

**Arabic- Background Muslim Students in State Schools:
An Inclusive Multicultural Education Perspective**

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B.Ed

MA. TESOL

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy Education

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney.

2014

Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Leila A. Mouhanna, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Leila A. Mouhanna

27th March, 2014

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people.

I would like to gratefully and sincerely thank my supervisor Dr Jennifer Hammond for her wisdom, guidance, understanding, patience, and for her friendship during the course the research journey. Her mentorship, her scrupulous responses to the chapters helped to get me through the most difficult phases of the thesis. For everything you've done for me, thank you.

I'd like to thank the teachers, school executives, the students, and the young women who kindly volunteered to participate in this study, and gave up their valuable time to share their insights and experiences. Without your generous involvement and support, this research would not have been possible.

I'd like to thank my co-supervisor Dr Nina Burridge for her insights in the course of the study, and for giving her valuable advice and input. I'd also like to thank Andrew Chodkiewicz for his informative and valuable insights on multicultural education. Thank you to thank the librarians at UAEU Zayed library for the quiet space to do my writing, and to Professor Alastair Pennycook and Ms Jo Bu who provided me with study space at UTS.

I'd like to thank Dr. Peter Bowman McLaren for editing my thesis, and for his candid, and insightful feedback during the final few months of thesis writing. I'd also like to thank Sharon Lee Calladine for her valuable work with proofreading of the final manuscript. I'd like to thank my friends and colleagues at UAEU for their wisdom, humour, advice and encouragement, and for being my support network.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family, to whom I dedicate this thesis. I'd like to thank my husband Mouhamad, for his faith in me, for his sense of adventure and drive to achieve more in life, and for his patience and impatience in various doses, which helped me to complete the thesis. I owe the deepest gratitude to my mother and father, for making me who I am today, for their faith and encouragement, and for all the ways that they encouraged and supported me on with this thesis, including babysitting grandchildren. I'd also like to especially thank my sisters and brothers, for their love, sense of humour, and unwavering support. They all helped to make the Ramadan winter study sessions pass. I'd like to thank them for helping to keep my children entertained while I studied, for being drivers when I didn't have transportation, for getting the printed copies of the thesis to UTS, and for all the other little ways you were there. Indeed, this thesis would not have been possible without all of your unwavering support. Finally, I'd like to thank my sons Abdullah and Muhammad-Ali, who were ever so patient with me during the research journey. I love you dearly, and hope this experience inspires you to persevere and achieve all that you can in life.

Finally, and most importantly, I am most grateful to God for the guidance and strength to complete this thesis.

Abstract

The study investigates the education of Australian Arabic speaking background (ASB) Muslim females. While there has been considerable (usually negative) focus in recent years on the social experiences of young ASB and/or Muslim males, there has been relatively little focus on females – and on their more positive educational story. The study thus addresses an under-researched area. It also provides an insider perspective into the education of students whose voices have been under-represented in educational debates.

The purposes of the study are two-fold:

- to learn more of the educational experiences of ASB Muslim females who attend Australian state secular schools – from the perspective of the students who are currently attending school, from their teachers, and also from the perspective of young women who have now completed school and have taken up various post-school pathways;
- to investigate the extent to which secular schools that are attended by ASB Muslim female students can and do address their educational, language, cultural and religious needs.

Data for this investigation are drawn from two Sydney state secondary schools. They include questionnaires and interviews with school students; interviews with school executives and teachers; and analysis of school and education department policy documents. They also include interviews with a group of young, Australian ASB Muslim women regarding their post-school experiences.

To pursue the purposes of the research, the study proposes an inclusive multicultural framework for the analysis of the data. This framework enables factors to be identified

within the research sites that contribute positively to educational outcomes for ASB Muslim female students, and those that do not.

Outcomes from the study enable implications to be drawn for schools, for students and their parents and, more generally, for the education and social inclusion of ASB Muslim females in secular societies such as Australia. The outcomes also contribute to broader questions about the nature of inclusive and multicultural education; about the benefits and limitations of such notions for the education of Muslim ASB females; and more generally, about ways of enhancing ASB Muslim women's participation in a cohesive and inclusive society.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASB	Arabic-speaking background
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
EAL/D	English Additional Language/Dialect
Eid	Muslim holidays Eidul Adha festival of the Sacrifice, Eidul Fitr (festival of the feasting)
HSC	Higher School Certificate
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
LBOTE	Language Backgrounds other than English
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NESB	Non-English speaking backgrounds
NSW	New South Wales
PDHPE	Personal Development, Health, Physical Education
TAFE	Technical and Further Education Institutes (State funded Vocational Education provider)