population for the study were introduced. In this section I will describe the participants in the sample. Twenty-five male and eighty-five female Omani teacher trainees participated in the study. They were all in the third year of their four-year degree programme studying to become teachers of English as a foreign language. They had already completed a foundation year so, in real time, they had been at the college for a total of four years at the time of conducting the study.

The teacher trainees were divided into six classes or groups for the duration of their teacher training programme. Each class consisted of roughly one-third male and two-thirds female trainees. At the time of gathering the data I had just completed teaching the Practicum 2 course containing the microteaching component (which forms the context under investigation in this study) to one of the classes. The other five groups were taught by male teachers. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the sample size according to gender, marital status and age of the participants. The reason why marital status has been foregrounded will be explained in Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.6.

Participants	Male N=25	Female N=85
Married	1	5
Unmarried	24	78
Marital Status Unspecified	0	2
20 Years Old	1	1
21 Years Old	10	63
22 Years Old	13	18
23 Years Old	0	1
Age Unspecified	1	2

Figure 2 Sample size according to gender, marital status and age

4.4.1 Sample sizes

Generally speaking, samples in qualitative research are usually smaller in size because of the focus on the richness and detail of the data (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Therefore, a sample of 110 could be considered larger than one would expect, but I decided on this size for two main reasons: first, I wanted to give a voice to as many of the trainees as possible thereby gaining multiple “diverse” perceptions from a larger number of participants (Ritchie, et al., 2003, p. 83); second, I drew on quantitative data from the questionnaires to identify differences between the male and female perceptions in order to answer my second research question. I felt a larger sample would be more representative of the college population in this regard (Cohen et al., 2000). However, a smaller sample size of eight (four males and four females) was chosen for the interviews. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the participants according to their groups, as well as gender and data-collection tools.

Data Tool / Group	Male Questionnaire N=25	Female Questionnaire N=85	Male Interview N=4	Female interview N=4
1	3	14	1	2
2	0	13	0	0
3	7	17	2	1
4	2	11	1	0
5	5	11	0	1
6	8	19	0	0

Figure 3 Sample size according to group, gender and data tool

4.4.2 Sampling strategies

The quality of a research study can be judged not only by the extent to which the methodology and methods are deemed appropriate, but also by the “suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 92).

4.4.2.1 Purposive sampling

Two sampling procedures were implemented. First, ‘purposive’ was implemented because this type of sampling is used extensively in interpretive research to obtain “thorough information” about or from the participants (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013, p. 259). It is also commonly used in case studies where participants are chosen for a specific purpose (i.e. I wanted to elicit perceptions about coeducation) and for specific criteria, namely the participants were all trainee teachers in a coeducational microteaching setting (Cohen et al., 2000; Dörnyei, 2003; 2007; Richards, 2003; Wellington, 2000). Furthermore, purposive sampling is a strategy also used in the critical research paradigm to “understand the target groups, their problems and expected changes to happen” (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013, p. 261). Thus, the interpretive and critical paradigms

can once again be seen to complement each other, this time in the use and importance of similar sampling procedures.

4.4.2.2 Convenience sampling

The second sampling procedure I implemented is called 'convenience' because the participants were all easily accessible, known to me, near to me and I had taught them all at one time or another during their four years at the college (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000; Wellington, 2000). While some of the literature on sampling, such as Wellington (2000), describes convenience sampling as one of several types of purposive sampling, I will draw a distinction between these two sampling procedures after Cohen et al. (2000, p. 102) who list them separately as examples of non-probability samples. Typically, case-study research may adopt non-random samples because the purpose is usually not to generalise to a larger population, but rather to focus on that specific group of people. Certainly convenience sampling was chosen because of "the advantages it offers" for me as the researcher (Richards, 2003, p. 250) listed above. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, was adopted even though it "decreases the generalizability of findings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 148). It is not the purpose of my study to make any generalisations, but rather it is to understand the perceptions of the twenty-five male and eighty-five female trainees in their coeducational microteaching context. In the next section I will detail how I designed and utilised the questionnaires and interviews to elicit those perceptions.

4.5 Methods of Data Collection

While case studies are mostly qualitative in nature (Sanassian, 2011), they can draw on both qualitative and quantitative data (Yin, 2003). Quantitative data could be collected, for example, from questionnaires (Dörnyei, 2007). I elicited some quantitative data using my questionnaire in order to identify more easily any differences between the male and female perceptions of coeducation. Furthermore, while certain data-collection methods are preferred, such as interviews and observations (Dörnyei, 2007), it is not always necessary for researchers to rely solely on "direct, detailed observations" in case-study research (Yin, 2003, p. 15). I did not use observations in my research, instead, following

a number of previous studies eliciting perceptions including Elghotmy (2012), Ismail (2011) and Khuwaileh (2002) I used a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) as well as an interview (see Appendix 3). The reasons for using these two instruments will be explained in the ensuing sections below, but first I wish to remind the reader that my study, including my data-collection tools, are informed by social constructionism and Barkhuizen's (1998) notion of perceptions as discussed in Chapter Three. Therefore, from a social-constructionist perspective, perceptions in the form of feelings, judgements and predictions, are socially constructed, are historically situated, change over time, and are derived through social processes. The three questions below are examples of items on the two data-collection tools specifically informed by Barkhuizen (1998) and Gergen (1985):

“How do coeducational microteaching classes make you **feel**?”

(Interview Item 2)

This question above is eliciting a response in which the interviewee will express a feeling-type perception as proposed by Barkhuizen (1998) while questionnaire Item 19 below is eliciting a prediction-type perception.

“Do you think there will be coeducational schools from grade 1-12 in Oman in the **future**?” (Questionnaire Item 19).

Question 23 below is an example of an item on the questionnaire that has been informed by a social-constructionist conceptualisation of perceptions, namely that they can change over time:

“Has your view on coeducation **changed since you first arrived** at this College nearly 4 years ago?” (Questionnaire Item 23).

4.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are listed by Wellington (2000, p. 95) as one of a group of methods that are “commonly” used to gather case-study data. This is a study about perceptions, so an interview as a data-collection method would be expected because researchers can ask more easily about things which “we cannot observe” (Wellington, 2000, p. 71); but

my main data tool was the questionnaire. The reasons why a questionnaire was chosen are firstly, it is one of the most “efficient” ways in which anonymous trainee feedback can be obtained (Brown, 1995, p. 200). Secondly, I designed a specific questionnaire for the microteaching classes because I believe that it is “more relevant to the context in question” (Davies, 2006, p. 4). Thirdly, given the controversial nature of the topic of coeducation, I thought the participants might feel more inclined to say what they really felt through responses written anonymously on a piece of paper, rather than answer my interview questions face-to-face.

4.5.1.1 Semi-structured questionnaires

Dörnyei (2003, p. 52) suggests when designing a questionnaire, especially for novice researchers such as myself, that it might be helpful to use questions from “established questionnaires” as a way of ensuring that questions are well written, have been piloted and will be better understood. While I did not use anyone else’s questions verbatim, two of the items on my questionnaire were informed by the last two non-numbered questions on the Gunn (2007, p. 79) survey as follows:

“Has your attitude toward working with the opposite gender (either positively or negatively) changed since being at AUS. If so please explain how”

I have indicated the words that I borrowed from Gunn’s (2007) second-last question and used on my questionnaire below in bold italics:

“Has your view on coeducation ***changed since*** you first arrived at this College nearly 4 years ago?” (Item 23)

The final item on the Gunn (2007, p. 79) survey reads as follow:

“Do you have any other comments on group work, or attitudes toward the opposite gender, that you would like to make?”

My final questionnaire item borrowed these three words, once again indicated in bold italics:

“Please feel free to write **any other comments** or ideas that you may have about coeducation and microteaching below or on the back of this questionnaire.” (Item 25)

In addition to the borrowed words, the semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 2), which “sets the agenda but does not presuppose the nature of the response” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 248), was arrived at after the pilot of a more open-ended type of instrument that proved to be too unwieldy given my sample size. The final design elicits mainly qualitative data and also the necessary quantitative data; accommodates the three different types of perception (feelings, judgements and predictions); and gives the trainees power to express their voices through their perceptions about coeducation, thereby taking “ownership” of the data, which is an important qualitative as well as critical consideration (Stake, 2010, p. 201).

I divided the 25 items on the questionnaire into five sections: Section A (items 1–7) gathered background information including general information about the trainees as well as their opinions and those of their family about coeducation. Section B (items 8–9) wanted to find out if there were instances of a chilly-classroom climate (Hall & Sandler, 1982). The next three sections pertain to the specific roles or identities that the trainees take on in the microteaching class. Section C (items 10–14) asks about their role as the teacher in the microteaching class. Section D (items 15–18) questions the participants in their role as the “child”; and in Section E (items 19–25) the participants are asked for their opinions in their role as students at the college.

A total of 161 questionnaires were distributed. That was the total number of trainee teachers in the third year of their degree programme. I gave the questionnaires to the course presenters of the other five groups and mine were given to the class representatives to distribute. It was reported to me that most of the participants completed the questionnaires at the end of their class time, so the fact that they were “captive groups” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 76) could account for the relatively high return rate of around 70%. A total of 113 questionnaires were returned, of which three had to be discarded because they had not indicated if they were male or female participants. The

gender indication was vital in answering my second research question, which is to contrast the perceptions of the male and female respondents.

Figure 4 (below) is a breakdown of the microteaching groups who received questionnaires indicating group size and the gender of the course teacher or, as the teaching staff are usually called by the students, “doctor”. The number of questionnaire responses are tabled per group and per gender of the respondents. The total number of questionnaires distributed (as well as discards) and actual totals of those who responded are also indicated.

Total Number per Group & Teacher gender	Male Respondents	Female respondents	Discards due to incomplete info/ gender not specified	Actual Total Respondents
1: 28 Female teacher (Me)	3	14	0	17
2: 27 Male teacher	0	13	0	13
3: 27 Male teacher	7	17	0	24
4: 27 Male teacher	2	11	2	13
5: 24 Male teacher	5	11	1	16
6: 28 Male teacher	8	19	0	27
Totals 161	25	85	3 (discards)	110

Figure 4 Questionnaire distribution, course teachers, responses and discards per group and gender

4.5.2 Triangulation

Triangulation, as defined by Cohen et al. (2000, p. 112), is the use of two or more methods of data collection which they describe as “a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research”. I asked similar questions on both the questionnaire and the interview instruments and both yielded similar kinds of information, therefore the data gathered from the questionnaires did “correlate highly” with data from the interview (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 112). The interview framework did not arise out of the questionnaire, for example, rather, the interviews were used to check the trustworthiness of the questionnaire data (in terms of triangulation) and also to see if the trainees would add anything more or different to what they had written on the questionnaires. Thus, data were collected more or less simultaneously and I decided to use two instruments so that I could add depth to the data and make my study more robust. While I am aware that “methodological triangulation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 113) usually prefers the use of three different methods to gather data, I could only use two. It was not possible to carry out a video-recorded observation, as I had originally intended, because no one indicated their willingness to be filmed on their letters of consent (see Appendix 4), which the teacher trainees signed before taking part in the study. However, as Chapter Five will show, the consequence of using these two methods (questionnaire and interview) of data collection for triangulation was more-than sufficient rich data to work from and with.

4.5.3 Interviews

Although “qualitative interviews are essentially aimed at encouraging participants to talk about their personal views and experiences” (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p. 160), they do not merely gather information, they also serve to “deepen understanding” (Richards, 2003, p. 64). This focus on understanding fits in well with the overall purpose of my study. In addition, interviews are not only a “common method” of gathering data in

case studies (Richards, 2003, p. 20) they are also considered a highly “important” part of case-study research (Wellington, 2000, p. 94).

While my two data-collection methods were used simultaneously, I first designed the questionnaire and it was administered to some groups before the interviews and to some afterwards. The interviews were used to check the questionnaire data and to see if any different or new ideas could be elicited from the participants through the ensuing conversation.

4.5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

It might seem unusual that I did not make the interviews my primary research method, but, as I stated previously due to the controversial nature of the topic of coeducation as described in Chapter Two, the participants would probably feel more comfortable filling in an anonymous questionnaire rather than revealing information to me in a recorded interview. For this same reason, I felt it also best to conduct individual interviews rather than use focus groups or group interviews. Lewis (2003, p. 58) suggests individual interviews as a more appropriate method to deal with “sensitive subjects”. Therefore, I felt that the informants would feel more comfortable to discuss their perceptions of coeducation privately, without feeling influenced or even pressurised by what their classmates would think of their answers and opinions, irrespective of whether their opinions were in favour of, or against, coeducation.

I adopted a more structured approach to my ten interview questions (see Appendix 3) because I wanted “to explore particular lines of enquiry” regarding coeducation and I wanted to hear how the different participants perceived of the same aspects of coeducation (Richards, 2003, p. 64). Therefore, I needed to ask the same questions to the different participants and so I chose to elicit data using a semi-structured interview “schedule” (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 142) or “protocol” (Creswell, 2012, p. 225) that consisted of a “set of predetermined questions in a set order” (Wellington, 2000, p. 95). The participants, however, were free to answer the questions as they wished. Arthur and Nazroo (2003, p. 111) suggest that terms describing types of interviews “are not

necessarily used consistently”: for example, what I refer to as semi-structured, where “the interviewer asks key questions in the same way each time”, Cohen et al. (2000, p. 271) use the term, “standardized open-ended interviews” to refer to this type of interview. For sake of clarity I will keep to the term ‘semi-structured interviews’ throughout this thesis.

I conducted individual, tape-recorded, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with four male and four female teacher trainees. They had indicated on their letters of consent (see Appendix 4) that they were willing to be interviewed. Figure 5 is a breakdown of the interviewees per group, gender, age and also whether they had completed the questionnaire prior to their interview or not.

Group	Male (Age)	Completed Questionnaire	Female (Age)	Completed Questionnaire
1	1 (22)	Yes	1 (21) 1 (21)	No No
2	0	0	0	0
3	1 (21) 1 (22)	No No	1 (21)	No
4	1 (22)	Yes	0	0
5	0	0	1 (21)	Yes
6	0	0	0	0

Figure 5 Interviewee information according to group, gender, age and completion of questionnaire prior to interview, or not

All of the interviewees were single and roughly the same age. Marital status is a significant characteristic of the trainees, as I will explain in Chapter Five, and that is why I asked this question on both the questionnaire and interview schedules. I will now

describe how the data from the interviews and questionnaires was analysed in the next section.

4.6 Data Analysis

In this section I will address how I prepared and organised my data for analysis, how I coded the data, how the codes were organised into themes, how the findings were reported, how I interpreted the findings, and how I validated their accuracy. These are the “six steps commonly used in analyzing qualitative data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 237) that informed my study. Steps four and five (the reporting and interpretation of the findings) will be presented in Chapter Five.

4.6.1 Analysis of quantitative data

While my data tools were designed to yield mainly qualitative data, I also gathered quantitative data from the questionnaires as mentioned in section 4.5. Therefore, a quantitative approach was used to contrast the male and female participants to look for any differences in their perceptions. This was achieved by adding up the Yes and No responses to the questionnaire items. See Figure 6 (below) as an example of some of the quantifiable items where participants circled either Yes or No before providing a reason.

<p>19. Do you think there will be coeducational schools from grade 1-12 in Oman in the future?</p> <p>Yes / No <u>because</u> _____</p> <p>20. Do you like being at a coeducational college? Yes/No <u>because</u> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>21. Have you learned anything about the opposite gender during the microteaching sessions? Yes/No</p> <p> _____</p>

Figure 6 Yes / No questionnaire items as example of quantitative data

Appendix 5 is an example of how I carried out my quantitative analysis per group. A tick or a zero was placed in the appropriate column in the table according to how participants had responded to the questionnaire items. Then the number of ticks were added up and the totals were written down. On completion of the six groups, all the totals were then added together to show the number of Yes, No and zero responses for each gender. The final totals were left as numbers and then converted to simple percentages for ease of comparison. I found this to be the most convenient way of comparing the two sets of data to look for any clear noticeable differences. No formal statistical analysis was carried out because I was not trying “to test a hypothesis” and my main focus was on the qualitative data (Foster, 1998, p. 8). I will present the quantitative findings in Figure 7 and 8 in Chapter Five to show the extent to which there are any differences between the perceptions of male and female trainees, thereby answering research question two. Research question one (about the trainee perceptions of coeducation) and research question three (about the perceived effect of coeducation on microteaching) will be answered through the analysis of the qualitative data.

4.6.2. Manual analysis of data

Weitzman (2000) suggests four areas of concern that might influence a researcher to choose a manual analysis over a computer software package: a desire to be close to the data; a concern that a software package might influence the study in terms of theoretical conceptualisation or methodology; the view that new researchers should first gain experience in manual methods of analysis; and, lastly, the perspective that it is the researcher and not a software package that ensures the rigor or thoroughness of the study. I chose to “hand analyze” (Creswell, 2012, p. 240) my data for the reasons outlined above and because my data are drawn from a comparatively small number of interviews and questionnaires. Also, I am a bit technophobic and don’t feel that confident using unfamiliar software packages and I thought it would save time carrying out an analysis manually, rather than first learning how to use one of these computer packages. Lastly, I felt that working with the data by hand through the process of writing

on paper would give me a feeling of “more control over and ownership of the work (Saldaña, 2013, p. 26)

4.6.3 Analysis of qualitative data

According to Creswell (2012, p. 238), as there are many ways to analyse qualitative data, it can be described as an “eclectic process”. However, many scholars agree that an important first step is to organise and prepare the data for analysis (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007; Yin, 2011).

4.6.3.1 Preparation of data

Once the quantitative data had been identified and isolated on the questionnaires, the qualitative data were left and all that was required in preparation was to read through the responses many times in order to familiarise myself with the content and to develop a more in-depth understanding of the information written by the teacher trainees (Creswell, 2012). In order to prepare the interview data, firstly the recordings had to be transcribed (Richards, 2003). I listened to each interview and wrote down what I heard. On playback I discovered one of the female interviews had not recorded properly so was almost inaudible. However, I decided not to discard the interview as I had also taken detailed notes during each interview as a backup in case of such a technical malfunction with the recording equipment (see Appendix 6 and 7 as examples of note-taking). I felt the data I had collected was sufficient and also too valuable not to be included in the analysis. Seven transcriptions were thus prepared in total from the seven audible interviews recordings (see Appendix 8 and 9 as examples of the interview transcriptions).

4.6.3.2 Coding the data

A code can be described, in the present study, as a word or phrase that “symbolically assigns” a particular attribute to a piece of data from the interview transcripts and written questionnaire responses (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). This process of assigning codes

is called coding and while it is just “one way” of analysing qualitative data (Saldaña, 2013, p. 2), it is the way the data were analysed in my study. Coding involves the organisation of the data into text segments that can then be narrowed down and given labels or codes, which in turn are reduced into a few “themes” through combining similar codes or categories together to form a main idea (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). The purpose of arriving at these themes is to answer the research questions. Once the themes have been established, they can then be further organised, for example, chronologically, or sequentially into some kind of concept or model that hopefully can lead to new information being generated about the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2012).

4.6.3.3 Grounded-theory analysis

I chose to follow the grounded-theory analysis approach to coding after Punch (2009). Grounded theory refers not only to a particular research approach but also to “a set of procedures” for data analysis (Punch, 2009, p. 182). I utilised this specific procedure to analyse my questionnaire and interview data simultaneously as I found it to be the most suitable strategy considering the type of data my study comprises, namely perceptions or “perspectives held by participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 244). I feel this process best represents the voices of the participants and the results are derived exclusively from the data, which are comprised of the trainee responses to the open-ended questions on the data-collection instruments. Through the processes involved in the assigning of open, axial and selective coding (Punch, 2009), a number of themes will emerge, which in turn will be presented in Chapter Five in answer to my first and third research questions.

4.6.3.3.1 Open coding

The first stage in grounded-theory analysis is called ‘open coding’ where labels are placed on segments of data. I chose “in vivo codes” as they are the exact words of the participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 244). Appendix 10 is an example of how I coded the first page of one of the interviews. I drew blocks around pieces of text (the in vivo codes) and later on started to write down words that could describe those open codes.

4.6.3.3.2 Axial coding

The second stage involves the connecting or finding of relationships between the descriptions, ideas or categories that have emerged through the open coding stage. These connectors are sometimes called “theoretical codes” in the research literature (Punch, 2009, p. 186). Examples of relationships can include cause-and-effect or stimulus-and-response (Punch, 2009). Appendix 11 is an example of how the connections between the codes were found from the interview data. The in vivo codes from each of the interviewees were written on a single page. Then, using different colours, relationships were found and highlighted, for example, positive and negative feelings were highlighted in pink, while before and after experiences, or changes, were highlighted in yellow.

4.6.3.3.3 Selective coding

The last stage in the coding process involves the choice or selection of key or central aspects of the data from within the axial codes, which will give rise to selective codes, theory or themes. Thus movement from analysis to interpretation occurs through the search for themes where the aim, according to Punch (2009, p. 188), “is to construct abstract theory about the data, which is grounded in the data”. Appendix 12 is a short example of the coding process carried out on questionnaire and interview data from open (in vivo codes) to axial (theoretical codes) through to selective coding and the emergence of a theme. The results will be fully presented and also discussed in Chapter Five, but first the final step, the validation of findings, in Creswell’s (2012) data-analysis approach will be addressed in the section below as part of the ethical considerations of my research study.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

In addressing the ethical considerations of undertaking this study, I first completed the University of Exeter ethical research approval certificate (see Appendix 13). Second, the director general of colleges, the college administration and staff as well as the MOE and MOHE were also informed about my research. Third, I informed verbally, and provided

a letter of consent to, all the participants as well as to my head of department at the time of my study (see Appendix 4).

4.7.1 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the process whereby the researcher provides the participants with enough information about the study, explains issues of confidentiality, and also how the data will be used, so they are then in a position to give their permission (or not) as to whether they will take part in the study (Dörnyei, 2003). My participants were also told that their names would not be used; instead I employed pseudonyms in the reporting of the data and findings from the interviews as follows: Sheikha, Farida, Ameera and Saida for the females and Ibrahim, Khalifa, Ahmed and Arif for the males. I identified the questionnaire respondents using letters and numbers, the rationale and explanation for which I have outlined in Appendix 14. In addition, the participants were informed and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The topic of coeducation proved to be controversial already in the preparation and pilot work I had carried out for my study, so I decided to ask the trainees to indicate which specific data-collection methods they agreed to participate in and also to sign the letters of consent despite Dörnyei's (2003, p. 92) warning that "a request for a consent in too formalized a manner can raise undue suspicions". I wanted the participants to feel secure in the knowledge that their perceptions would remain anonymous, so I felt it was necessary to formalise the arrangements for my study and also to have a written record of approval should there be any queries or complaints later on. All the trainees signed their agreement to take part in the study, however no one consented to a video-recorded observation. I therefore deleted this data-collection method and only used questionnaires and interviews as the tools for eliciting perceptions about coeducation in a microteaching context, thereby enabling the voices of my participants to be heard while still maintaining their anonymity.

In terms of further ethical considerations, I needed to take into account the cultural and religious context in which the study was conducted and to be aware of the sensitivity of the participants as regards aspects of my investigation into coeducation. Also, aware of my position in the study as “the teacher as researcher” (Wellington, 2000, p. 20), I did not administer the questionnaires to the microteaching class that I was teaching at the time. Instead the male and female student representatives from the class took over and I left the room. I took this precautionary step to ensure the quality of the data was not compromised by my presence in the classroom and also to enable the participants to feel that they could write freely and anonymously without me looking over their shoulders so to speak. All the questionnaire and interview data, as well as recordings, were then kept in sealed envelopes and securely stored in a locked cupboard in my home after the data analysis was completed. I am confident therefore that I have carried out my study in keeping with the guidelines of conducting ethical research as required by the University of Exeter.

4.7.2. Credibility and trustworthiness

Credibility and trustworthiness are used to measure or judge the quality or standard of a study in qualitative research. For example, “validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 105). This final step in Creswell’s (2012) approach to analysing qualitative data is to then validate the data in terms of credibility and accuracy. Credibility refers to the “adequacy” of the data (Richards, 2003, p. 286) and in order to check the accuracy and credibility of the results and interpretations, the researcher can choose from a number of ways to ensure the data is trustworthy – such as member checking, or triangulation. I have already referred to my use of triangulation in section 4.5.2. By examining the data in both the interviews and questionnaires I could check if the data was accurate. I did not, however, use member checking, whereby I show the participants the findings, for example, and elicit their views as to the “accuracy of the data gathered, descriptions, or even interpretations” (Richards, 2003, p. 287). I will discuss this point again under the section regarding limitations of my study. I could also have used an external audit whereby another researcher could check my study and look for weaknesses (Creswell,

2009). To a certain extent, though, it could be argued that my thesis supervisors carry out this type of role. Despite using only triangulation as my main strategy to validate the data, I believe that my position as a teacher–researcher – over an extended period of time with my coeducational microteaching trainees – has further added to the credibility and trustworthiness of my study, because, according to Creswell (2009, p. 192), “[T]he more experience that a researcher has with participants in their actual setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings.”

This teacher–researcher position then can be advantageous in terms of a deeper knowledge and understanding of the context in which my study is taking place and also in terms of the relationship that has developed over four years of teaching the trainees at the college. Closeness and trust had been built up to such an extent that I thought the participants would feel secure enough to talk about coeducation to me, albeit that I occupy an ‘outsider’ position within the Omani community as already stated in Chapter Three. However, there are also certain disadvantages in being a teacher–researcher such as a “lack of time” (Wellington, 2000, p. 20), which I will address more fully in the next section.

4.8 Limitations of the Study

According to Dörnyei (2003, p. 122), research reports should also describe “any known limiting factors” or potential weaknesses the study encountered. For example, a sample size might be considered too small, or the choice of research design itself could be problematic in trying to answer the research questions. I believe that my study has limits on two levels: personal and academic. On the personal level much of my research work is limited by my position as a relatively new researcher and a part-time doctoral student. This limits my research skills, knowledge and techniques, and also my time. As mentioned in the previous section, a teacher–researcher position can be problematic in terms of time. For example, when I was working at the college as a teacher trainer my number one priority was to prepare and deliver my courses as well as visit trainees in

schools. This resulted in severe constraints on the time I was able to devote to my doctoral work.

Personal limitations aside, I also need to look critically at the limitations of my actual study at the academic level. Firstly, once again the issue of time needs to be addressed. For example, over the years that it took to write up my thesis, I found that I needed to keep updating my sources in the literature to ensure my references and studies were not dated and my research was kept relevant and contemporary. Also, I ran out of time to carry out any kind of member checking of my findings, because, although I collected my data in 2009, by the time I had started analysing the data, in 2013, the participants had already graduated and left the college. It is possible then that some of their perceptions could have been misrepresented (Elghotmy, 2012; Kourieos Angelidou, 2011).

Secondly, although subjectivity is not necessarily an issue with qualitative research (Creswell, 2009), questions surrounding my position, or personal bias, could arise because of the multiple perspectives from which this thesis is written: as the teacher trainer, as the researcher, as the teacher–researcher and as a critical teacher-trainer researcher.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I believe the results and discussion (following in Chapter Five) will show that my study has something new to offer, provided that the purpose of this qualitative case study is not to make large-scale generalisations. The challenge will be to address these limitations in future research projects on trainee-teacher perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As stated previously, the purpose of this thesis is to critically consider, explore and understand the perceptions of English teacher trainees as regards the impact of coeducation in the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman. This chapter aims to achieve that purpose by addressing each of my three research questions introduced in Chapter One, section 1.3. First, I will present the perceptions of the teacher trainees as regards coeducation in the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme. Second, I will explore the extent to which the female and male perceptions of the coeducational microteaching component differ. Third, I will consider the themes that emerged through the teacher-trainee perceptions of the effects of coeducation on their microteaching before concluding the chapter. The results will be discussed in relation to existing literature and relevant research studies where the quantitative findings will be presented in tables and the qualitative will be illustrated with quotes from the data.

5.1 Teacher-Trainee Perceptions of Coeducation

Informed by my social-constructionist conceptualisation of perceptions and Barkhuizen (1998), I found six perceptions emerging in regard to coeducation in a microteaching context. Three of the perceptions confirm those of Barkhuizen (1998) as discussed and diagrammatically presented in Chapter Three, section 3.2.5. They are: predictions, feelings and judgements. In this study, though, I use the terms 'emotions' for feelings and 'evaluations' for judgements. Three new perceptions also emerged, namely: sustainments, reflections and transformations. I will represent these adaptations and additions in my diagram in Chapter Six, section 6.4.3; but now each perception will be discussed individually before making a final comment about how I have interpreted them collectively.

5.1.1 Sustainments

According to Bernat (2008, p. 14) within more socio-cultural understandings of perceptions they are usually seen as “fluid and dynamic”. However, it is possible for some perceptions to be so “well-entrenched” that even in unsupportive learning environments they remain unchanged (Trinder, 2013). I found that there were some trainees whose perceptions did not change at all in their coeducational microteaching classes. I call these unchanged or constant perceptions ‘sustainments’, for example:

“I have the same view and will not change” [G1FQ1].

The quote above is from a female respondent; but there are also some males who indicate an unchanged position as well, such as:

“My view still the same” [G6MQ7]

Sustainment is the first of three new perceptions I have identified through my study. Although the word ‘sustain’ did not emerge directly from the data, its meaning and connotation did. As outlined in Chapter Three, section 3.2.6, from my social-constructionist understanding of perceptions, they emerge through the social processes, actions, practices and interactions of people (Burr, 2003). Sustainment has connotations of an interaction or process, too, in the sense of sustaining a point of view, an argument, a conversation or a perception. A few of the female participants sustain particularly vehement opposition to coeducation with perceptions such as:

“I hated coeducation and still hate it” [G6FQ3]

While others indicate a more favourable disposition by sustaining:

“I’m with coeducation from the beginning” [G6FQ14]

The extent to which the teacher trainees, both male and female, express favourable or less-than favourable perceptions about coeducation will be addressed more in section 5.2 as part of the quantitative analysis of the data. While I will be presenting

percentages and comparisons in that section, the focus in response to my first research question in this section is on the qualitative presentation of the teacher-trainee perceptions.

5.1.2 Emotions

The second type of perception that emerged from the data is emotions. The actual topic of feelings or emotions has gained traction in the literature on educational research, particularly in teacher education in recent years such as Caires et al. (2012) and Hargreaves (2003, p. 60) who contends “teaching is not only a cognitive and intellectual practice but also a social and emotional one”. Feelings have also been identified as one aspect, type or kind of perception by Barkhuizen (1998) as I indicated previously in Chapter Three, section 3.2.5.

In this study, I refer to these feeling perceptions as ‘emotions’ after Borg (2001) and Hargreaves (2003). According to Gergen (1994), within a social-constructionist conceptualisation our emotions are removed from our inner selves and instead become products of discourses. I found that as a result of the discourses of the coeducational microteaching classes, the teacher trainees are expressing a range of emotions from extremely positive on one side, such as:

“I am very happy” [G4MQ2]

The emotions then become more neutral perceptions, for example, female trainee 4 says that she feels:

“normal” [G2FQ4]

Slowly the emotions start leaning towards more negative perceptions, including the shyness of male trainee 1:

“I feel shy, depending on the girl” [G4MQ1]

While Sheikha, in her interview, expresses nervousness:

“I always feel nervous to have males in our classes”

Finally, some trainees share extremely negative perceptions about coeducation such as female trainee 4 in her words below:

“I hate it” [G1FQ14]

Hate is a very strong word and appears a few times in the female responses, while the males tend to use less emphatic terms to express unfavourable emotions such as “shy”. Elghotmy (2012, p. 206) also found female trainees using “hate” to describe their feelings about males watching videos of their microteaching performances. Some females in my study also “hate” males observing them; but, unlike in Elghotmy (2012), the females in my study are being observed live, in real time, as neither they nor the males agreed to being recorded. I will be examining these differences in the emotional perceptions of the male and female teacher trainees more in section 5.2.2.5 and section 5.2.2.6, but now I will discuss the third perception type: predictions.

5.1.3 Predictions

Similar to Barkhuizen (1998), I found predictions refer to the perception that calls upon the participants to say what they think will happen in the future. Many of the teacher trainees said that a coeducational college environment would have positive implications for the future such as preparing females, in the example below, to adjust to working with males:

“prepare us for the future to not feel shock when we work with males”
[G2FQ8]

Gunn (2007, p. 70) also found respondents expressing the future benefits of having been in a coeducational tertiary environment prior to the workplace with some saying “that the world is made up of both men and women and working together is inevitable”.

In Barkhuizen (1998), the respondents make predictions about the future only, however I found some predictions are being made about situations that have not actually been experienced or lived. For example, female trainee 12 (below) in indicating her preference for coeducation, is predicting what she thinks or expects will happen if the microteaching classes were single-gender, which under the present circumstances they are not:

“I prefer coeducational microteaching classes because if the class is only female or male I expect it to be very noisy and very talking so it is better to be coeducational” (G3FQ12)

White (1999, p. 456) uses the term “expectations” in this regard. They emerge before experiencing a specific learning context and may then influence how learners “react, respond and experience” or participate within that context or environment (White, 1999, p. 444).

Many of the predictions acknowledge the positive role coeducation has in preparing the males and the females for life after college and some see the benefits of coeducational classes as they expect single-gender classes to have disadvantages in the future, such as being noisier. However, there are some teacher-trainee perceptions that do not predict positively regarding coeducation. Instead they perceive single-gender classes will be of more benefit. For example, female trainee 8 below predicts, expects or rather, hopes single-gender microteaching classes will enable both males and females to be more creative in their teaching:

“I hope, I hope from you practicum teacher and others to separate students in microteaching classes and you will see if Allah wills, creative male and female in their microteaching” [G5FQ8]

5.1.4 Reflections

“What I want to say here our country is Islamic country and we have our own Islamic constitution which prevent us from any future problem if we follow it exactly. In Islam there must be no coeducational schools” [G3FQ2]

In the quote above, female trainee 2 talks about her religion, Islam, opposing coeducational schools. I found that many of the teacher trainees express perceptions about coeducation in which they reference religion, society, tradition, culture or family in their point of view. In the example below, female trainee 3 cites culture that makes certain behaviours and dealing with males a difficulty:

“It is very difficult to deal with boys especially our culture doesn’t accept to talk or behave like when we behave with girls only” [G4FQ3]

Male trainee 3 also refers to culture in this perception of studying and working with females:

“According to our culture, it is not good to study and work with the opposite gender” [G6MQ3]

These findings support those in Khuwaileh (2000) and Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006). In addition, in Gunn (2007, p. 72) a respondent stated that because of “Muslim religious background and culture, interaction between different genders are preferred to be minimal”. Gunn (2007, p. 76) further contends that these perceptions are “shaped by culture”. In Chapter Three, section 3.1.2.1, I described how aspects such as religion, customs and traditions constitute what Holliday (1999) refers to as ‘large culture’. One of the large-culture norms affecting the coeducational microteaching classrooms in this study is: “males and females who are not related should not interact with each other” (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 137). Through the social and cultural norms outside the classroom (Breen, 2001; Pennycook, 2000; Troudi, 2005) perceptions of coeducation are being formed inside the microteaching class. I refer to these perceptions as ‘reflections’ because they reflect the social and cultural context or the large culture

through which they are formed. 'Reflections' is the second new type of perception that has emerged from the data. I elicited the term 'reflects' directly from the quote below in which Saida recounts the advice her father gave her regarding males in a coeducational environment:

“He only said be careful when you are dealing with these people because you don't know how to think. And this: and be respectful also in front of them. Because the girl's like, the girls' behaviour, I believe are like a mirror, it reflects the family”

Saida is thus referencing and thereby reflecting her family in her perception. For the father, the notion of respect is important, and the way that his daughter behaves reflects or represents her family. Abuya et al. (2014) also address reflection. In talking about how the role of tradition and culture account for the way women are perceived of in society, they describe these perceptions as reflections of their society in that it “mirrors the patterns of socialisation in their own communities” (p. 383). They, however, only consider the reflections of women. In the present study I investigate reflections of the men as well.

5.1.5 Evaluations

I use the term 'evaluate' or 'evaluations' to refer to those perceptions that involve the teacher trainees judging or evaluating what they have learned as a result of being in a coeducational microteaching classroom context. Barkhuizen (1998) refers to these types of perceptions as 'judgements'. The response to a question such as “have you learned anything as a result of participating in the class?” (p. 87) would be considered a judgment. Barkhuizen (1998) compares these perceptions to the 'uptake' of Slimani (1989) where learners report on what they are able to do by the end of a lesson. In the example of a judgement below, female participant 9 evaluates or judges and then

reports on what she has experienced or learned about herself as a result of participating in the coeducational microteaching class:

“Yes. I’m and after 4 years I still unable to cope with coeducation successfully”
[G1FQ9]

The coeducational microteaching class can be described in this example above as a site of struggle (Pennycook, 2000). The college where this study was conducted underwent a transformation from female-only to coeducation. There are “inevitable struggles involved when an institution which was originally reserved for one gender is required to accommodate the other” (Gill, 2004, p. 33). Female participant 9 is still struggling to cope with coeducation after four years. The English teacher trainees judge, assess or evaluate what they have learned about themselves in the microteaching class and sometimes those evaluations are empowering or sometimes they are limiting. In contrast to predictions, these evaluation perceptions are based on actual experiences of what is taking place in the coeducational microteaching class. An example of a more empowering perception can be seen in the example below where female participant 8 states:

“Yes. I learned that I’m part of this society and I’ve got rights as well as boys”
[G2FQ8]

I would like to interpret this finding in terms of the “critical moment” that Pennycook (2004b, p. 330) describes when someone “gets it” and “throws out a comment that shifts the discourse”. Female participant 8 has claimed her identity as part of society and powerfully claimed ownership of her rights alongside the males. This intersection of identity and power can also be interpreted as investment (Norton, 1997). As previously stated in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1, an outcome of adopting more critical positions, such as the one demonstrated in the quote above, is also a change or transformation (Schultheiss & Wallace, 2012).

5.1.6 Transformations

Transformation is the third new perception that has emerged from my study. Bernat (2008, p. 14) describes some perceptions as “not stable entities” and Wesely (2012) suggests that learning contexts or environments can have an effect on them and cause them to change. I found that some of the teacher trainees did change their perceptions and I call these shifts in point of view ‘transformations’. A change in perception or transformation can come about as a result of getting used to a situation over time as can be seen in Saida’s words below:

“the idea of microteaching, last year it was a horrible idea as I think, but now I like microteaching”

Male trainee 2 also expresses a transformation over time in his perception of learning with females below:

“First, when I came to the college I was afraid to learn with girls and now my view has changed” [G3MQ2]

Albrecht and Carnes (2006, p. 157) describe pre-service trainees as being in the process of “transforming” from students to teachers in the microteaching class, while Hyland and O’Brien (2007) found that at first their trainees were very self-conscious, but over time as they became fully involved in the microteaching process, they became less self-conscious. I found that some trainees transform in terms of confidence in the microteaching class. For example, some are now more confident than they were before about walking around and checking on opposite groups during their microteaching lessons:

“Before not confident, now no problem to walk around” [G1FQ11]

These results support Gunn (2007) who also found that some participants’ perceptions change over time: some change towards more positive perceptions and some change

from positive to become more negative perceptions. I found similar results, for example, while female trainee 12 grew in confidence:

“coeducation helps you to be more confident” [G1FQ12]

Male trainee 5 didn't and instead became more reticent:

“I become more shy” [G6MQ5]

I will address this critical notion of change again in section 5.3 when I present the perceptions of how coeducation has affected microteaching, but now I will conclude this section with a comment about my perception of the teacher-trainee perceptions.

5.1.7 My perception of the teacher-trainee perceptions

The answer to my first research question can be seen in the six perceptions or themes that emerged from the data analysis, namely: **s**ustainments; **e**motions; **p**redictions; **r**eflections; **e**valuations and **t**ransformations. While looking at the initial letters of each perception I found that it forms the acronym: SEPRET. Although the spelling differs, it reminds me of the word 'separate'. This observation might at first appear to be somewhat contrived given that this study is an investigation of coeducation, but I believe it is spelling out exactly what the voices of many trainee teachers are asking for in this particular context. Namely, that in the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme, they believe it is more beneficial for them to be separated into male-only and female-only classes. The call to separate comes not as a result of the acronym, it is evident in the direct words or voices of the participants themselves as has already been seen in the “I hope, I hope” example in section 5.1.3 above and as I will demonstrate again in section 5.3.4, but first I will present the results of my second research question in the next section.

5.2 Differences between Male and Female Perceptions of Coeducation

The presentation of the results for my second research question will differ from the presentation of research question one and three because, as I stated earlier in Chapter Four, section 4.6.1, the answers to those two research questions were elicited from the open-ended questionnaire items and the interview responses only. Therefore, only the qualitative data are presented for those research questions, as it is through the qualitative data that the perceptions and effects were elicited.

However, to answer research question two, about any differences between the male and female perceptions, I considered both the quantitative and the qualitative data and as such will present and discuss both sets of data. I used the “closed-response questions to gather numerical (or at least quantifiable data)” (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 15) on the questionnaire to highlight immediate contrasts between the responses to the Yes / No items, while simultaneously looking at the qualitative data to explain those differences.

5.2.1 Quantitative results of differences between male and female perceptions

The quantitative data were tabled from the responses to the 12 Yes / No items on the questionnaire as well at item 24. These responses were calculated and converted to percentages for ease of comparison. Figure 7 shows the quantitative analysis of differences between the male and female Yes / No perceptions. The number next to each question corresponds to the item number on the questionnaire. The next column identifies which research questions (R.Q. 1, 2, or 3) are related to which questionnaire items. As can be seen from the table, some questionnaire items are related to more than one research question. In the following two columns, the male and female Yes responses are contrasted, followed by the next two columns, which show the No responses. The final two columns depict the ‘no answer at all’ or ‘zero’ responses to the questions.

Five of the rows in the table, namely questionnaire items 4, 5, 9, 19 and 20, are highlighted in grey for ease of identification as they depict the differences between the male and female perceptions that I will be discussing in answer to research question two, but first I will briefly explain the rationale for arriving at only these five rows, using questionnaire item 8 as an example.

At an initial glance over the table, there appear to be many more than five differences between the male and the female responses. As regards questionnaire item 8, for example, 24% of the males agree that the gender of the course teachers or 'doctors' affects the microteaching class, in contrast with 31% of females. Also, 76% of the males disagree, while only 68% of the females do. However, I did not use a direct comparison between the male and female Yes and then No responses as the basis for my criteria of what constitutes a trend in my data. Instead I looked at the increase and decrease patterns between the Yes and No responses within each gender group and compared that as a trend. For example, for questionnaire item 8, there is quite a substantial increase from 24% Yes to 76% No for the males. Similarly, there is a substantial increase from 31% Yes to 68% No for the females. Therefore, using this increase pattern as a trend it can be argued that there is no noticeable difference between the male and female perceptions as regards the effects of teacher gender on the microteaching class. Both genders are displaying a major increase from Yes to No in their responses, hence the similarity in the trend in the data.

Using this rationale, it can now be argued that seven of the questionnaire items show no noticeable difference between the male and the female teacher-trainee perceptions as regards coeducation in their microteaching classes. For example, when there were more Yes than No male answers to items 13, 14, 21, 22 and 23, there was a similar trend, namely an increase pattern, in the female responses. Likewise, with the responses to items 8 and 18, both the male and the female teacher trainees had more No than Yes replies, namely a decrease pattern in responses. Therefore, only the five highlighted rows show any major differences in the perceptions of the male and female teacher trainees.

Questionnaire Item	R.Q.	M%Y	F%Y	M%N	F%N	M%0	F%0
4. Did you know that this was a coeducational college before you arrived here?	1	52	80	40	20	8	0
5. Did your family give you their opinion about coming to a coeducational college?	1	44	53	56	48	0	1
8. Do you think the gender of the “doctor” affects the microteaching class?	2 & 3	24	31	76	68	0	1
9. Do you think there is a difference between the way the “doctor” treats the men and women in microteaching?	2 & 3	40	47	60	47	0	6
13. Is there a difference between the way you treat the men and women in your lesson?	2	52	55	48	45	0	0
14. Do you think coeducation has had any effect on your performance in microteaching?	3	64	74	36	22	0	4
18. Is there a difference in your participation in the class with an opposite gender teacher?	2 & 3	36	42	56	52	8	6
19. Do you think there will be coeducational schools from grade 1-12 in Oman in the future?	1	48	40	48	58	4	2
20. Do you like being at a coeducational college?	1	72	42	28	53	0	5
21. Have you learned anything about the opposite gender during the microteaching sessions?	1 & 2 & 3	64	68	32	30	4	2
22. Have you learned anything new about yourself as a result of coeducational microteaching classes?	1 & 2 & 3	80	88	16	8	4	4
23. Has your view on coeducation changed since you first arrived at this college nearly 4 years ago?	1	56	59	40	38	4	3

Figure 7 Differences between male and female yes/ no questionnaire item responses

Questionnaire item 24 also depicts differences between the male and female perceptions. I have presented the results separately in Figure 8 as they are not replies to Yes / No questions. Instead the teacher trainees had to circle their preference for single-gender (male-only and female-only) or coeducational microteaching classes.

Male Only	Female Only	Males for Coed	Females for Coed	Male Zero Answer	Female Zero Answer
32%	52%	56%	40%	12%	8%

Figure 8 Male and female preferences for single-gendered or coeducational microteaching classes

5.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative discussion of differences between male and female perceptions

I will address each of the five highlighted items on the questionnaire from Figure 7 in turn and will then discuss the differences in preference for the gender organisation of microteaching classes from Figure 8. The qualitative data are derived from the reasons the respondents gave in support of their Yes / No and circled preferences answers.

5.2.2.1 Differences in prior knowledge of the coeducational college

At an initial glance there appears to be no difference between the male and female responses about knowing if the college was coeducational before arrival, in item 4. The percentages for both the male and female Yes responses are higher than the No responses. However, item 4 has been highlighted because, although the trend as regards the male and female responses are similar, there is a clear difference between the actual female and male percentages: 52% of the males knew the college was coeducational; 40% didn't know; and 8% didn't answer the question. On the other hand, 80% of the females replied Yes; and only 20% didn't know. There were no female unanswered questions.

This was the only Yes / No item on the questionnaire where the participants were not asked to provide reasons. Therefore, an explanation that could account for why there is a noticeable discrepancy between the male and female responses to item 4 requires some speculation. It could be that the women were better informed about the coeducational organisation of the college at their schools before arrival. Maybe older siblings were at the college already and had told their younger sisters. A third option, that has become evident through the data analysis could be that within this particular context, where “roles for men and women seem to be more defined” (Gunn, 2007, p. 68) the accepted and expected behaviour for females is more restrictive than for males. It is possible to suggest then, that the prior-college gender organisational information would be more relevant to the females as they would need to be more aware, and therefore be more prepared than the males, in terms of how to behave appropriately in a coeducational setting.

5.2.2.2 Differences in family opinions about attending a coeducational college

Item 5 asked whether the teacher trainees had been given any family advice or opinions about coming to a coeducational college. More males did not receive advice than did: 56% said No; 44% said Yes. The opposite occurred with the females where 53% said they were given family opinions; 48% said No; and 1% did not answer the question at all.

An example of the norm, mentioned in section 5.2.2.1 above, of more restrictive behaviour expected for females can be seen in the differing opinions family members gave to the male and female trainees. The males were given more encouraging and less cautionary advice regarding coeducation. For example, male trainee 5 was told:

“you will get benefit with mixed students of boys and girls” [G3MQ5]

And male trainee 2 recounted the cautiously “nice” advice from his father:

“Actually my father said it’s nice to study with girls but try to be careful”
[G3MQ2]

On the other hand, the females received many more cautions from their families regarding a mixed-gender environment. For example, female trainee 4 was ordered not to talk to males:

“you mustn’t talk or give the opportunity to any boy to talk to you” [G3FQ4]

Female trainee 1, in group 5, was told to associate with females only:

“They said keep yourself with the girls, you don’t have any business with boys”
[G5FQ1]

While the family of female trainee 1, in group 2, spoke about respect and avoiding any unnecessary communication with males:

“They said if you respect yourself and don’t do any bad behavior, they will respect you. Don’t talk with boys unless it is necessary” [G2FQ1]

Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) found that if Bedouin girls in coeducational settings in the Negev region are seen to be having contact with boys who are non-relatives it could damage their reputation or honour as well as their family’s honour. So their “parents warn them to keep their honor in school by watching themselves and distancing themselves from the boys” Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, p. 10). Parents are also referred to in Khuwaileh (2000, p. 287) where a female participant reacts to the use of certain taboo topics and vocabulary in her coeducational writing class stating: “I was raised by my parents who used to tell me that such words aren’t good to be used or said by girls”. While another female participant argues that the taboo words go against “me my personality, religion, honour and polite” (Khuwaileh, 2000, p. 287). Family involvement is also described in Gunn (2007, p. 73) where a female participant says her reason for preferring to work in single-gender groups is because she “is not allowed from family to call males”. In my study the females are also being cautioned to keep away from the males by their parents.

The females, especially, reminded by their families, are highly aware of how they are expected to behave in culturally appropriate ways in coeducational settings. They are

also aware of the consequences and possible misinterpretations of their behaviour in the microteaching classes as can be seen in the quote from female trainee 11 below:

“It’s difficult here in Oman because there are some stupid boys, sorry for that, who think that standing close to them I have some feelings for them”

[G4FQ11]

The role cultural norms play in influencing behaviour is addressed by Gunn (2007, p. 73) who quotes a female participant in the UAE study as follows: “living in an Arab society being close or being seen a lot with the opposite gender is considered wrong and can sometimes be perceived as totally inappropriate”. In earlier research I found that in terms of Holliday (1999), both large and small culture inform the cultural norms of the participants and “maintaining honour seems to be the most important value in my women’s lives” (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 138). In the current study under discussion, the large culture of Oman, influencing parental advice, and the small culture of the participants in the coeducational microteaching class are once again informing the cultural norm and while the word ‘honour’ does not appear in my data, the notion is implied through the use of terms such as ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’ as female trainee 9 explains:

“Yes. I learn how to deal with them and in which extent to save my dignity and respect myself” [G6FQ9]

5.2.2.3 Differences in the way course teachers / doctors treat males and females in microteaching

Item 9 addresses the question of whether there was any difference between the way the course teachers or doctors treated the men and women in the microteaching class. In my opinion, this result is interesting because all the males responded to this question with 40 % Yes, and an increase to 60% of No answers. On the other hand, the female responses were exactly the same at 47% Yes and No each, and 6% zero responses.

This question was asked specifically to determine if the teacher trainees were experiencing any instances of the chilly climate (Hall & Sandler, 1982), described in Chapter Three, section 3.3.5.2 in their coeducational microteaching classes. The chilly classroom climate can affect both males and females and can be brought about by faculty (or course teachers who are also called doctors in my context) as regards the extent to which, and the manner in which, they engage with students.

The males and females, indicating no difference, gave almost the same reason in explaining their answers. They were receiving equal treatment in the microteaching class according to male trainee 1:

“No because they deal with us in the same way” [G6MQ1]

Similarly, female trainee 3 said:

“No they treat us equally” [G2FQ3]

Also, both the males and the females indicate that the focus of the teachers was on the observation criteria for evaluating the trainees, not on their gender. For example, male trainee 5 stresses the performance and the criteria:

“No because it depends on performance not gender and teachers have criteria to evaluate the students [G3MQ5]

While female trainee 9 reiterates that the criteria rather than the gender is the sole consideration of the course teachers:

“No he/she depends only upon the criteria for evaluation and does not care about the gender of the trainee” [G5FQ9]

Seven per cent more females than males thought that there are differences in teacher treatment. However, the males Yes responses reveal a teacher bias in favour of the females, as can be seen in the example below:

“Yes because they be more flexibility with women” [G6MQ7]

Some females indicate a similar sentiment to the male Yes respondents, namely a teacher bias against males:

“Yes because they treat the boys as they are stupid” [G3FQ7]

Myhill and Jones (2006) record a similar bias in teacher perceptions of treating the males more negatively than the females in their study. However, in the present study there are also some female trainees who think that the teachers act more negatively towards them, for example:

“Yes, because they are more flexible with men and strict with women”
[G1FQ3]

This bias-against-female view is supported by much of the early literature on the effects of the chilly climate, such as Hall and Sandler (1982) and Sadker and Sadker (1986) who found that it is primarily women who are on the receiving end of different and more negative teacher treatment in coeducational settings. Hall and Sandler (1982, p. 2) also suggest that other outside factors, “including familial and social expectations, may contribute to the preservation of these differences”. Examples of these outside, large culture, factors are discussed in section 5.2.2.2. (above), including the pressure that families and cultural or societal norms bring to bear particularly upon female students. In section 5.2.2.5 I will discuss a further contributing factor to the chilly climate identified by Hall and Sandler (1982), namely the environments within and outside the classroom.

5.2.2.4 Differences in predictions about future coeducational grades 1 to 12 Omani schools

In item 19, the trainees predict if schools from grades 1 to 12 will be coeducational in the future in Oman. The results are almost an exact opposite of the trends found in item 9. The male Yes and No responses are exactly the same, at 48% each, with 4% zero

replies; while there is an increase in the female responses from 40% who answered No, to 58% Yes. Two per cent did not answer the question at all.

The male and female trainees provide similar reasons for why they think schools will be coeducational such as stating that it is a government decision, for example:

“Yes because the government tries to do that from long time” [G5MQ2]

Some believe coeducation is adding to the development of education in Oman:

“Yes because Oman tend to develop the way of education to enhance it”
[G1FQ3]

While others feel it is to be expected because schools are already coeducational from grades 1 to 4:

“Yes because the cycle 1 schools are mixed with boys and girls so I think it will be the same” [G1FQ1]

As outlined in Chapter Two, coeducation in Oman has come about as part of the modernisation and development, particularly in economic terms, of the country since 1970, which has also “driven the government to attempt to revolutionize English language teaching (ELT) through pursuing a reform plan—Basic Education System (BES)” in state run Omani schools (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 141). The teacher trainees are aware of the government reform initiatives, they reflect the opinions of the Ministry of Education as regards the development of schooling in Oman, and they think that coeducation from grade 5 onwards is a logical consequence of the policy already implemented in grades 1 to 4. However, while the trainees predict that there will be coeducational schools in the future, it appears from certain words such as “but I don’t think” that not all the respondents are necessarily in support of coeducational schools in the future:

“Yes because the government think this way means Omani development country, but I don’t think there are any benefits form it” [G5FQ11]

Two of the participants, male trainee 5 and male trainee 1 use the pronoun “they” in their predictions quoted below:

“Yes because they think it is the better way of learn” [G6MQ5]

“Yes because they start doing this for grade 1-4” [G4MQ1]

From a perspective straddling socio-linguistics, pragmatics and critical-discourse analysis, Coupland (1999, p. 10) suggests the word ‘they’ or “they-ing” is one of the strategies used to distance oneself from a person, group or opinion as a verbal form of “othering”. Yamaguchi (2004, p. 17) contends that “mystification or even endowment of respect” also involve some kind of space, distance or discourse analytic othering.

Therefore, by using the term ‘they’, it is possible that the male trainees in the two quotes above are respectfully distancing themselves from their future predictions, which might not be consistent with their own, more negative, perceptions of coeducation.

There are trainees, though, who do not think that there will be coeducational schools in the future in Oman. Once again, the male and female reasons for why they think so are quite similar. Male trainee 5 and female trainee 18 both refer to a barrier using different words. Male trainee 5 uses “red line”:

“No because there are some religious aspects and red line” [G3MQ5]

Female trainee 18 in the example below describes the barrier as a “boundary”:

“No because there are some boundaries and Omani customs that prevent doing this” [G6FQ18]

Both large and small culture (Holliday, 1999) can be seen informing the perceptions of the male and female teacher trainees. The large-culture influence of religion is mentioned by male trainee 5 above, while female trainee 18 refers to Omani customs. On the other hand, the small-culture influence within the school is informing male trainee 4 below:

“No because culture of students in schools is different from students in colleges” [G3MQ4]

While within the small culture inside the schools the age of the students is a concern for female trainee 5 below:

“No because students are teenagers and maybe do something wrong” [G4FQ5]

The age of the students is also a concern in Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006). The males and females are becoming teenagers and entering the adolescent phase in their lives when hormones are developing and they are becoming more aware of the opposite gender. It is because of these reasons that many of the teacher trainees in the present study prefer to separate the genders at school level in keeping with cultural norms. However, the females in the Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) study are considered of an age that is suitable for marriage and that is why their fathers, in particular, wish to separate them from the males until they are ready to get married. I will discuss marriage again in section 5.2.2.6, but next I will address emotional differences between the male and female participants in my study.

5.2.2.5 Differences in emotional responses to being at a coeducational college

Item 20 yielded the biggest difference between the male and female teacher-trainee perceptions. An emotional response was elicited by asking if they like being at a coeducational college. The males dominated the Yes reply, with everyone answering the question. Seventy-two per cent said yes; and only 28% said No. In contrast, there was less of a discrepancy between the female responses, with 42% answering Yes and, unsurprisingly, given the reasons below in the qualitative discussion, 53% saying No. There were ‘zero responses’ of 5%.

Although the quantitative analysis reveals a significant difference between the male and female Yes and No responses, the qualitative data show less of a difference in the reasons supporting their answers.

First, the Yes respondents, both male and female, feel a coeducational college can improve self-confidence. Male trainee 2 focuses on confidence only:

“Yes because to increase self-confidence” [G5MQ2]

However, female trainee 3 includes self-esteem in addition to confidence in her reason:

“Yes because I can gain self-confidence and self-esteem” [G1FQ3]

Second, the No respondents both feel it will be better without the other gender in the class. For example, female trainee 1 said:

“No because I feel I can improve more without the boys at the college”
[G5FQ1]

While male trainee 4 stated:

“No because it’s better to be with your own gender” [G6MQ4]

However, the trainees also provide different reasons for not liking a coeducational college. The female perceptions include a strong dislike for the negative impact the male presence on campus has on them:

“No because males makes the life in the college miserable and difficult”
[G6FQ10]

Some feel coeducation goes against their large cultural norms:

“No because it is against our culture and religion” [G1FQ11]

They feel restricted in their behaviour:

“No because there are a lot of things I gave to avoid and don’t do as a woman” [G6FQ1]

Others feel the male presence is impacting their level of participation and comfort at the college:

“No because I think my participation will be more in class and feel relax”
[G6FQ7]

On the other hand, some males report a lack confidence with having females at the college:

“No because it gives me more confidence if I learn with boys” [G6MQ5]

A few males indicate that a female presence on campus contradicts what they perceive of as normal:

“No because that is not good and not normal” [G1MQ1]

While item 20 elicited a response from the trainees about their coeducational college life in general, item 24 narrows towards the microteaching classroom. These questions are both eliciting an emotional response if one considers the word ‘prefer’ as a synonym for ‘like’ (see Appendix 2 for the wording of these questionnaire items). As discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.4.4.1, Caires et al. (2012), in comparing male and female perceptions of teaching practice, found a higher level of stress amongst the women in contrast to the men. Similarly, the female teacher-trainee perceptions in my study indicate a higher level of stress or discomfort than the males. The women in Elghotmy (2012, p. 206) also feel “uncomfortable” working in mixed-gender groups in their microteaching class, as do the females in Gunn (2007, p. 73) who say they are “not comfortable” in coeducational groups either. However, not all the instances of discomfort, stress and lack of freedom are reserved for the females alone. There are some males in the present study, albeit a much smaller percentage, who do not feel good in coeducational environments. Similar to the perceptions of these few male trainees in my study, Morgan (2005) found males saying they felt more relaxed on their single-gender course and some male participants in Gunn (2007, p. 73) said they could “talk free and friendly” with the same gender group.

Hall and Sandler (1982, p. 2) acknowledge that the “atmosphere, environment or climate – both within and outside the classroom” plays a role either positively or

negatively in student development. It would seem then that while large-cultural norms outside play their part in creating a stressful or indeed a chilly climate inside the classroom, most of the pressure, effects and differences are being emphasised as a result of coeducation in general at the college and within the coeducational microteaching classes in particular. Therefore, in keeping with my critical aim of wanting to provide the trainees a platform to let their voices be heard, I asked them to indicate their preference for male-only, female-only or coeducational microteaching classes and to give reasons for their choice.

5.2.2.6 Differences in preferences for the gender organisation of microteaching classes

The female and male preferences for the gender organisation of their microteaching classes show a clear difference. More males prefer coeducational classes (56%) to male-only classes (32%). However, there were quite a few males who did not answer the question at all (12%). More females prefer female-only classes (52%) to coeducational microteaching classes (40%). There were also a few zero answers at 8%.

The microteaching class, according to Albrecht and Carnes (2006) should be a place where trainees can practice teaching in a relaxed, safe non-threatening space. Bell (2007) found that many trainee teachers feel very anxious, shy or nervous about teaching in front of their peers. In my study, not only do the trainees teach in front of their peers, they also teach in front of their opposite-gender peers within a large-culture context in which coeducational practices are not the norm. Hence the emotional level of the trainees is heightened and stress, especially, is increased due to the presence of the opposite gender in the microteaching class. In the quote below, female participant 3 expresses nervousness and anxiousness:

“Sometimes I feel nervous and anxiety” [G3FQ3]

In addition, male participant 2 expresses shyness and feeling pressurised:

“I feel shy and under pressure” [G6MQ2]

More males than females prefer coeducational microteaching classes. The male perceptions focus on the benefits; some feel it will prepare them to deal with the opposite gender:

“I prefer coeducational microteaching classes because I learn more how to deal with both and almost opposite gender is more respectful” [G3MQ5]

Others feel coeducation is assisting in preparation for life outside college:

“I prefer coeducational microteaching classes because I prepare myself for real life” [G3MQ4]

A further reason given for preferring coeducational microteaching classes is that it improves confidence, as male trainee 6 states:

“I prefer coeducational microteaching classes because it gives me more confidence” [G3MQ6]

There are also a few females, such as trainee 7, who agree that coeducation has improved their confidence:

“I prefer coeducational microteaching classes because they help me to improve myself and become more confident” [G3FQ7]

On the other hand, there are a few males who prefer to work in a male-only environment, referring to large-culture norms:

“I prefer male only microteaching classes because it is difficult to apply it in Islamic country” [G6MQ6]

While a few males cite issues of freedom for their male-only preference:

“I prefer male only microteaching classes because I feel more free” [G6MQ2]

The female trainees refer to freedom as well, but the difference in their perceptions is the emphasis on the restrictions coeducational microteaching classes place on them:

“I prefer female only microteaching classes because they can microteach freely”
[G4FQ10]

It is because they cannot perform and participate freely that they prefer female-only classes. For example, female trainee 1 will feel more relaxed, and female trainee 9 will be able to increase certain activities like perform and do a song, in a male-free class:

“I prefer female only microteaching classes because I will do better and relax”
[G1FQ1]

“I prefer female only microteaching classes because I would like to act more in my micro and sing” [G5FQ9]

While there are similarities between the perceptions of the male and female teacher-trainees, there are a number of differences, too, in terms of parental guidance; the treatment of the trainees by course teachers; the future view of coeducation in Oman; emotions; preferences for classroom organisation; and large-culture norms informing the behaviour of men and women in this particular context. For example, as discussed in section 5.2.2.2, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) found that honour and reputation define the role of females and were the main reasons preventing girls from attending coeducational schools in the Negev. While the female participants in my study are not forced to drop out of college in order to protect their dignity and ensure respect, they are highly aware of how they are expected to behave in the presence of the males in the microteaching class. In the Negev study it was further found that some fathers no longer objected to their daughters attending school after they were married because as one father described it, the “most appropriate framework for protecting her is marriage” (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006, p. 14). Therefore, I decided to foreground the marital status of my participants on both my data-collection tools to see if the question of marriage was also important. Saida’s words below reveal what I believe to be the main reason underpinning the differences in the male and female perceptions of coeducation,

namely there is a difference in the way the males and the females perceive their roles in society and, like Gunn (2007, p. 68), suggests these roles appear “more defined” in this region of the world:

“For example, if we get married, if I was a girl with bad, er bad history-side, or have bad things about me, in the college, or in the boys, no one can marry me, everyone will say what, I can’t trust this woman, for example”

The females in my study are concerned with their modesty and reputations, which are similar findings to Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006). The females will be ostracised if their reputations are considered to be sullied and they will face a severe penalty, such as not finding a husband. In my opinion, the female trainees are defining their gender role in society according to their suitability as ‘marriage material’.

On the other hand, Ahmed’s words reveal that the males in my study perceive their role in society as being defined by their “macho male” status (Younger & Warrington, 2006, p. 584):

“in our society here, it is known that a man can, can, have to be much like confident and much masculine in front of the girls, so they are very shy from making mistakes in front of the girls”

It seems, from the different female and male perceptions above regarding ‘marriage suitability’ and ‘confident masculinity’, that coeducation is perpetuating traditional stereotypical gender roles (Skelton, 2002; Younger & Warrington, 2006). These roles are “based on notions of gender” (Skelton, 2003, p. 196), that suggest males have “greater social status and power” than females (Damji & Lee, 1995; Halstead, 1991; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000, p. 616; Zeyneloğlu & Terzioğlu, 2011).

Research has also been carried out in different countries on the impact of single-gender versus coeducational schools on gender-role attitudes. Hamdan (2010, p. 386) argues that gender-separate schools provide more equal and fewer stereotypical “educational opportunities” particularly for females in Canada. In a study investigating the effects of

school gender organisation on gender-role identity and attitudes towards marriage, Katsurada and Sugihara (2002, p. 249) describe Japan as culturally having “strong traditional gender stereotypes”. They found females from coeducational schools who developed a more “traditional gender-role identity were more likely to desire marriage” (p. 255). In Turkey, Erarslan and Rankin (2013, p. 457) found coeducational settings “foster traditional gender roles” as regards attitudes towards family-life roles. Certainly coeducation has created differences in the male and female teacher-trainees in this study, particularly as regards their perceptions of their gender roles. While I believe these traditional and stereotypical gender notions are useful in interpreting the perceptions of my trainees, it is my intention to critique rather than condone them.

5.3 The Perceived Effects of Coeducation on Microteaching

My third research question investigates the teacher-trainee perceptions of the effects of coeducation on their microteaching. Three themes emerged through the data analysis as the perceived effects of the opposite gender in the microteaching classroom. I refer to these effects as follows: masking, inhibiting and repositioning. I will describe and interpret each one in turn and will then discuss them collectively as they pertain to what I have termed ‘the mirror effect’.

5.3.1 Masking

In earlier research about the effects of coeducation on female participants in a speaking class, I reported on the action of hiding the way of naturally behaving. I used the metaphor of the mask, also known as a burqa in Arabic, to describe this action as it “is particularly significant in the Gulf, where many of the women literally wear masks as part of a cultural practice to shield their faces from strangers” (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 140). In the current study under discussion in this thesis, the two quotes below reveal that not only are some of the females, like trainee 2, masking their behaviour, but some of the males, like trainee 7, are doing so as well as a result of coeducation:

“We aren’t behave as our real personality, we must think before do any behaviour in front of men” [G3FQ2]

“I can’t behave my normal behaviour” [G3MQ7]

In a further example of masking (below), female trainee 5 maintains a strict demeanour with the males in keeping with large-culture constraints. However, the effect of not knowing how, or not wanting, to show any rapport by laughing, for example, negatively impacts her teaching:

“In our culture we can’t laugh with men, so I always try to be strict with them as an escape and finally I mess up the whole lesson” [G1FQ5]

While male trainee 1 finds it difficult to maintain eye-contact with the women:

“I find it difficult because I or the other gender can’t look face to face to each other” [G3MQ1]

With strangers or non-family members, males and females would not act with familiarity such as laughing and making direct eye-contact. This is not an unusual finding for the part of the world in which my study is situated. For example, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) and Gunn (2007) both report on specific gender roles, ways to behave in the company of the opposite gender, and the lack of interaction between genders, as a result of cultural norms. The perceptions of the male and female teacher-trainees also reveal that, because the opposite gender is present in the microteaching classroom, many of them are not only hiding or masking their normal, true or usual behaviour, but they are also masking their performance and participation. For example, female trainee 9 refers to females who are masking their true potential:

“There are many girls who don’t use their abilities because boys in the college” [G3FQ9]

They are downplaying their intelligence or abilities and instead are finding ways to be more attractive:

“We don’t have the freedom, concentrate in their study and focus on how to be attractive and all the boys look at me” [G2FQ1]

This emphasis on attractiveness might not necessarily mean in the physical sense of beauty, but rather, in order to avoid any behaviour that might bring dishonour to themselves or their families, the females concentrate on large-culture qualities that would make them appear attractive such as acting “in a modest and restrained manner, especially in front of men” (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 138). In this sense they are conforming to the culture of romance (Langdon, 2001) described in Chapter Three, section 3.3.5.4.

The male trainees, on the other hand, as can be seen in the two examples below, could be displaying instances of the culture of laddism (Jackson et al., 2015; Pomerantz et al., 2013) as outlined in Chapter Three, section 3.3.5.3:

Sometimes the men behave badly:

“I’ll try to pay attention, but the problem that I’m a naughty boy” [G3MQ2]

While other males joke around:

“Sometimes I joke with them to make them relax and don’t shy” [G3MQ4]

Although male trainee 4 in the quote above claims the joking is to make specifically the women “them” feel more relaxed, the female trainees do not all react positively to this type of laddish behaviour as can be seen in the strong reaction from female trainee 6:

“Sometime hate the opposite gender because they laugh and give bad comments and jokes for us” [G5FQ6]

Pomerantz et al., (2013, p. 196) investigating female Canadian teenager experiences in school, noted that a common theme amongst the participants was their description of the male students “as class clowns who managed to hijack class”. While in their study on patterns of classroom interaction amongst adults in an Iranian EFL classroom, Rashidi and Naderi (2012, p. 35) found the males were “more humorous” and “more tolerant of humor” than the females. Younger and Warrington (2005) suggest these laddish strategies may be used as a way to deflect attention away from under-performance especially in coeducational settings. It could be that the male trainees in

my study are trying to hide a perceived lack of ability, or an inferior language level, in front of the females and so would rather joke and play around than to feel embarrassed. In the next section I will look at specific comments about grades or marks from the males, and females as regards the effects of coeducation on aspects of their performance and participation. Despite the genderist terminology, Jackson et al. (2015, p. 301) do not restrict laddishness to males only by contending that “men or women may perform laddism”. Although the examples above indicate that it is the males in my study who are complicit in the culture of laddism, it could be that coeducation is masking the laddish desires of some of the females too, for example female trainee 13 expresses the wish to perform some laddish-type behaviours in the following quote:

“I want to be free to laugh loud, play, make jokes in class, run in college passages” [G1FQ13]

5.3.2 Inhibiting

The second perceived effect of coeducation I have identified as ‘inhibiting’. This refers to specific instances where the presence of both genders in the microteaching class is causing self-consciousness, for example, or is restricting, hindering or preventing the teacher trainees from participating and performing fully. I chose the term ‘inhibiting’ to refer to these instances as it is an all-encompassing synonym for the words “hinder”, “prevent” and “shy” elicited directly from the data as examples of this theme. In the quote below, the female presence is hindering or inhibiting the creativity of male trainee 7:

“I can’t do some things with ladies so it hinders my creativity” [G3MQ7]

While in the next example below, the large-culture effects of coeducation are preventing female trainee 7 from treating both genders equally:

“Some culture hapits provet us to deal both gender with same way. I deal with boys more polite than girls” [G5FQ7]

Further instances of inhibiting displayed by the trainees that I will discuss include: remaining quiet, not moving around freely, not being able to discuss certain topics, refraining from calling the opposite gender by name and concern that marks or grades are being affected.

5.3.2.1 Verbal and physical participation

“Makes students shy and not participate in classroom” [G6MQ2]

As a result of coeducation some trainees refuse to participate in class as indicated by male trainee 2 (above). This lack of participation occurs in two ways. First, verbally, where the trainees remain quiet or silent as Sheikha describes:

“So we stay quietly, and we cannot share our teachers our opinions or what we feel or what we understand”

Second, the presence of the opposite gender is inhibiting participation physically when trainees do not take part in or perform certain activities as illustrated by Farida:

“for example TPR, or we want to dance with the class, especially for songs or some actions, so some of these actions we cannot do it in front of the male”

One way of interpreting these examples is to invoke the notion of non-participation as described by Norton (2001). In certain communities, non-participation “is inevitable because our experiences include coming into contact with communities to which we do not belong” (Norton, 2001, p. 161). It is possible the trainees feel they do not belong in a coeducational microteaching class so prefer not to participate. Another way of interpreting the lack of participation, particularly silence, is to subscribe to reasons offered by Petress (2001), such as a lack of interest in the topic or fear of ridicule. In the

quote below, for example, it could be that female trainee 1 does not want to be embarrassed or ridiculed if she does not know the answer:

“I won’t participate unless I am sure of the answer” [G5FQ1]

Gender issues could explain a third possibility for non-participation. According to Tannen (1996, p. 343), increasingly, studies about TESOL classrooms are contributing to a growing literature on gender and “gender-related patterns of classroom discourse” and behaviour. The theoretical framework within this literature is informed by two approaches, which are seen to be more complementary than “opposed”, namely the “cultural difference” approach and the “power” or “dominance” approach (Tannen, 1994, p. 9). Differences between male and female interactions are understood in terms of their cultural contexts in the cultural-difference approach. From a dominance perspective, silence or not participating could be explained with reference to power. Romaine (1999, p. 152) suggests that references to women, in particular, to remain quiet, such as the view suggested by Bedouins of “the ideal woman as having a soft voice and not a long tongue”, could be an example of their perceived lesser status in society. However, in my microteaching class, coeducation is inhibiting both the males and the females. It is therefore more likely that non-participation and silence in my context are more in line with Tannen (1994), and with Petress (2001, p. 105), who suggests that cultural differences – such as factors relating to gender – may “forbid or strongly discourage individuals from speaking up in classroom settings”.

5.3.2.2 Discussion topics

Troudi (2005, p. 115) urges TESOL teachers to ensure that their cultural knowledge is “informed by a deep sense of commitment” in order to understand the social and cultural contexts of their students. This need for understanding can be seen when trying to interpret Farida’s words:

“Some topics I don’t want to teach it in front of the boys, because it requires something against our culture”

Without cultural knowledge it would be possible to misinterpret the reasons why discussing certain topics is inhibiting the trainees. For example, Khuwaileh (2000) and Petress (2001) both found that topics could affect participation in the class. Petress (2001) suggests some students might not be interested in the topic so would prefer to remain silent. On the other hand, Khuwaileh (2000, p. 286) contends that certain topics that are regarded as containing “taboo vocabulary”, can prove embarrassing, or can even violate religion and honour in certain cultural contexts. In such situations the women expressed more strongly that they would prefer not to talk about these topics, especially with males present in the classroom. The cultural constraints of coeducation are inhibiting not only my female trainees, but the males as well, such as male trainee 2:

“We can’t contact with the other gender. Also we can’t talk in some topics”
[G5MQ2]

Some of the participants give examples of the kinds of topics they do not want to talk about in a coeducational environment. Many of the females do not want to talk about marriage, for example:

“Being shy- Less participation- Less confidence to talk about topics e.g. marriage” [G1FQ13]

Marriage was also a topic that did not want to be discussed in Mackenzie (2011). Rather than the disinterest interpretation of Petress (2001), it appears when “co-education is applied, the openness in stating opinions in the classroom and the use of taboo words can all be culturally bound practices which seem to hinder” Khuwaileh (2000, p. 282) or inhibit the choice of, and discussion about, certain topics in the microteaching class.

5.3.2.3 Use of names

“I feel embarrassed and especially if they call my name” [G2FQ11]

Rapport, or the building up of a close caring relationship between the teacher and the students in order to create a “supportive social environment” in the second-language classroom, has been identified as an important skill for pre-service teachers to practice (Crookes, 2003, p. 162). One way of developing rapport is to use the names of the students in the class (Gower et al., 2005). However, female trainee 11 (in the quote above) expresses embarrassment at the use of her name. Many of the male teacher-trainees also find it difficult to practice rapport, such as Khalifa:

“I find difficulties in dealing with girls, maybe in naming their names”

Both the male and the female trainees are inhibited by using the names of the opposite gender during microteaching lessons, as female trainee 19 explains:

“With men I always serious and not always call them there names” [G6FQ19]

This finding confirms the results of my earlier study (MacKenzie, 2011) where students also preferred not to address members of the opposite gender directly by name in a coeducational class, in keeping with their cultural tradition of maintaining formality and a distance between opposite-gender non-family members. Naming would suggest a type of rapport or familiarity with the opposite gender, which is not an acceptable convention in this coeducational context.

5.3.2.4 Freedom of movement

“There was a barrier that prevent me to the other groups especially female group” [G3MQ3]

Coeducation is also inhibiting the freedom of movement around the classroom. In the quote above, male trainee 3 is referring to the practice of managing small-group work in class where one of the skills they need to demonstrate during the microteaching lesson is the monitoring of individual groups while they are working on a task. This requires the trainee teacher to walk around the classroom and check on groups. However, female

trainee 4 does not monitor the male groups and fears the perceived consequence of her action, loss of marks, which I will discuss in the next section:

“I used to not going to the men groups, but of course we will lose marks”

[G6FQ4]

Both the males and females are unable to practice discreet monitoring where they “stay for a while near” opposite-gender groups, or participatory monitoring where they “sit down with them” (Scrivener, 2012, p. 212). In keeping with accepted large-culture norms, the males and females curtail their movement around the microteaching classroom. They are also maintaining an acceptable distance or barrier between themselves and opposite-gender groups, as do the female participants in Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, p. 10), whose parents caution them regarding “distancing themselves from the boys”.

5.3.2.5 Graded performance

An added concern expressed by the trainees in my study is the perception that they may lose marks because they are only focusing on one side of the classroom when monitoring only same-gender groups, as evidenced in the second part of female trainee 4’s quote in section 5.3.2.4. (above):

“but of course we will lose marks” [G6FQ4]

Therefore, I have included graded performance as a fifth example of inhibiting in the coeducational microteaching classroom.

The trainee teachers are observed, evaluated and graded while performing their microteaching lessons according to a set of predetermined criteria, which are discussed with them prior to commencing the microteaching component of the college-based practicum courses. Each trainee also receives a copy of the microteaching evaluation form (see Appendix 15) as part of the materials and information distributed at the start of the course. In the quote below, Khalifa is concerned about decreasing grades, which he attributes to the shock, or distracting presence, of the females in the room:

“We should separate the girls from the boys because as we know, the boys before they come here they got good marks, the now we see most of the boys are down, and that because of, er, of, of they are shocked with studying with the girls”

On the other hand, female trainee 19 attributes the loss of marks to the effects of the male presence, resulting in her serious demeanour and anxiety or stress:

“all in all I am against of making microteaching with mix gender, because of this I always loose my marks because teaching in front of the gender make me under pressure + to be serious” [G6FQ19]

Calls to separate the genders as a way of improving marks or raising achievement are not new in Western literature on coeducational versus single-gender classrooms, but a verdict has not yet been reached in this particular grade-performance debate (Younger & Warrington, 2006). In a study eliciting male student perceptions Morgan (2005) found that learning appears to be more effective in single-gender classes because the participants are not distracted by the opposite gender. Younger and Warrington (2006, p. 607) concur that a single-gender environment can benefit both males and females “because it is insulated from the distractions and off-task behavior of the other sex, there is less harassment and potential embarrassment, confidence can be built up, and students can be encouraged to participate more constructively in lessons”. From an Arabian Gulf perspective, Gunn (2007, p. 76) does not specifically refer to grades, but “although not proven” in the UAE study, proposes that assumptions, informed by culture “can significantly reduce the learning value” of activities such as group work. In other words, the students’ perceptions of coeducation are influenced by their culture, thus coeducation can have an inhibiting effect on learning or performance. There is group work in the microteaching class, but my trainees have already separated themselves into single-gender groups. However, when they teach their microteaching lessons, they are specifically graded on fair distribution of participation amongst their students as well as offering assistance to them during activities (according to criteria 16 and 19 of the

evaluation form). They feel that coeducation is inhibiting their ability to carry out these tasks and as a result they perceive their grades are being affected.

5.3.3 Repositioning

The third perceived effect of the way that coeducation has impacted the microteaching of the English teacher trainees is that it has brought about a shift or a change in the way they perform and participate. I refer to this change as ‘repositioning’. The notion of change was first addressed in section 5.1.6 of this chapter in answer to research question one. I found, discussed and gave examples of ‘transformations’, which are the perceptions trainees hold that change or transform over time, either positively or negatively. Repositioning, on the other hand, is the effect that coeducation has after perceptions have been transformed and takes place as teacher trainees rearrange their positions or “proximity” (Crookes, 2003, p. 73), as they claim “ownership” (Norton, 1997, p. 409) of “changing identities” (Skinner, 2012, p. 46) and as they “run” their small cultures (Holliday, 1999, p. 239) in the microteaching classroom.

5.3.3.1 Rearranging positions

The first instance of repositioning I have termed ‘rearranging positions’ because the teacher trainees are literally changing their positions in terms of physical space as well as the position of their behaviour in their microteaching classrooms. They are creating open spaces or rows between themselves and the opposite gender when seated as Ibrahim explains below:

“I think, the position of the girls and of women, I think it is better to make just one row for ladies, one for men, and one for ladies”

The trainees are also keeping their distance when moving around, such as monitoring group work in the microteaching class, as can be seen from the response of female trainee 11 below:

"It's fine as long as I keep my distance but without effecting the lesson"
[G4FQ11]

Crookes (2003, p. 73) refers to the use of space and distance between the teacher and the students in the classroom as "proxemics" and suggests that cultural conventions dictate the extent to which those spaces should be maintained in order to ensure a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom that's in keeping with the "cultural rules". While the teacher trainees are highly sensitised regarding proxemics in my study, TESOL teachers are urged to become more aware of such cultural differences between themselves and their students, especially as they pertain to performance and participation in their classrooms (Crookes, 2003; Gunn, 2007; Troudi, 2005).

The teacher trainees are also rearranging positions in terms of their behaviour in dealing with the opposite gender during microteaching. Arif provides an example of such behaviour, namely acting:

"Because there are girls, you know.... Girls.... we can't do everything. We can't acting because they are nothing like us"

Within the coeducational class it would seem that certain behaviours are accepted, provided enough space has been arranged between the opposing genders to be within clear cultural limits. However, those behaviours or activities such as acting, which would seem to be beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable in a coeducational setting with members of the opposite gender who are not direct family or even distant relatives, are simply eliminated or deleted by some, as female trainees 9 illustrates:

"I delete some creative steps which demand acting" [G6FQ9]

It is possible for misconceptions or problems to arise as a result of coeducation in a culture where the "norm is that males and females who are not related should not interact with each other" (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 137). This large-culture norm of non-

interaction is also found in Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) where, on the one hand, the females are simply repositioned right out from their coeducational environments to avoid misconceptions while, on the other, in Khuwaileh (2000, p. 285) an awareness of cultural differences is once again advised especially as regards the position of teaching in “the Arab culture”. Female trainee 10 is keen to avoid any misconceptions and so repositions her behaviour accordingly:

“to avoid any misconception that may happen, I have to treat the girls normally, but the men within limited freedom” [G2FQ10]

5.3.3.2 Owing multiple identities

The second instance of repositioning I have called ‘owning multiple identities’ which happens when the teacher trainees are in the process of changing from pre-service students to becoming English teachers in the microteaching room (Albrecht & Carnes, 2006). As the trainees move towards a conceptualisation of themselves as more of a teacher and less of a student, they can be said to be “changing identities” (Skinner, 2012, p. 46). It is through cultural and social discourses, or what they say about themselves, that positioning takes place; while repositioning occurs in terms of the struggle to claim ownership of a range of identities including imagined, temporary and changing (Burr, 1995; 2003; Norton, 1997; Pennycook, 2001; Skinner, 2012).

In my study, the teacher trainees “simultaneously negotiate” (Bell, 2007, p. 24) multiple roles or identities – some fixed, some temporary and some imagined – within the coeducational microteaching class, including: males or females; Omanis; Muslims; third-year teacher trainees; tertiary college students; classmates; friends; peer observers in microteaching lessons; teachers performing microteaching lessons; and children participating in microteaching lessons. Not only are they positioning (and repositioning) themselves within these identities, they are also positioning the other trainee teachers as well through their “talk” (Burr, 2003, p. 204). For example, female trainee 3, in group

4, has positioned herself as the teacher in the microteaching lesson and has positioned her classmates as her students:

“I feel normal because I behave as a teacher and they are my students”

[G4FQ3]

Male trainee 1 has repositioned himself as a child:

“I love that and try to act as possible as a real child” [G3MQ1]

While in another example below female trainee 3, in group 3, has positioned her classmates within the imagined community of children:

“I have learnt how to treat them in Microteaching as being students in my class, not classmates. I imagine them as kids” [G3FQ3]

It appears that the teacher trainees are thus able to interact with opposite-gender classmates for three main reasons. Firstly, because some have positioned their classmates as their students, children or “kids” in the microteaching classroom (as illustrated above), and secondly, because some have positioned their classmates as family members:

“my classmates become as my sisters and brothers so I don’t feel shy from them”

[G4FQ7]

The notion of family is important in this context because it is only within the family that less-restricted behaviours between males and females are allowed, such as laughing, smiling, being in close proximity and maintaining eye contact.

A third reason why some of the teacher trainees have no problem engaging in talk with the opposite gender – such as giving them tasks, asking them to pay attention or explaining instructions in the microteaching room – is because they have taken on the identity or roles of teachers. They might have found interaction with the opposite gender difficult due to large-culture constraints, but having claimed ownership of the “job” of

being a teacher through repositioning their identities they are able to engage when managing the class or monitoring group work, for example:

“This is my job, so I should not be shy to move around and check” [G6MQ4]

The trainees also reposition their classmates as teachers and so are able to “accept” when the opposite-gender classmate engages with them:

“I accept it because I understand that they’re doing their job” [G3MQ7]

Therefore, through repositioning teacher identity a certain amount of understanding has been reached in the microteaching classroom as regards interaction:

“I also have no problem with that because they understand that I am suppose to act as real teacher” [G4FQ9]

(Gunn, 2007) found that in some instances the males and females in the UAE group-work study had no problem working together in mixed-gender groups. However, they requested that the teacher allocate them to groups because, as one female participant explained, “she did not want to look like she was actively choosing to work with either men or women” (Gunn, 2007, p. 66). So, if the initiative or command comes from the course teacher, rather than the students themselves deciding who will be in the mixed-gender groups, then that would be regarded as acceptable. The students are seen to be passively obeying orders or instructions, in keeping with the norms of their “culture and its influence on male-female relationships” (Gunn, 2007, p. 68), rather than actively seeking out coeducational interactions. Similarly, the participants in my study are able to engage with each other provided they are within certain limits and not perceived to be actively initiating contact for two main reasons. Firstly, coeducation is the policy at the college, so by interacting they are passively obeying the college rules and administration. Secondly, by assuming the role or identity of the teacher they can do certain things which would normally be discouraged in their large culture as Omanis and

Muslims, such as talk to, walk near, interact, make eye contact and engage with the opposite gender.

5.3.3.2.1 Identity in talk

I would like to interrogate this second reason further by interpreting the engagements with the opposite gender in light of the three kinds of identity in talk proposed by Zimmerman (1998, p. 90) namely: “Discourse, Situational and Transportable Identities”. The teacher trainees adopt discourse identities when they engage in organised or sequenced interactions such as questioning and answering. For example, when the teacher trainee directs a question they become the questioner and they position the targeted recipient of that question “the reciprocal identity of the answerer” (Skinner, 2012, p. 48). As the name suggests, situational identities are assumed in particular situations, such as those within the microteaching class where the trainees position themselves as teachers in the classroom and tell the ‘children’ to pay attention, for example. The third kind of identity, transportable, is so named because these “travel with individuals across situations” (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 90). For example, the trainees in my microteaching classroom will carry their identities as Omanis and Muslims into other classrooms, into their homes and elsewhere. In the first example below, the ‘ok’ refers to male trainee 3’s transportable identity where it will be okay for him to engage with the females (using discourse identity to tell them to keep calm) because he is doing so within his situational identity:

“it is ok because I am a teacher and I have to make them calm” [G6MQ3]

In the second example below, once again the ‘ok’ refers to transportable identity, which will be okay because female trainee 9 has repositioned herself within her situational identity as the teacher. Skinner (2012, p. 58) suggests that when teacher trainees use these three kinds of identities it can result in “having more interactional space leading to opportunities for more meaningful communication”. In the context of my study these identities provide space or opportunities to enable interaction and engagement between

opposite genders within the cultural and social constraints under which they are operating in the microteaching situation:

“It’s ok for me because I’m the teacher and I put myself in the situation”

[G3FQ9]

5.3.3.2.2 Claiming ownership

However, not all the teacher trainees are able to reposition themselves to interact with the opposite gender in the microteaching class. They perceive that the coeducational microteaching environment does not reflect the real classroom. In the example below, female trainee 10 will, therefore, not be able to practice the songs that have been modelled or demonstrated to them despite the positioning of the classmates as children. By reinterpreting Norton’s (1997, p. 422), notion of “ownership” away from the English language learning context and reapplying it to the coeducational English teacher training context, some trainees “might not consider themselves legitimate” teachers if they are not able to claim full ownership of their imagined school classroom community, or their imagined identities as grade 1–4 school teachers, so will not be able to participate in activities like singing action songs to their imagined school children:

“it doesn’t let me to imagine in real situation in situation I can’t sing the songs to my children as model does” [G5FQ10]

As mentioned in Chapter Three, section 3.4.5.2, even though microteaching can be described as artificial for reasons such as the teaching of peers, rather than real children (Gürbüz, 2006), it has been found to be a beneficial tool to help prepare teacher trainees to practice for their real classrooms (Benton-Kupper, 2001; Gürbüz, 2006). Also trainees can learn new ideas and strategies from each other (Benton-Kupper, 2001). Studies further suggest that, despite the lack of authenticity, it is the place where for many of the trainees it is the first time they start to identify themselves as teachers and begin to imagine what real teaching is like (Seferoğlu, 2006).

Furthermore, in the microteaching class, they can practice their planning and teaching

strategies and develop their teaching personalities or personas (Al-Methan, 2003). Therefore, in order to authenticate the microteaching experience more, Sen (2009) suggests the microteaching class should be organised in ways that best represent the actual context in which the trainees will one day find themselves.

The microteaching classes in my study are coeducational, however the schools, except grades 1 to 4, are not. The male trainees will not teach in coeducational classes at all and only females will teach grades 1 to 4 in coeducational classes and then will teach female-only classes for grades 5 to 12. So the coeducational microteaching classrooms in which they are practising are not helping them to prepare for the real Omani classrooms at all. Agee (2006, p. 195) proposes that “some of the greatest tensions that arise in teacher education actually center on disjunctions between students' imagined roles and models for teaching advocated in education programs”. While studies demonstrate the success that positioning in imagined communities of school teachers and English language classrooms has on trainees with “no teaching experience” (Barkhuizen, 2009, p. 292), my study has demonstrated limited success, despite many of the trainees claiming ownership of multiple identities. Furthermore, Skinner (2012, p. 52) warns that the “degree of performance necessary in microteaching” is so much more demanding than in many of the other identities that trainee teachers may adopt, that it can lead to “potential confusion”. Certainly coeducation in the large culture surrounding the Omani microteaching context, appears to be exacerbating disjuncture and confusion, as can be seen in the example below from male trainee 1:

“women make me confuse” [G1MQ1]

5.3.3.3 Running small cultures

The third instance of repositioning involves those teacher trainees who have successfully positioned themselves and have claimed ownership of identities to the extent that they are able to engage in certain behaviours in their microteaching classrooms that would not usually be accepted outside the classroom walls, such as answering questions directly posed by the opposite gender and walking comfortably

close enough to the opposite gender. For example, female trainee 11 in the quote below claims she has learned to behave:

“I have learned to behave in a coeducational classes” [G1FQ11]

I would like to contend that she, along with the other trainees who have learned how ‘to behave’, have done so because they are creating new small cultures within the microteaching class in order to balance or cope with coeducation and the large-culture norms that it brings in dealing with the opposite gender. Not only can these small cultures “run between as well as within related large cultures” (Holliday, 1999, p. 239), it is the trainees themselves who are creating and therefore running these new small cultures. They have developed new customs and rules for dealing with situations in a manner that is still appropriate to the wider large culture outside the classroom walls, but still allows the trainees to do the necessary tasks and actions during microteaching without having to compromise themselves, or their families’ or their reputations.

Thus, in my microteaching classes, both large culture and small culture are at work. The participants reflect the large-culture perceptions of their parents, their Omani culture, their traditions, their religion and their customs. However, they are creating new small cultures within the context of the coeducational microteaching class where they are distancing themselves from the opposite gender in terms of physical space, in seating arrangements in the class, by watching the way they address each other and by watching the way they act as teachers or even as children in the microteaching class.

In MacKenzie (2011, p. 133), I found that the female participants were “creating a new “small” culture to deal with the impact of coeducation on their “large” culture. However, in the present study I have found that it is not only the females, but also the males, who are creating and running their new small cultures, as male trainee 2 describes:

“I always avoid to treat someone in a way he does not like so I always attend to ask my friends and they are of course males to do activity or exercises and aslo I avide to put girls in embbarresing situation”. [G3MQ2]

While Khuwaileh (2000) and Gunn (2007) do not refer to Holliday's (1999) notion of large and small culture, both studies imply it by addressing how the impact of culture affects what is happening inside the classroom. It is this type of situation, argues Khuwaileh, (2000, p. 286), that forces the participants "to operate in two cultures": first the Jordanian culture outside the classroom and second the culture operating within the English classroom "within the Jordanian society".

Despite running small cultures within the microteaching class, it cannot be denied that many of the male and female teacher trainees are still struggling with coeducation giving rise to what I call 'the negative mirror-effect', which I will discuss in conclusion to this chapter. For example, male trainee 3 is concerned about the effect of coeducation on ability or performance:

"It weakens our abilities in learning especially if the number of the ladies is more than the guys" [G3MQ3]

Female trainee 1 also emphasises how coeducation negatively impacts level or performance as well as behaviour or participation:

"Coeducation has a very negative effects in both some students behaviour and their level of study" [G2FQ1]

5.3.4 The negative mirror-effect

While new small cultures have been developed and many of the teacher trainees have critically repositioned themselves, the results still show that coeducation is affecting their participation and performance. In addition, the microteaching classroom, although it is an acknowledged artificial practice teaching environment, does not reflect the gender organisation of Omani schools either, which makes it even more of an inauthentic training experience for the participants. According to their perceptions, in answer to my third research question, the coeducational microteaching classroom has caused masking, inhibiting, repositioning, rearranging, owning and running. I have taken

the initial letters of each of these words and arrived at the acronym: mirror. The negative mirror-effect is thus the result of coeducation, where trainees **m**ask, **i**nhibit, **r**eposition, **r**earrange, **o**wn (and) **r**un in terms of microteaching.

In order to overcome the negative mirror-effect of coeducation I propose that we listen to the voices of the teacher trainees themselves, such as Farida calling for separation from the males in microteaching:

“In micro-teaching separate boys from girls”

From the males, Arif, too, wants separation:

“I would separate them, boys alone and girls”

The call to separate males and females from large-culture Islamic communities is not new. From a British perspective, Halstead (1991, p. 263) argues that single-gender schooling has “been one of the most persistent demands of Muslims in this country ever since they became numerous enough to make their voice heard”. Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, p. 15) suggests “separate spaces” within coeducation in order to accommodate the large culture and small culture of the females in the Negev Region. While in North America, Hamdan (2010, p. 387) hopes the perceptions of Arab-Muslim-Canadian women “will contribute to the debate concerning the value of single-sex classes in co-educational schools”.

Similar to Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) and Hamdan (2010), many of the teacher trainees in the present study are asking for single-gender classes within the coeducational college so that they can participate and perform in the microteaching classes without having to mask, inhibit or reposition themselves. While the call for separation comes from both male and female voices, it appears louder and stronger from the females, who are also asking for understanding:

“I think it will be not difficult I our doctors understand our behaviour in front of men” [G3FQ6]

This then has been the purpose of my thesis: to understand the perceptions of the female and male teacher trainees as regards coeducation and the perceived effect on their behaviour or performance and participation in the microteaching classes and in doing so to give them a voice. I will use Chapter Six as an opportunity to let these voices be heard for a final time when I conclude my thesis.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

“For me, actually I, when I get the chance of teaching boys and girls, I look at it as a good chance for me. So, I try to do as best as I can, but for, that’s for me, but for other people and other students they might do better in one gender classes because what I noticed from my colleagues and some students they are shy in front of girls”

The words above of Ahmed further illustrates the result presented in Chapter Five showing that there are some teacher trainees who do not have a problem with coeducational microteaching classes and also recognising that there are those trainees who do. In the coeducation versus single-gender debate thus, there are instances where “the jury remains out on the effectiveness of single-sex classes” (Younger & Warrington, 2006, p. 607) in the perceptions of a few, mainly male, trainees in the Omani microteaching context. However, as stated in Chapter Three, section 3.3.5.1, it is not my intention to take sides in the debate. Rather, in this concluding chapter I will give voice to the teacher-trainee perceptions of coeducation and their perceived effects on microteaching by first summarising the main findings of my study. I will then discuss the implications of the study, recommendations will be made and the theoretical contribution of this study will be presented. Finally, I will end with a personal reflection on my thesis journey and its future scope.

6.1 Summary of Main Findings

Situated within a coeducational initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman, it has been found that for many of the teacher trainees the coeducational microteaching classes are sites of struggle where multiple SEPRET perceptions are being reflected, sustained and transformed. The male and female teacher trainees are expressing similar emotions, giving similar evaluations and making similar predictions

as regards coeducation. Their perceptions as regards the impact of coeducational microteaching classes differ only slightly. However, coeducation appears to be creating an environment in which stereotypical and large-culture gender roles are being fostered and through which smaller cultures of romance and laddishness are being perpetuated in the female and male teacher trainees respectively. Furthermore, as a result of coeducation, the trainees are experiencing a negative mirror-effect in masking true identities and behaviours. They are inhibiting aspects of performance and participation and are repositioning themselves and their identities between and within the large and small cultures both inside and outside the coeducational microteaching classroom. Through the voices of the trainee teachers comes the call to the powers that be to understand their behaviour in front of the opposite gender, and also a critical plea, from many, to separate the genders, if not in the coeducational college as a whole, then certainly within the microteaching component of their initial teacher education programme.

In the following two sections, 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, I will highlight how the main findings link firstly, to my conceptual framework, namely social constructionism, and, secondly, to the theoretical underpinnings, namely my position straddling the critical and interpretive paradigms.

6.1.1 Linking the findings to social constructionism

In Chapter Three, section 3.1, I outlined the four main tenets of social constructionism: a critical stance towards taken-for-granted assumptions; historical and cultural specificity; knowledge is sustained by social processes; and knowledge and social action go together. Not only is my thesis informed by these tenets, but they also each link to the main findings, as I will demonstrate below.

6.1.1.1 A critical stance towards taken-for-granted assumptions

Firstly, as stated in Chapter Three, section 3.2.6, this thesis is adopting a critical stance by calling into question the taken-for-granted assumption that perceptions are formed individually and cognitively. Instead, it has been found that multiple perceptions (six to be precise) are being socially co-constructed in the coeducational microteaching classroom.

In addition, by giving voice to the trainees asking for separate spaces I have been able to call into question my own assumptions surrounding coeducation as being a more effective way of organising classrooms. In other words, this finding has come about through the process of “critical reflexivity” as explained in Gergen (2009, p. 12).

6.1.1.2 Historical and cultural specificity

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.3.3.3, it was found that both large culture and small culture are operating in the coeducational microteaching classes. Large-culture perceptions are being specifically reflected through the historical opinions of the parents, through the Omani traditions and customs, and through religion. Small cultures are being created, too, in which the trainees are repositioning themselves to accommodate coeducation in a way that is compatible with the large culture.

6.1.1.3 Knowledge is sustained by social processes

Thirdly, language is an example of a social process and it was found that through language the perceptions of the teacher trainees are being voiced. However, due to the presence of the opposite gender in the microteaching class, some trainees are finding themselves unable to speak up, participate, or perform as they would like to. They are being inhibited by coeducation and they feel obliged to mask their authentic identities and behaviours.

6.1.1.4 Knowledge and social action go together

Lastly, in the coeducational microteaching classes, it was found that some social actions are being encouraged and some social actions are being discouraged. For example, the cultures of laddishness and romance, as well as the repositioning of the trainees themselves in terms of their behaviour and identities are being encouraged, while the negative mirror-effect is discouraging certain aspects of performance and participation in many of the teacher trainees, both male and female.

6.1.2 Linking the findings to the interpretive and critical paradigms

I illustrated in Chapter Four, section 4.2 and the ensuing subsections how this thesis is underpinned by a position that straddles two paradigms and I will now provide examples of how my findings link to each of them. Firstly, research within the interpretive paradigm is centred around understanding. Not only has it been my purpose to understand the perceptions of the teacher trainees, it has also been found that the trainees themselves are asking to be understood as can be seen in this example quoted from a female trainee in the closing sentences of Chapter Five:

“I think it will be not difficult I our doctors understand our behaviour in front of men”

[G3FQ6]

Secondly, in terms of the critical paradigm, as outlined in Chapter Four, section 4.2.3, one of the main purposes in doing this type of research is not only to empower the silenced by giving them a voice, but also to bring about change or transformation. Not only has a change occurred in my position regarding coeducation through conducting this study, but one of its main findings has been the identification of a new perception where trainees express changes in their experiences, which I have termed ‘transformation’. Certainly, reporting on the perceptions through the direct quotes from the teacher trainees themselves has allowed their voices to be heard and their transformations to be voiced as can be seen in this example from Chapter Five, section 5.1.5, when a female trainee experiences a critical moment of empowering change:

“Yes. I learned that I’m part of this society and I’ve got rights as well as boys”

[G2FQ8]

6.2 Implications

The implications of this study presented below centre around my third research aim listed in Chapter One, section 1.2, regarding a deeper more critical understanding of the suitability of coeducation within this particular Omani microteaching context.

6.2.1 Implications of this study for educational reform

As outlined in Chapter Two, coeducation has come about as part of the educational and economic reform processes underpinning modernisation and development in the Sultanate of Oman. In terms of the implications of this study for reform initiatives in particular, firstly, it has highlighted the value of incorporating the often absent student perceptions or voices regarding the introduction of policies that directly impact them, such as coeducation.

Secondly, this study is promoting a critical understanding of both female and male English teacher trainee perceptions in calling into question the suitability of coeducation “in the development of modernity” (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006, p. 3) in this particular microteaching context. To be critical means to effect change (Creswell, 2009; Pennycook, 2004b; Troudi, 2015). It is hoped that through this study the voices of those trainees will be heard and that in some small way, they may inform decisions to bring about change in the gender organisation of microteaching classes in future teacher education programmes in the Sultanate of Oman.

6.2.2 Implications of this study for perceptions

Through a social constructionist understanding of perceptions it has been revealed how they are actively constructed and negotiated through social interaction where the

reflections of family, history, society, customs, religion and culture are evidenced. Within this theoretical framework, perceptions are shaped by the context or environment and can mold “affective processes in the classroom and impact on their actions” (Bernat, 2008, p. 7). The implication of this study for the Barkhuizen (1998) model of learner actions on their perceptions is that it falls short in accounting for the specific behaviours and types of perceptions that are emerging in the Omani microteaching classes as a result of coeducation. In section 6.4.3 I will present the model of teacher trainee actions on their perceptions of coeducation that the study under discussion in this thesis has contributed.

6.2.3 Implications of this study for coeducation

There is a tendency in much of the debate surrounding coeducation to divide research issues or topics along gender lines and investigate them separately such as the chilly climate for females (Hall & Sandler, 1982) and male underachievement (Martino et al., 2005). Therefore, an implication of this study for coeducation is to problematise these seemingly divisive discourses such as the “polarizing of boys and girls as troublesome boys and compliant girls” (Jones & Myhill, 2004, p. 553) and rather to redirect the debate towards more “gender relational and gender-inclusive approaches” (Younger & Warrington, 2008, p. 429). For example, while the notion of the chilly climate, broadly speaking, refers to the way one gender is preferenced or treated differently to the other, largely at the hands of faculty (Serex & Townsend, 1999), the teacher trainees in the present study, both male and female are experiencing a chilly climate, not as a result of faculty, but rather as a result of coeducation which is not only causing chilly masking, inhibiting and repositioning, but it is also providing a chilly environment through which stereotypical gender roles are being perpetuated.

A further critical implication of this study for coeducation would be to call into question these types of romantic and laddish roles, for example, which the teacher trainees are not only engendering for themselves, but are also foisting upon each other as can be seen in this quote below of male trainee 5’s romanticized description of female trainees:

“Sometimes the opposite gender tends to be shy and silent” [G3MQ5]

Silence, demureness and modesty are behaviours associated with the culture of romance as outlined in Chapter Three, while in the quote below female trainee 4 ascribes to the males a particular type of behaviour often displayed within the culture of laddism, namely humour:

“I hate this to be with boys, but sometimes I try to say, it is ok, they will help me in my microteaching to add some kind of humour” [G3FQ4]

A final implication of this study for coeducation can be seen in the comparison and contrast between the female and male perceptions of coeducation. While the results of the present study illustrate that there are more similarities than differences between their perceptions, the differences suggest that in future investigations of coeducation and its effects, the perceptions of both males and females should be mandatory.

6.2.4 Implications of this study for microteaching

Although it is not an authentic classroom teaching experience (Gürbüz, 2006), the microteaching room should best represent the eventual school context (Sen, 2009) and be a safe and secure environment within which trainees can prepare and practice aspects of their teaching before going out to face real children in real classrooms (Albrecht & Carnes, 2006). Instead, the results of this study show that these coeducational classrooms neither reflect the eventual Omani school classrooms, nor are they safe and secure practice teaching environments. Instead they are sites of struggle where, set within the large Omani culture, participant perceptions are calling for ‘SEPRET’ single-gender microteaching classes. It is believed that these separate spaces could provide safe places in which neither female nor male English teacher trainees will be disadvantaged, through which small cultures of romance and laddism can be discouraged and by which the negative mirror-effect of coeducation on the participation and performance of the trainees in the microteaching component of this particular initial teacher education programme could be diminished or even avoided.

6.2.5 Implications of this study for TESOL practitioners

The implications of this study for TESOL practitioners are twofold. First, as expatriates working in environments often foreign to their own large and small cultures, TESOL teachers should consciously familiarize themselves with the “social and cultural” (Gunn, 2007, p. 76) norms of the learners. According to Troudi (2005, p. 122) this implies much more than “cultural sensitivity and respect for other cultures”, but rather they “need to develop the type of critical cultural knowledge” that will assist in understanding, and where possible in accommodating, the needs and learning processes in the TESOL classroom. Second, from a critical perspective, due to the transitory and often precarious nature of the TESOL profession particularly in large culture contexts such as those in the Arabian Gulf, where top-down educational policies and reform are the norm (Karmani, 2010; Sanassian, 2011), TESOL practitioners might be reticent, for example, to problematise seemingly sensitive or controversial issues such as coeducation. While TESOL practitioners might not be able to effect major shifts in educational policy and maybe few transformations and emancipations have occurred as a result of their educational practice, I believe TESOL teachers and teacher trainers can conduct research studies that provide empirical evidence in support of positions and, in the seeking-out of student perceptions, they can provide a platform from which the often voiceless could critically be heard and empowered.

6.3 Recommendations

This study proposes three recommendations, each contingent upon the other, with regards to the reorganisation, restructuring and repositioning of coeducational microteaching classes within this particular initial teacher education programme in the Sultanate of Oman.

6.3.1 Separate coeducational microteaching classes into single-gender classes

Based on the findings of this research study voiced through the perceptions of the female and male teacher trainees, and in order to mitigate against the negative mirror-

effect of coeducation on their performance and participation, it is recommended that the trainees separate into reorganised male-only and female-only classes for all the microteaching components of their college-based practical as well as theoretical courses for the duration of their teacher education programme.

6.3.2 Separate cycle 1 and cycle 2 microteaching of classes

The first recommendation promoting gender separation, although only in specific contexts, might be interpreted as a direct contravention of the government imposed coeducational policy and as such might not be welcomed. Therefore, a second recommendation is to separate the microteaching classes, not according to gender which will happen incidentally, but rather to restructure the classes according to the grades they will practice teaching. Cycle 1, comprising grades 1 to 4, is taught by females only. The teaching strategies and methodologies for young learners involve more instances of teacher led songs, action rhymes and physical activities than is suggested for the older learners in cycle 2, grades 5 to 10. The data indicate that the female trainees experience the negative mirror-effect more when teaching cycle 1 lessons in coeducational microteaching classes than they do teaching cycle 2. Therefore, although not ideal, the males and females would not be separated in the cycle 2 microteaching classes.

6.3.3 Separate microteaching from college classrooms to school classrooms

The second recommendation, however, will not alleviate the masking, inhibiting and repositioning of either the males or the females in their coeducational cycle 2 microteaching classes. Therefore, this study proposes a third recommendation of repositioning the microteaching component of the teacher education programme from the college classrooms to school classrooms. Critics of this idea could argue what would be the difference between microteaching and the school-based practice teaching experience modules that the trainees will complete in the final year of the programme? It is envisaged that a microteaching room would be designated in the target schools,

apart from the usual classrooms. The trainee teachers would conduct their microteaching lessons with smaller numbers of children in the room and would still be observed by their peers and the course teacher. As the schools are already organised along gender lines, the male and female trainees would not be practicing their teaching to and in front of opposite-gender peers. The females would teach coeducational grades 1 to 4 children only. This recommendation will not only reduce the negative mirror-effects of coeducational microteaching classes, but it will also help the trainees to practice their teaching in a more authentic setting, because the school-based microteaching classes will resemble the gender organisation of the real classrooms for which they are being trained to teach.

6.4 Contribution of the Study

The theoretical contribution of this study is presented below with regards to coeducation, microteaching and perceptions.

6.4.1 Contributing to the critical debate on coeducation

This study has contributed to a wider debate on coeducation from a critical perspective by challenging the perception that it is a suitable way of organising education, especially in an Arabian Gulf–Omani context.

6.4.2 Contributing to the literature on microteaching

This study has contributed to the literature on microteaching in five ways. Firstly, a gap in the literature on gender and teacher education has been filled by bringing together the topic of coeducation and microteaching in a single study. Secondly, this study has added to the microteaching and identity literature by exploring “notions of identity in microteaching” (Skinner, 2012, p. 47). Apart from the study by Bell (2007) mentioned in Chapter Five, this area has been described as rather under-researched (Skinner, 2012). Thirdly, this study has added to the literature on microteaching from an Arabian Gulf–Omani perspective. Fourthly, this exploration has elaborated on work about the importance of student voice, particularly regarding educational reforms and the

implementation of change resulting in coeducational microteaching classes. Finally, this study has added to the literature on perceptions of coeducation in a microteaching context by contributing a new model (or diagram) of learner actions, which I will present in the next section, developed from Barkhuizen (1998) as seen in Chapter Three, section 3.2.5, Figure 1.

6.4.3 Contributing a new model on perceptions of coeducational microteaching classes

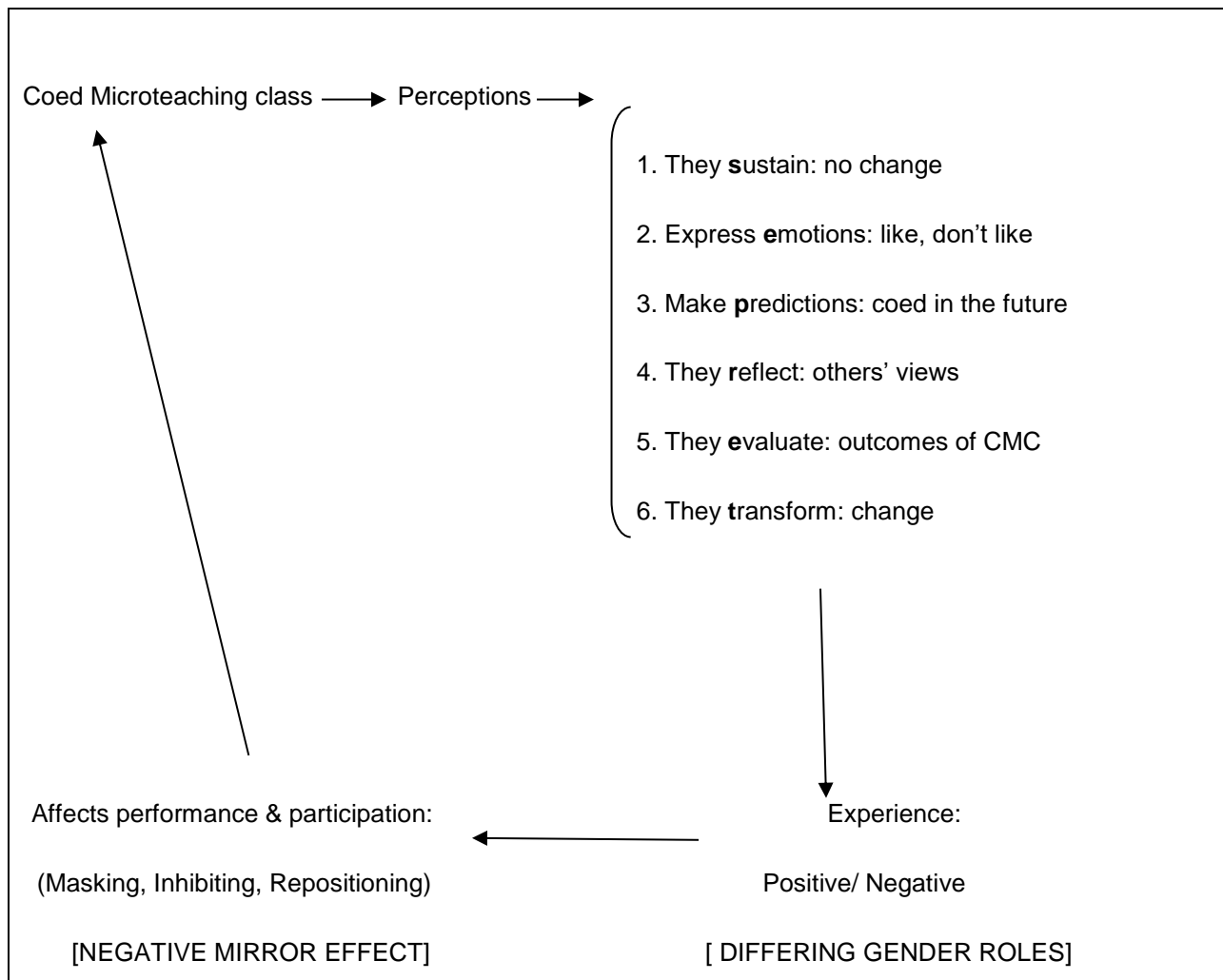


Figure 9 Diagram of learners' actions on their perceptions of the coeducational microteaching class

Figure 9 above depicts the learner or trainee teacher actions on their perceptions of the coeducational microteaching class and, in doing so, also illustrates the findings of my study. I will explain the diagram in the sections that follow:

6.4.3.1 The coeducational microteaching class

The trainee-teacher perceptions emerge within the context or environment of their coeducational microteaching classes.

In terms of the chilly-climate construct the coeducational microteaching classroom is not perceived as safe and comfortable. Some of the males and many of the females do not feel secure, thus the coeducational microteaching class has become a 'chilly' site of struggle.

6.4.3.2 Perceptions

Three perception types are depicted in the Barkhuizen (1998) diagram: feelings, judgements and predictions. From a social-constructionist perspective and through the data analysis, three more perceptions were identified: sustainments, reflections and transformations. Two of the Barkhuizen (1998) perceptions were reconceptualised: feelings as emotions; judgements as evaluations. These six perceptions were arrived at: sustainments, emotions, predictions, reflections, evaluations and transformations, which form the acronym, SEPRET.

6.4.3.3 Experience

In the Barkhuizen's (1998) diagram, attitudes emerge that are described as nonlinguistic outcomes of the learning and teaching taking place in the classroom. In my model, the six perceptions give rise to a microteaching experience that ranges along a spectrum of emotion from more positive to more negative experiences and also perpetuates stereotypical gender roles such as demure females and laddish males.

6.4.3.4 Affecting performance and participation

Barkhuizen (1998) found that levels of motivation and other areas of receptivity, such as anxiety in the classroom, are affected by attitude, while I found the learner or teacher trainee behaviour is affected in terms of the negative mirror-effects of masking, inhibiting, repositioning (including rearranging, owning and running) their performance and participation in the coeducational microteaching class.

6.4.3.5 Revisiting the coeducational microteaching class: a cyclical site of struggle

In these Omani microteaching classes then, coeducation is creating a chilly climate, and also resulting in the creation of new small cultures within which the participants can carry out certain behaviours without compromising large-culture boundaries. Certainly these coeducational microteaching “classrooms, both in themselves and in the relationship to the world beyond their walls are complex social and cultural spaces” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 89). Perceptions are being formed, identities are being constructed and, in concluding the section on the theoretical contribution of this thesis (before moving on to my personal reflection) I would like to propose that the diagrammatic representation of my findings in Figure 9 illustrates the teacher-trainee perceptions and experiences of their coeducational microteaching classroom context as a cyclical site of “struggle” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 98).

6. 5 Personal Reflection and Future Scope of the Thesis

This doctoral path has been an intensely personal and life-changing journey that stems back to my childhood: growing up under an apartheid regime in South Africa; and the memories of my mother, to whom this thesis is dedicated. From the age of five, through her widowed words, she instilled in me three key principles that have at times both hindered and helped me throughout my life and especially on this thesis journey: be

critical, education is freedom and follow your dreams. My mother's words will now guide this reflection on my thesis and its future scope.

6.5.1 Be critical

In 1986, I wrote an essay entitled "The effective teacher" (MacKenzie, 1986). In my reflection of all that I had experienced, learned and taught during my own initial teacher education course that year in Cape Town – at the height of apartheid in South Africa – I expressed a desire in that particular curriculum context to equip my future students with “adequate tools so that they can critically assess the curriculum and the underlying values and assumptions associated with the hidden curriculum, not only of the particular school, but of the education system as a whole” (Mackenzie, 1986, p. 13). Thus, from a young age, both personally and professionally, at the outset of my teaching career and now thirty years later in the culmination of this thesis, I am a passionate TESOL practitioner and teacher trainer who fiercely subscribes to a worldview underpinned and informed by criticality. This thesis journey has re-energised me to continue instilling in myself and in my English teacher trainees, not only a love and passion for teaching, but also the desire to constantly and consistently be critical.

6.5.2 Education is freedom

I have always wanted to be a teacher. Maybe this passion for teaching was ignited by a combination of my mother's words and my own perception, constructed within the small-culture context of my family and the large-culture context of my country, which – despite loss, trauma and pain, education, degrees and now a doctoral qualification – bring freedom because they cannot be forcibly removed or taken away. In thinking of the future scope of my thesis and the freedom it will bring for me, I would like to suggest three areas that could be further researched. First, a follow-up study could be conducted on the perceptions of the participants in the present study, now practicing teachers, who once again find themselves in coeducational microteaching environments

when they participate in Ministry of Education-led in-service teacher training courses and professional development workshops throughout the various regions in Oman. Second, a critical study could be conducted in which the fostering and perpetuation of gender stereotypes could be called into question, particularly in the feminised coeducational cycle 1 schools in Oman. Third, a comparative study could be conducted between the national university, which has been coeducational since its inception, and the college in which my thesis is situated to compare and contrast perceptions of coeducation across different courses and disciplines, and thereby not limiting the context to a microteaching component of an initial teacher education programme.

6.5.3 Follow your dreams

This journey – to follow my dreams in writing this thesis – has been long, challenging, transforming and incredibly isolating. While my mother is no longer with me, she has smiled down upon me every step of the way from her picture placed on a wall of encouragement I created in my thesis room (see Appendix 16). Over the many years that it has taken to complete this journey, I have placed items on the wall not only to encourage myself along the way to completion, but also to help me visualise the end goal. From my table I can see neon-coloured reminders recording every thesis milestone reached on calendars, posters, and notes detailing deadlines and endless to-do lists. I can also see photographs of: previous educational achievements, current dream scuba diving whale shark encounters and my future Doctor of Education certificate and accompanying graduation pose. I have truly been following and living the Exeter-thesis dream in Oman.

6.5.4 My final thoughts

I end this thesis with my final thoughts as to the relevance and criticality of my doctoral journey. No matter how many contracts are terminated, no matter how many protests are silenced, no matter how many demonstrations are dispersed, no matter how many

walls are built, no matter how many boats are turned back or exits are made, the TESOL world crosses many boundaries and divides. As TESOL practitioners, including teachers, teacher trainers and life-long learners in that world, we “need, now more than ever, to function as *transformative intellectuals*” (Johnson, 2009, p. 121). Through this thesis journey I have come to realise that effecting change or being critical is not only about transforming society or removing ideological “obfuscation”, but it’s “the quiet seeking out of potential moments, the results of which we don’t always know. It’s about the everyday” (Pennycook, 2004b, p. 342).

In trying to understand and give voice to the English teacher-trainee perceptions of coeducation in an everyday microteaching context, I hope this study will remain relevant through 2016 and beyond and that I have indeed been critical enough. Lastly, it is hoped that this thesis will not only bring about understanding, but that it will also bring about transformation in the reader and the powers that be, as it has brought about in me, through critically listening to those Omani voices asking for separate microteaching spaces in their initial teacher education programme. I began Chapter Six in the words of a male trainee and, finally, I would like to end by giving the last word to a female trainee:

“Yes, I learn that coeducation is ok, but we need it not in all classes” [G1FQ4]

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 The BEd (English) study plan

Semester 1 Academic Year /						Semester 2 Academic Year /						تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 1224	Listening and Speaking	3	2	2	Foundation	ENSP 1225	Advanced Writing II	3	2	2	ENSP1122						
COMP 2001	Introduction to Computer I	2	1	2	Foundation	ENSP 1226	Grammar and Usage II	3	2	2	ENSP1123						
ENSP 1122	Advanced Writing I	3	2	2	Foundation	COMP 2002	Introduction to ComputerII	2	1	2	COMP 2001						
ENSP 1121	Advanced Reading and Vocabulary	3	2	2	Foundation Year	ENSP 1111	Introduction to Linguistics	3	2	2							
ENSP 1123	Grammar and Usage I	3	2	2	Foundation	ENSP 2151	Literature I	3	2	2							
ENSP 1212	Phonetics and Phonology	3	2	2	Foundation	EDUC 600	Educational Foundations	3	3	-							
		17	11	12				17	12	10							
Semester 3 Academic Year /						Semester 4 Academic Year /											
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2113	Morphology and Lexical Semantics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111	ENSP 2114	Syntax and Structural Semantics	3	2	1	ENSP2113						
ENSP2228	Report Writing	2	2	-	ENSP 1225	ENSP 3135	Vocabulary and Grammar Language Skills Development	3	2	2							
ENSP 3217	Readings in Applied Linguistics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111	ENSP 4152	Children's Literature	3	2	2							
ENSP 3134	Reading and Writing Skills Development	3	2	2		HIST1008	Oman Across History	2	2	-							
PSYC 210	Educational Psychology	2	2	-		CURR 107	ELT Methods of Teaching	3	3	-							
ISLM4405	Islamic Culture	2	2	-		CURR 088	Educational Technology Using IT	3	2	2	comp2002						
Arab 2003	Practical Arabic Language Skills	2	2	-													
		17	14	4				17	13	7							

Semester 5 Academic Year /						Semester 6 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2232	Initial Literacy Skills Development	3	2	2		ENSP 2215	Language Acquisition	3	2	1	
ENSP 4221	Advanced Listening Comprehension	2	1	2		ENSP 3211	Psycholinguistics	2	1	2	ENSP 1111
ENSP 4222	Creative Writing					ENSP 3212	Sociolinguistics				
ENSP 4223	Debating and Communication					ENSP 3213	Discourse Analysis				
ENSP 3228	Error Recognition and Correction	3	2	2		ENSP 3133	Oral/Aural Language skills Development	3	2	2	
EDUC 800	School Management	2	1	2		PSYC 240	Developmental Psychology	3	3	-	
CURR 170	Practicum 1	3	0	6	CURR 107	CURR 180	Practicum 2	3	0	6	CURR 170
ENSP 4245	ELT School Curriculum Analysis	2	1	2		CURR 108	Classroom Research & Teacher Development	3	3	-	
PSYC 250	Assesment	3	3	-							
		18	10	16				17	11	11	
Semester 7 Academic Year /						Semester 8 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites	Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2231	Communicative Language Teaching Development	3	2	1	CURR 107	ENSP 4143	Differential Learning and Independent Learning	3	2	2	
ENSP 3241	Language Through Stories	3	2	2		PSYC 4138	& Research Methodology Statistics	2	1	2	
ENSP 3116	General Translation	3	2	1		ENSP 4142	Language through the Arts	3	2	2	
ENSP 4251	World Literature	2	1	2	ENSP 2151	CURR 200	Practicum 4	5	0	10	CURR 190
ENSP 4252	Literature 2										
ENSP 4253	Contemporary Literature and Poetry										
CURR 190	Practicum 3	5	0	10	CURR 180						
		16	7	16				13	5	16	

Appendix 2 The Questionnaire

I am conducting research about microteaching and the education of men and women together or coeducation. Please could you take a few minutes to fill in this questionnaire. This is voluntary and anonymity will be respected. The information will be used for my doctoral thesis as well as possible presentations and future publications. Please circle YES or NO and provide reasons for your answers.

A. BACKGROUND: 1. Gender: male / female 2. Age: ____ 3. Married: Yes / No

4. Did you know that **this** was a coeducational college before you arrived here? Yes / No

5. Did your family give you their opinion about coming to a coeducational college? Yes / No

They said _____

6. What is an advantage of a coeducational college? _____

7. What is a disadvantage of a coeducational college? _____

B. THE MICROTEACHING "DOCTOR" (e.g. **MISS** Alison or **MR** Mark):

8. Do you think the **gender** of the "doctor" affects the microteaching class? Yes / No

because _____

9. Do you think there is a difference between the way the "doctor" treats the men and women in microteaching? Yes / No because _____

C. YOU AS THE TEACHER IN THE MICROTEACHING CLASS: How do you feel about ...

10. teaching in front of the opposite gender? _____

11. walking around and checking on groups of the opposite gender? _____

12. telling opposite gender classmates to pay attention? _____

13. Is there a difference between the way you treat the men and women in your lesson?

Yes / No because _____

14. Do you think coeducation has had any effect on your performance in microteaching?

Yes / No because _____

D. YOU AS THE "CHILD" IN THE MICROTEACHING CLASS: How do you feel when ...

15. the teacher asks you to come and write an answer on the board? _____

16. the teacher asks you to perform a dialogue with the opposite gender? _____

17. the teacher of the opposite gender tells you to pay attention? _____

18. Is there a difference in your participation in the class with an opposite gender teacher?

Yes / No because _____

E. YOUR OPINIONS AS A COLLEGE STUDENT:

19. Do you think there will be coeducational schools from grade 1-12 in Oman in the future?

Yes / No because _____

20. Do you like being at a coeducational college? Yes/No because _____

21. Have you learned anything about the opposite gender during the microteaching sessions?

Yes/No I _____

22. Have you learned anything new about yourself as a result of coeducational microteaching classes? Yes/No I _____

23. Has your view on coeducation changed since you first arrived at **this** College nearly 4 years ago? Yes/No I _____

24. **(Please circle)** I prefer **male only/ female only/ coeducational** microteaching classes because _____

25. Please feel free to write any other comments or ideas that you may have about coeducation and microteaching below or on the back of this questionnaire: _____

Thank you so much for your contribution to my study.

Appendix 3 Interview Questions for trainee teachers



Interview Questions

Alison MacKenzie

Thank you for making time and agreeing to this interview. I am conducting research about microteaching and the education of men and women together or coeducation. This interview is being recorded, but your anonymity will be respected. The information will be used for my doctoral thesis as well as possible presentations and future publications.

A. DATE: This interview is taking place on _____ venue: _____

B. PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEE: Third year, male / female **trainee**. Group: _____

Age of trainee: _____ Marital status _____ Completed the questionnaire: _____

C. QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about coeducational classes at **this** College in **general**?
2. How do coeducational microteaching classes make you **feel**?
3. In your opinion are there any **differences** between third year microteaching and second year microteaching classes at **this** College (and if so what are they)?
4. How do you think your **teaching performance** would have been different if there were no males/ females in your microteaching class?
5. How do you think your **participation** as a "child" in the class would have been different if there were no males/ females in your microteaching class?
6. How did you **feel** in the feedback sessions when males/ females commented about your lesson?
7. Do you think there was any **difference** in the way your microteaching "doctors" gave feedback to the males and females in your microteaching class?
8. What would you like to say to the **Ministry of Higher Education** about coeducation and microteaching?
9. What **advice** would you like to give to the new third years about microteaching?
10. What **changes** would you like to see happen in the microteaching classes?

Thank you so much for your time and for contributing to my study.

Appendix 4 Letter of consent for data collection



LETTER OF CONSENT

My name is Alison MacKenzie and I am a Doctor of Education (TESOL) student at the University of Exeter in the U.K.

I'm currently researching an area of Teacher Education, namely, microteaching. I'm particularly interested in the impact of educational reform in Oman especially as regards the education of men and women together or "coeducation".

I would like to collect data from third year male and female English teacher trainees for my thesis. Data collection tools will include a questionnaire, interview and a video recorded observation of a microteaching lesson.

Please complete the table below to indicate your willingness to take part in my research or not. Details of my study will be provided at your request. Confidentiality will be respected and a true and accurate account of the findings will be presented. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Alison (rustaqenglishteacher@yahoo.com)

Statement	YES	NO
I agree to fill in a questionnaire		
I agree to be interviewed		
I agree to be observed		

Name: _____ Group: _____

Email: _____ Phone number: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 5 Example of quantitative analysis of questionnaire items

Comparison of responses to YES / NO items on the questionnaire: *Group 1*

Questionnaire Item	MY	FY	MN	FN	MO	FO
4. Did you know the college was coed	3	1	0	1	0	0
5. Did your family give you their opinion about coming to a coeducational college?	1	4	2	9	0	1
8. Do you think the gender of the "doctor" affects the microteaching class?	1	3	2	1	0	0
9. Do you think there is a difference between the way the "doctor" treats the men and women in microteaching?	1	5	2	7	0	2
13. Is there a difference between the way you treat the men and women in your lesson?	3	10	0	4	0	0
14. Do you think coeducation has had any affect on your performance in microteaching?	3	12	0	1	0	1
18. Is there a difference in your participation in the class with an opposite gender teacher?	0	6	2	6	1	2
19. Do you think there will be coeducational schools from grade 1-12 in Oman in the future?	1	4	1	9	I don't know	1
20. Do you like being at a coeducational college?	2	3	1	10	0	1
21. Have you learned anything about the opposite gender during the microteaching sessions?	1	10	1	2	1	2
22. Have you learned anything new about yourself as a result of coeducational microteaching classes?	3	13	0	0	0	1
23. Has your view on coeducation changed since you first arrived at the <i>this</i> College nearly 4 years ago?	1	6	1	7	1	1

3 males 14 females

Appendix 6 Example of note-taking for female interview



Interview Questions

Alison MacKenzie

Thank you for making time and agreeing to this interview. I am conducting research about microteaching and the education of men and women together or coeducation. This interview is being recorded, but your anonymity will be respected. The information will be used for my doctoral thesis as well as possible presentations and future publications.

A. DATE: This interview is taking place on 27th/4 venue: my office

B. PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEE: Third year, male / female trainee. Group: 1

Age of trainee: 21 Marital status NO Completed the questionnaire: X

C. QUESTIONS *beginning, embarrassing, school not OK, big movement - inter - seems usual - like with it - we don't mind, our college - no matter.*

1. How do you feel about coeducational classes at Rustaq College in **general**?

2. How do coeducational microteaching classes make you **feel**? *depends on the topic - requires - against our culture by movements, actions, we don't do same actions*

3. In your opinion are there any **differences** between third year microteaching and second year microteaching classes at Rustaq College (and if so what are they)? *walking etc but running, singing*

4. How do you think your **teaching performance** would have been different if there were no males / females in your microteaching class? *males ability long attributes more creative, energetic, more many things, action. → culture religion*

5. How do you think your **participation** as a "child" in the class would have been different if there were no males / females in your microteaching class? *maybe → no matter*

6. How did you **feel** in the feedback sessions when males / females commented about your lesson? *no matter when boys give feedback - no inspire - how to feel.*

7. Do you think there was any **difference** in the way your microteaching "doctors" gave feedback to the males and females in your microteaching class? *No difference*

8. What would you like to say to the **Ministry of Higher Education** about coeducation and microteaching? *coeducation → more natural to our society yes separate men + women with benefit in their teaching*

9. What **advice** would you like to give to the new third years about microteaching? *could → continue don't mind - just look at your space. How to feel better*

10. What **changes** would you like to see happen in the microteaching classes? *↓ Rooms → design there are more posters groups → crowded now, talk out extra better.*

Thank you so much for your time and for contributing to my study.

invitation → all materials + equipment

more experience, more in the third year curriculum.

books + cassettes.

Appendix 7 Example of note-taking for male interview



Interview Questions

Alison MacKenzie

Thank you for making time and agreeing to this interview. I am conducting research about microteaching and the education of men and women together or coeducation. This interview is being recorded, but your anonymity will be respected. The information will be used for my doctoral thesis as well as possible presentations and future publications.

A. DATE: This interview is taking place on 25/4 venue: My office

B. PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEE: Third year, male / female **trainee**. Group: 1

Age of trainee: 22 Marital status not married Completed the questionnaire:

C. QUESTIONS *I didn't like it in 1st year - 1st time to deal with girls - lost some skills*

1. How do you feel about coeducational classes at Rustaq College in **general**? *Ok - sometimes difficulty with girls - say their names - maybe they will embarrass.*
2. How do coeducational microteaching classes make you **feel**? *Ok - sometimes difficulty with girls - say their names - maybe they will embarrass.*
3. In your opinion are there any **differences** between third year microteaching and second year microteaching classes at Rustaq College (and if so what are they)? *Developed this year, better, accustomed to girls + teaching materials. Prior knowledge.*
4. How do you think your **teaching performance** would have been different if there were no males / females in your microteaching class? *no what I like without embarrass, free, men feel free, 1924.*
5. How do you think your **participation** as a "child" in the class would have been different if there were no males / females in your microteaching class? *Will be the same for me. They will feel free.*
6. How did you **feel** in the feedback sessions when males / females commented about your lesson? *We like constructive feedback*

7. Do you think there was any **difference** in the way your microteaching "doctors" gave feedback to the males and females in your microteaching class? *as men cycle 1, cycle 2, cycle 3, as men no the same, boys feedback prefer to girls + males*

8. What would you like to say to the **Ministry of Higher Education** about coeducation and microteaching? *separate girls from boys the boys get great marks before but now they are down.*

9. What **advice** would you like to give to the new third years about microteaching? *feel relaxed, not to think about girls, be practical*

10. What **changes** would you like to see happen in the microteaching classes?

no need to separate, because you are accustomed now

Thank you so much for your time and for contributing to my study.

- *Students should be free to use materials and teaching methods*
 - *No midterm exam - because it is practical*
 - *practical schools - to observe + practical*
- Shack, coeducation, quotas, boys say, biased*

Appendix 8 Example of transcribed female interview

Female interviews - Cassette 2 – Interview 2 - Farida

Interviewer : And I am going to ask you a very personal question, and the question is, how old are you?

F : Eh, 21.

Interviewer : 21, and we are starting now, and are you married?

F : No.

Interviewer : No, and em, no we haven't done, no, we are going to do the questionnaire tomorrow. Now, my first question is, how do you feel about co-educational classes, to having males and females together in classes at this College, what's your feeling about that in general?

F : Ah, at the beginning, it was embarrassing, because when we are in schools we are not in co-education but here is a high movement from secondary school to start college to have males and females together, but later it comes usual and we live with it, and we don't mind if males and females are together, because every field, every school, every college, university are designed to be like that, and no matter.

Interviewer : Then, when we talk about micro-teaching classes, and em, you know! you have to teach in front of the boys, or you have to be a student in front of the boys, how do co-educational micro-teaching classes make you feel?

F : Ah, micro-teaching, it depends on the topic. Some topics I don't want to teach it in front of the boys, because it requires something against our culture.

Interviewer : Can you give me an example?

F : For example, the movements, the actions that we want to do it, and in our culture it is not like that, we don't do

some actions, it depends on the action, some actions against our culture.

Interviewer : Can you give me an example, especially because I am not from the culture? So, can you give me an example of some sort of actions that is not accepted to do in front of the male?

F : For example em, running, like that, but walking is ok.

Interviewer : Can I ask you? Walking is ok? But not running? can I ask why?

F : Err, against our culture.

Interviewer : Against the culture, any other example, of something you'd like to do in the micro-teaching class which doesn't make you feel comfortable?

F : Nothing.

Interviewer : Singing?

F : Singing, no.

Interviewer : Singing also not, is that also not part of the culture? To sing in front of men?

F : It is not part of our culture and our religion.

Interviewer : Is it religion as well? Ok, so singing, culture and religion, what about dancing?

F : It is also,,,

Interviewer : I am thinking of cycle one and the songs where we would do a little bit of singing and dancing.

F : In front of male in college no.

Interviewer : No, singing micro-teaching, in front of the girls it's ok?

F : It is ok.

Interviewer : Yes, alright! Ok, now in your opinion, if you compare third year micro-teaching which is this year's micro-teaching, practicum one

and practicum two, and you compare second year micro-teaching is there a difference? Do you notice any difference?

F : Ah, I don't think there are difference between micro-teaching in the second, err, but we have experience, more experiences and more confident.

Interviewer : You think that you are more confident in the third year?

F : Yeah, more confident.

Interviewer : And is it because you have already had a chance in the second year?

F : Yeah, I think that.

Interviewer : Em, if you look now, in the micro-teaching class, you as the teacher, twice. If you think about you as the teacher and you think about the co-educational class, if there were no men, no males in the class, do you think you would have been a different teacher in micro-teaching?

F : Yes.

Interviewer : Can you give me examples of what would have been different?

F : You have more abilities to verify your activities, more creative, you are energetic maybe also, you can improve many things in your lesson, and you may do the actions of the songs confidently.

Interviewer : Ok, and now when you think about your participation as a child, when you are not the teacher, and you are taking part in the class, do you think also, that your participation would have been different if there were no boys?

F : Ah, cha, children?

Interviewer : You! When, you know in micro-teaching sometimes you are the teacher, but when somebody else is teaching you are not the teacher, but you are the child in the micro-teaching class? You know, you are taking part, you are grade 7 or grade 9, do you

think the way that you participate would have been different if it was ladies only?

F : Maybe! Maybe it will be different, but if you are teacher you have to do everything.

Interviewer : Yes, but as a child? For example, if Saida is teaching and she says to you "Farida, please come up to the board, and write the answer on the board" how do you feel if there were males in the class about coming to the front and putting the answer on the board?

F : It is no matter.

Interviewer : No matter? If she says "come and do a dialogue with Saud"?

F : Now it is no matter because we are,,,

Interviewer : No matter now, because you are used to each other, ok. Ok, our next question, in the feedback sessions, when your teacher, which is me, ok? No before we get there, before we get there, hang on, the first question, I really mix them! How do you feel in the feedback sessions when males comment on your lesson?

F : It's eh, it's eh, it's no matter when boys feedback girls, I think it's important for boys and girls, to get the feedback from them to improve your, er, how to teach, their views, it's important, but I think it's important.

Interviewer : Important, and it doesn't matter, it doesn't, you don't know if there is a difference in the way that the boys give their feedback, and the way that the girls give their feedback?

F : No, I think it's no matter.

Interviewer : No matter, good. Number 7, now, the teacher, (*giggles*) do you notice, Ok? about me, or even about last semester, do you notice when the teacher gives the feedback, do you think that there is a difference in the way that the teacher gives the feedback to the ladies and the way that the teacher to give feedback to the gents?

F : I think no.

Interviewer : You don't think so! There is no difference, the teacher speaks in the same way, she is not horrible to the girls, and nice to the boys, or nice to the boys and horrible to the,,,?

F : Maybe some teachers, but teachers that, er, who teach me, I think there is no difference.

Interviewer : It's interesting because I am asking the teachers this question as well; I want to ask them, do they give; now this is for support to see if there is an agreement. Last 3 questions, the ministry of higher education comes here, and they say to you, Farida you've been at the college now, this is your fourth year, next year you'll be a final year student, and you know that it is our policy to do co-education, this is the ministry speaking. What is your opinion about this, what would you like to tell us about co-education and micro-teaching?

F : Co-education, I think it comes more natural to our society, and it's no matter, it's the co-education comes in er,,, will be treat in our society, and also co-edu, men and women will benefit from each other in their teaching, they will come more creative in their teaching.,

Interviewer : Is this both men and women together, or if they were separate?

F : Co-education.

Interviewer : Together?

F : Yes.

Interviewer : Would you like to see, would you like for the ministry to continue with men and women in the same class, or do you think that they should have ladies only micro-teaching and men only micro-teaching?

F : In micro-teaching separate boys from girls.

Interviewer : So you would like it to be separate.

F : Yeah.

Interviewer : And is it because as you said, because you are more free, when you are separate, you can do more of the activities?

F : Yeah, I think that.

Interviewer : But, but for the rest of the college it is ok to be together?

F : Yeah.

Interviewer : Ok, so men and women will benefit from each other but in micro-teaching it is better to be separate?

F : Yeah.

Interviewer : Ok, now we've got new third years coming next semester, and you'll be in your final year. What advice, would you like to give to the new third years about micro-teaching classes?

F : If it is co-education, continue your micro-teaching, I don't mind, if you are in co-education just look at your goals, do not look at anything else. Continue, er, continue and do not think about anything else, just your goals, your, how to teach better and better, how to provide your society with something new and creative.

Interviewer : Thank you, one last question. If you could change anything about the micro-teaching classes, you know you've had two years of micro-teaching now, and if there is something you would like to change, what would it be?

F : In this College?

Interviewer : Yeah in this College, and in micro-teaching, yeah?

F : Ah, the rooms.

Interviewer : The rooms?

F : Yeah, how the rooms are designed. I think if there are more posters, nice posters on the walls it will be better, also the design of the groups, it is just crowded with

tables and chairs. I think just the needed tables and the needed that is used, er,,,

Interviewer : Just enough for the people maybe, extra ones could go outside? Yeah?

F : Yeah, extra ones should go outside.

Interviewer : Take out extra furniture maybe?

F : All the materials should be in the classroom, you don't have to go to the media and bring it.

Interviewer : Yes, em, all materials and all equipments?

F : Also the cassette and books should be provided, er,,,

Interviewer : And anything else about co-education?

F : Co-education, if it er, co-education, er,,,

Interviewer : No not necessary, but your preference would be for separate micro-teaching?

F : Yeah, I prefer to be separate.

Interviewer : Separate, but the rest of the classes, theory classes, ok together? Other classes ok together?

F : Yeah, ok, because you will benefit.

Interviewer : From each other. Thank you so much Farida. Thank you!

Appendix 9 Example of transcribed male interview

Male interviews - Cassette 1 – Interview 2 - Khalifa

Interviewer : Khalifa, thank you for making time and agreeing to this interview. I am conducting research about microteaching and the education of men and women together, or co-education. This interview is being recording but your anonymity will be respected, so nobody will know your name although, I'll write your name on the list, so that I'll know who you are. Ok? The information will be used for my doctoral thesis as well as possible presentations and future publications, if that's ok with you? So, the date today is the 25th and we are in my office, and you are a third year male trainee, and you are group 1. Khalifa, I'll start by asking you a very personal question, and that what is your age? How old are you?

K : I am 22.

Interviewer : 22, ok, and are you married?

K : No I am single.

Interviewer : Ok, and this morning you completed the questionnaire. Em, can I ask you, how do you feel about co-educational classes at this College in general? Not about micro-teaching but in general, about co-educational classes?

K : I didn't like it when I was in my first year, I really feel very bad with the girls because it was my first time to deal with the girls, and that done ,my level, and I lost some skills, and that effected on my first and second year.

Interviewer : Ok and now how do co-educational micro-teaching classes make you feel?

K : It's ok but sometimes I find difficulties in dealing with girls, maybe in naming their names.

- Interviewer : Do you know their names or not?
- K : Yes, I know their names.**
- Interviewer : Then why is it difficult to say their names?
- K : Maybe they feel embarrassed when I ask them to go to the board, the white board, or to do a task in front of the boys,**
- Interviewer : Maybe they will feel embarrassed?
- K : (*mumbles*),**
- Interviewer : Ok, and in your opinion, if you compared second year, last year, you did some micro-teaching last year, and of course much more micro-teaching this year, have you noticed any difference between micro-teaching from last year, and micro-teaching from this year?
- K : This year it is very developed, and better than last year, because the students got accustomed with the girls and with the techniques of teaching and we studied a lot of teaching materials and books, so now we are second year trainee teachers, and we have a fair knowledge about teaching.**
- Interviewer : Ok, if you think about, in the micro-teaching class, you are sometimes the teacher, and when you are the teacher, if you think, if the classes are different and that there are only men in our class, how do you think you would be different as a teacher?
- K : I may do what I like, without embracement, I never feel afraid, but I think men don't care about participations, for the girls they participate during my micro-teaching and even though the boys are my friends but sometimes they feel lazy about answering questions.**
- Interviewer : Ok, and if you think about you in the micro-teaching class when you are not the teacher, but you are maybe role-playing the child, if you

were in a male only class, how do you think it would be different to participate in the micro-teaching?

K : It will be the same, no,,,,

Interviewer : It will be the same?

K : Yeah!

Interviewer : For you?

K : For me yes.

Interviewer : But for some other class mates, do you think?

K : There will be laugh and smile.

Interviewer : More than now?

K : More than now, yes.

Interviewer : In the feedback sessions, after you finish the micro-teaching, and for example, the teachers and sometimes the students would give comments about the lesson that they have taught. How do you feel in the feedback session when the ladies comment about your lesson?

K : No, I like constructive feedback.

Interviewer : And you think that the ladies give constructive feedback?

K : Yes.

Interviewer : Ok, so you don't mind?

K : I don't mind.

Interviewer : Ok, and if you think about the teachers that you have had for micro-teaching, you have had me and last year, last semester somebody else, and you think when we give you feedback, do you think that the teachers give different feedback to the boys, and different feedback to the girls, or is it the same?

K : We are in err,, learning err, at this college, we have two, cycle one and cycle two. So, cycle one has to be a smaller. Has to be a smaller, how you asking people. What else, we

**have to,, ask me, because we are teaching in cycle two.
From age 12 to age 18.**

Interviewer : Ok, and do you think in the feedback that the teacher gives, when the teacher says that you must be in a certain way, do you think that the teacher is maybe giving feedback to cycle one, more than for cycle two?

K : For cycle one it is teacher-centered, and for cycle two, no, student-centered. So, there is no, a lot, different from cycle two. more,,, a lot for working in cycle two.

Interviewer : Yeah! But, so, question now is like with me, when I talk, you finished teaching micro-teaching, like for example, your lesson is finished, and now I give you, I tell you, positives and suggestions for improvements, and let's say, that we'll use the name *Nahid* as an example, and *Nahid* is finished, and I give her positives and suggestions, do you think the way that I speak to you and the way that I speak to *Nahid* is different?

K : No, it is the same; it depends on the teacher, the trainer teacher.

Interviewer : Yes, that's what I am saying, yeah.

K : But some teachers, not all the teachers, some teachers prefer girls than the boys.

Interviewer : Have you noticed that Khalifa?

K : Yes.

Interviewer : Do you think that they prefer the girls?

K : Yes, lots of teacher.

Interviewer : Wh, wh, why do you say, not why do you say, how do you know?

K : When the students answer questions, they embarrass the students and they sometimes ignore their answers,,

Interviewer : Hem,,

K : **And sometimes they just talk to the girls, to the boys,**

Interviewer : Hem,, and do you think that this happens in micro-teaching classes?

K : **In micro-teaching, no.**

Interviewer : Not in micro-teaching?

K : **But em, in previous courses.**

Interviewer : Ok, if the ministry of education came here today, now you know the college works and is told what to do by the ministry of education, so this co-education is the ministry told us, we must have co-education, but if the ministry came here today, what would you like to say to them about co-education and micro-teaching?

K : **We should separate the girls from the boys because as we know, the boys before they come here they got good marks, the now we see most of the boys are down, and that because of, er, of, of they are shocked with studying with the girls.**

Interviewer : They are shocked with their studies?

K : **Studying with girls.**

Interviewer : And do you think that what made their marks go down?

K : **Yes.**

Interviewer : Is it only the shock, or what else?

K : **No they have different factors, but one of the factors is co-education.**

Interviewer : And do you think because of co-education the boys' marks went down?

K : **Yes.**

Interviewer : And if the boys are by themselves, their marks wouldn't go down?

K : **And in other college, my friends have a good marks.**

Interviewer : Now are they in boys' only colleges?

K : **Yes, in Qatar, Qatar University.**

Interviewer : Ah!

K : One of my friends, with an A.

Interviewer : And boys only?

K : Yes, the boys only, and when I ask them about the, er, why, they say because we are relaxed.

Interviewer : Yeah, and do you think it will be the same here, that if there were no girls, the boys will be more relaxed, maybe?

K : Yes.

Interviewer : Ok, now you almost finished the third year, and there are new students going to the third year next year, what advice would you give to the new third years about micro-teaching?

K : I advise them to be relaxed, to not think about girls, we are in our, they are in their, the last year, or two years, they will finish, they have to be patient, and everything will be ok.

Interviewer : Last question.

K : Ok.

Interviewer : What changes, you have already mentioned some already, but what changes would you like to see in micro-teaching classes? If you could change micro-teaching classes?

K : Aah, changes?

Interviewer : Yeah.

K : What I suggest?

Interviewer : Em, you have already said maybe separate, ok? Would you agree here, if you would be allowed to separate them?

K : No, we haven't said, we got accustomed to the girls, so its ok, no need to separate.

Interviewer : You think now no need to separate?

K : No need to separate, in micro-teaching because we got accustomed for theirs.

Interviewer : So, because you are accustomed now?

K : Yes we got accustomed.

Interviewer : Ok, so can you think of any other changes you would like to make?

K : In micro-teaching?

Interviewer : Em.

K : Students should be create with using their materials, and no need to get hocked with the teacher's ways of teaching, what they prepare, no. they should use their experience in teaching.

Interviewer : So in other words, if the teacher said I want you to be teaching this way, feels like a doctor, eh? That they should be more free, that the trainees should be more free?

K : They should be more free.

Interviewer : Should be more free to use materials and teaching methods?

K : Teaching methods yes.

Interviewer : Ok.

K : And also I suggest not to do mid-term exam for practicum.

Interviewer : Ok, no mid-tem, and why do you suggest that?

K : Because it a practical, and it depends on the student, and also I suggest to do practicum at schools, at least to three times,,,

Interviewer : In the third year? In the third year?

K : In the third year, yeah.

Interviewer : Ok, practicum at schools,,,

K : One year observation and the other year is to practice.

Interviewer : So practicum at schools one to observe and to practice?

K : Yes.

Interviewer : To observe and to practice. Khalifa thank you very much

K : You are welcome.

Appendix 10 Example of open coding of interview data

Female interviews - Cassette 2 – Interview 2

Ms. F

Interviewer : And I am going to ask you a very personal question, and the question is, how old are you?

F : Eh, 21.

Interviewer : 21, and we starting now, and are you married?

F : No.

Interviewer : No, and em, no we haven't done, no, we are going to do the questionnaire tomorrow. Now, my first question is, how do you feel about co-educational classes, to having males and females together in classes at this College, what's your feeling about that in general?

F : Ah, *Before + after* at the beginning, it was embarrassing, *Feeling (neg)* because when we are in schools we are not in co-education but here is a high movement from secondary school to start college to have males and females together, *fresh* but later it comes usual and we live with it, and we don't mind if males and females are together, because every field, every school, every college, university are designed to be like that, and no matter. *Statur quo?*

Interviewer : Then, when we talk about micro-teaching classes, and em, you know! you have to teach in front of the boys, or you have to be a student in front of the boys, how do co-educational micro-teaching classes make you feel?

F : Ah, micro-teaching, it depends on the topic, *years?* Some topics I don't want to teach it in front of the boys, because it requires something against our culture.

Interviewer : Can you give me an example? *behaviour?*

F : For example, the movements, the actions that we want to do it, and in our culture it is not like that, we don't do some actions, it depends on the action, some actions against our culture.

role of culture?

Appendix 11 Example of axial coding of interview data

⊗ similar to make comments

F

1. How do you feel about coeducational classes at ^{this} [redacted] College in **general**?

FI1: "In the beginning ~~very strange~~ - embarrassing
 • No coeducation when we are in schools
 • Later it becomes usual
 • Every College every university designed to be like that so no matter.

FI2: • Always feel nervous to have males in class
 • In our schools before no males in our classes
 • We cannot talk to them because of traditions + customs
 • We stay quietly, not sharing opinions, feelings girls are so shy
 • I think it's horrible

FI3: • Didn't like at first
 • Noticed it helps you be more confident
 • Get information from males + females
 • Good

FI4: • Beginning very hard
 • 12 years female only classes
 • Now excellent idea
 • Now talking, discussing, sharing laughing

+VE
 excellent idea
 good
 -VE
 nervous
 shy
 humble

100%
 Key words: beginning - strange, hard, didn't like
 (changes) now - usual, helps confidence, good idea
 as opposed to 'no change' it's horrible
~~horrible~~
~~good~~

Appendix 12 Example of coding procedure in grounded-theory analysis

<p>OPEN CODING (in vivo)</p>	<p>AXIAL CODING / THERETICAL CODING (connections)</p>	<p>SELECTIVE CODING (themes)</p>
<p>*First when I came to (this) college I was afraid to learn with girls and now my view changed [G3MQ2item23]</p> <p>*We see some challenges in the beginning but now everything is ok [G3MQ5item23]</p> <p>*In first it was difficult, but now it easy and okay [G6MQ6item10]</p> <p>* Maybe at the beginning it was hard for me to accept the idea of co-education because I was studied for in females only, classes. But now I am the third year, and I believe that it's an excellent idea [Saida]</p> <p>* Ah, at the beginning, it was embarrassing, because when we are in schools we are not in co-education but here is a high movement from secondary school to start college to have males and females together, but later it comes usual and we live with it [Farida]</p>	<p>Perceptions changing over time</p>	<p>Transformation</p>

Appendix 13 Completed certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

Your name: Alison MacKenzie

Your student no: 550029178

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD (TESOL) in Dubai

Project Supervisor(s): 1) Sarah Rich 2) Salah Troudi

Your email address: am303@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 00968 92180470

Title of your project: Student perceptions of culture, coeducation and microteaching in an initial teacher training programme in Oman

Brief description of your research project: This study is a qualitative investigation into the impact of coeducation on the third year male and female teacher trainees in the microteaching component of their teacher preparation programme at a state-run tertiary institution in the Sultanate of Oman.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): Third year Omani male and female teacher trainees at a state-run tertiary institution in the Sultanate of Oman averaging in age from 21 to 22 years old and Omani as well as Expat teacher trainers at the same college.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) Trainees were informed verbally and by means of a letter of consent (attached on page 3) in which the purpose of the research is stated, confidentiality is addressed and participants were informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity will be respected in the thesis through the use of pseudonyms in the reporting of the data and findings.

Give detail of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress: Data will be obtained through interviews, observations and a questionnaire. Only trainees who indicated their willingness to be interviewed on their letters of consent would be approached and audio recorded, observations would take place as part of the regular observation of microteaching sessions so trainees would have no added stress placed upon them and class reps would distribute and collect the questions ensuring anonymity and no pressure to fill them in from me.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.): The questionnaires will be placed in envelopes and handed to me for storage at home, I will be responsible for securing the audio cassettes in my study at home as well.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants): The topic of coeducation has proved to be controversial already in the pilot work I have carried out for my study, so I have to ensure that my participant feel secure that their perceptions will remain anonymous. I also need to take into account the cultural and religious context in which I'm working and to be aware of the sensitivity of the participants as regards aspects of my investigation.

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my thesis 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 form.

Signed:.....Alison MacKenzie.....date:.....17 June 2010.....

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: Jan 2010 until: Dec 2010

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): SA L Rish date: 10/7/2010

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: D/09/10/19

Signed:  date: 13/7/2010
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

Appendix 14 Rationale and explanation for respondent/questionnaire identification

Rationale for using letters and numbers

While pseudonyms are an expected convention to protect the anonymity of participants in reporting research findings, I decided to use letters and numbers for the questionnaire respondents in my study. I had already assigned pseudonyms to the 8 interviewees (4 male names and 4 female names). However, with the high return-rate of 85 female and 25 male questionnaires, I felt it was more convenient to assign letters and numbers to the trainees than to produce 110 more pseudonyms.

Questionnaire identification explanation

In the example below, the information within the square brackets, after the quote from the data, represents the identity of the respondent.

“I have the same view and will not change” [G1FQ1]

I assigned letters and numbers to identify and represent the respondents as follows:

G1 refers to the class or group number in which the respondent was placed for microteaching. The numbers range from 1 to 6 as the participants were divided into 6 microteaching groups.

FQ identifies this trainee as a female questionnaire respondent. Male trainees are represented by the letters MQ.

Q1 refers to the number the particular questionnaire was assigned after it had been identified as either a male or female respondent within that group. The table that follows illustrates the range of the numbers assigned to the questionnaires in each group:

Microteaching Group	Range of Male Questionnaire Numbers	Range of Female Questionnaire Numbers
1	1-3	1-14
2	0	1-13
3	1-7	1-17
4	1-2	1-11
5	1-5	1-11
6	1-8	1-19

Appendix 15 Microteaching evaluation form

Session 1-30 marks

Student's name:

Date:

Unit:

Session 2-40 marks

Group:

Grade:

Lesson:

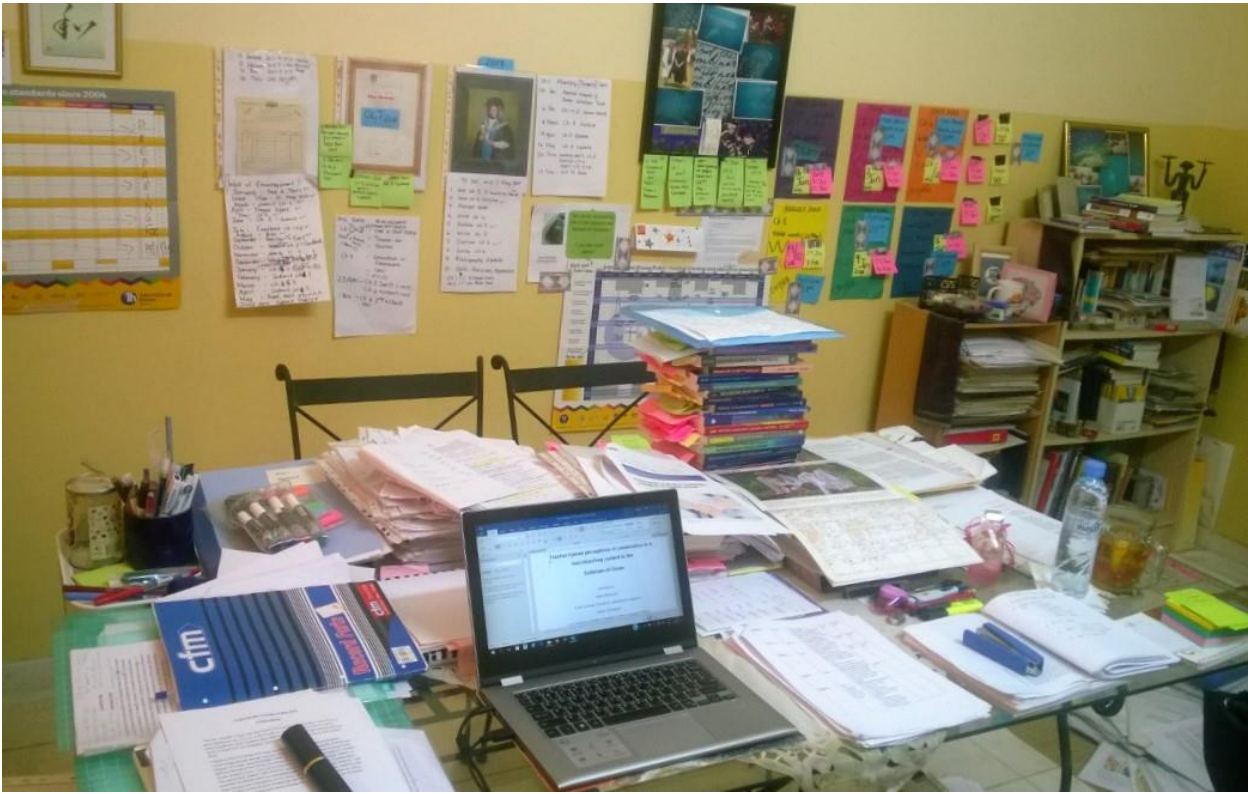
Category	High 5	4	3	2	1	Low 0
<u>Personality:</u> 1. Having self-confidence & clear voice						
<u>Language proficiency:</u> 2. Uses language accurately and fluently						
3. Uses language appropriate to students' level						
<u>Lesson preparation & portfolio:</u> 4. States clear learning outcomes						
5. Uses effective teaching strategies						
6. Applies appropriate timing						
7. His/her portfolio complete & up-to-date						
<u>Instruction:</u> 8. Uses pre-teaching effectively						
9. Presents the new lesson efficiently						
10. Provides students with enough practice						
11. Demonstrates skill in questioning						
12. Provides students with appropriate reinforcement						
13. Provides students with appropriate feedback						
14. Gives clear instructions						
15. Utilises teaching aids effectively						
16. Distributes participation fairly among students						
17. Checks students' understanding						
<u>Classroom management & achievement of aims</u> 18. Maintains appropriate classroom behavior						
19. Offers assistance to students during activities						
20. Achieves lesson aims						

Total mark:

General comments:

Supervisor's name & signature:

Appendix 16 The wall of encouragement



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