

Running head: EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACTION RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE

Exploration of teachers' attitudes towards Action Research implementation and its influence on their teaching practice

Zhanar Jumankulova

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Abstract

Action Research is a widespread practice of teacher inquiry implemented to develop teachers' research and reflective skills. It is considered to be an opportunity to bridge research and teaching practice. Teachers are supposed to identify some issues and solve them through Action Research. The project of Action Research has been recently launched in Kazakhstan education system since 2012. It was firstly introduced in Nazarbayev Intellectual schools in 2012, and then it has been disseminated to the mainstream schools of Kazakhstan. A big number of teachers were involved in the process its implementation. That is why, it is essential to analyze teachers' understanding and views on Action Research. The purpose of the study was to explore secondary school teachers' attitudes towards the project of Action Research and its effect on their teaching practice. The qualitative design was applied in this study to receive a detailed understanding of the issue. The purposeful sampling method was used to choose five teachers of the mainstream school of Taraz city. The maximum variation was selected to get different perspectives on the research questions. The following criteria were used to choose the participants: subjects, years of conducting Action Research and research topic. The findings of the study presented an overview of teachers' attitudes taking into account professional and emotional aspects as well as the obstacles they met. In addition, the results highlighted the areas of teaching practice that were under the influence of Action Research. The study also suggested some recommendations for policy makers and school administrators on how to contribute to the development of Action Research through understanding teachers' opinion.

Абстракт

Іс- әрекеттегі зерттеу және рефлексия дағдыларын дамыту үшін қолданылатын мұғалімдерді зерттеудің кең таралған тәжірибесі. Іс- әрекеттегі зерттеу және педагогикалық практиканы біріктіру мүмкіндігі. Мұғалімдер мәселелерді анықтап, зерттеу жолымен шешімдерді табады. Бұл жоба жақында қазақстандық білім беру жүйесінде іске қосылды. Бастапқыда ол Назарбаев Зияткерлік мектептерінде ұсынылды және зерттелді, содан кейін Қазақстанның жалпы білім беру мектептері арасында таратылды. Оны іске асыру процесіне көптеген мұғалімдер тартылды. Осылайша, контекстте мұғалімдердің түсінігін және осы жобаға қатысты пікірлерін талдау маңызды. Зерттеудің мақсаты орта мектептің мұғалімдерінің іс-әрекеттегі зерттеу жұмыстарына және оның оқу тәжірибесіне әсер етуіне талдау жасау болды. Мәселені егжей-тегжейлі түсіну үшін осы жұмыста сапалы зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Зерттеу сұрақтары бойынша әртүрлі көзқарастарды алу үшін мақсатты іріктеу әдісі бес негізгі мектептің мұғалімдерін таңдау үшін пайдаланылды. Қатысушыларды таңдау үшін келесі критерийлер пайдаланылды: пәндер, ғылыми зерттеулер мен ғылыми тақырыптар. Зерттеудің нәтижелері кәсіби және эмоционалды аспектілерді, сондай-ақ кездесетін кедергілерді ескере отырып, мұғалімдердің қарым-қатынасына шолу жасады. Бұдан басқа, зерттеу нәтижелері педагогикалық практиканың бағыттарын анықтады, олар зерттеудің әсерінен болды. Бұл жұмыс сондай-ақ, мұғалімдердің көзқарасын ескере отырып, саясаткерлер мен мектеп әкімшілері үшін зерттеу практикасын дамытуға үлес қосу туралы ұсыныстарды қамтиды.

Абстракт

Исследование в действии широко распространенная практика исследования учителей, применяемая для развития навыков исследования и рефлексии. Исследование в действии является возможностью объединить исследовательскую и преподавательскую практику. Учителя выявляют проблемы и находят пути решения с помощью исследования в действии. Данный проект был запущен в казахстанской системе образования недавно. Сначала он был представлен и исследован в Назарбаев Интеллектуальных школах, а затем распространен среди общеобразовательных школ Казахстана. Большое количество учителей были вовлечены в процесс его реализации. Таким образом, учитывая данный контекст важно проанализировать понимание учителей и их взгляды на данный проект. Цель исследования состояла в том, чтобы изучить отношение учителей средней школы к исследованию в действии и его влияние на их преподавательскую практику. Качественный метод исследования был применен в данной работе, чтобы получить детальное понимание проблемы. Метод целенаправленной выборки использовался для выбора пяти учителей основной школы для того, чтобы получить разные точки зрения на вопросы исследования. Для выбора участников использовались следующие критерии: предметы, годы проведения исследований и тематика исследований. Результаты исследования представили обзор отношения учителей с учетом профессиональных и эмоциональных аспектов, а также препятствий, с которыми они столкнулись. Кроме того, результаты выявили те области педагогической практики, на которые исследование в действии имело влияние. Данная работа также включает рекомендации для политиков и администрации школы о том, как внести вклад в развитие практики исследования в действии с учетом мнения учителей.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This study aims to provide an insight into how secondary school teachers perceive the project of action research. Particular attention is given to the influence of action research on their teaching practice, as it was initiated as a driving force of changes in teaching practice and inquiry.

There is no definite or universal definition of action research. It is interpreted differently in various educational contexts. However, Rearick and Fieldman (1999) highlighted three parts of action research: theoretical orientations, aim and kind of reflective process. Overall, they classified the types of action research in accordance with its organization, whether it is conducted by a person individually, a group of people in collaboration or by a school community as a whole (Rearick & Fieldman, 1999).

The term action research finds its roots in the UK and USA, but it has been evolved in different countries later on (Glassman, Erdem, & Bartholomew, 2013). However, it is a relatively new notion in Kazakhstan. With the launch of Nazarbayev Intellectual schools (NIS) in 2008 new reforms and directions in education were implemented. One of them was the project of action research which has been implemented since 2012. The project aimed to involve the teachers of NIS initially, then transmitted to other mainstream schools of Kazakhstan (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015). It was aimed at encouraging collaboration and developing reflective and research skills, as those were the main gaps in teaching identified during a study conducted by the group of researchers from the University of Cambridge. Another purpose of starting the project was professional development of teachers. Thus,

teachers would be able to study their own practice and share their teaching experience (McLaughlin, McLellan, Frost & Turner, 2013).

Regarding NIS experience on action research transmitted to mainstream schools, a list of the pilot schools was approved. Nowadays there are 21 NIS schools in Kazakhstan. Each NIS school in every region of Kazakhstan has about five schools for sharing practical experience and conducting systematic professional development sessions. The pilot school teachers have an opportunity to visit NIS schools and observe the lessons, while the NIS teachers try to provide their colleagues with necessary information on education changes (Work of NIS with pilot schools, n.d.). Thus, the project of action research is being implemented in some mainstream schools throughout Kazakhstan.

1.2. Background of the Study

Currently, a lot of attention is given to teachers' professional development as there is a direct relation between teachers' qualifications and students' learning outcomes. In addition, due to reflection and transfer of experience which occur when educators work upon improving teaching mechanisms, some of the obstacles taking place in the classrooms can be overcome (Garcés, Yicely, & Martínez, 2016). Action research is considered to be a part of professional development procedure as it is one of the forms to "understand and improve the quality of the educative process" (Hine, 2013, p. 152).

In order to have a full picture of the action research project in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to mention the background of the education system of Kazakhstan before its implementation. The Soviet Union legacy has a big influence on education system of Kazakhstan. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the old system could not meet the demands of new independent

Kazakhstan. Firstly, during the soviet time the status of a teacher was highly supported and protected. The Soviet teacher was the most respected person in the community, provided with a workplace and a constant income. However, soon after the Soviet Union collapse, the situation and social attitude towards teaching and teachers themselves had completely changed (Silova, 2009). The teachers were left behind education system searching for alternative resources to survive in an unstable economic and political environment (ibid.). Undoubtedly, it had an impact on quality of teaching and quality of education respectively. Silova (2009) called it “the crisis of the post-soviet teaching” (p. 366), when teacher’s status was undermined and students’ performance was sharply decreased. As a result, there were several attempts to rehabilitate the prestige of teachers and the quality of education in general.

A new approach was trialed. It was necessary to move beyond the functionalist approach of teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1989), when social norms were explained to interpretive and critical ones, when teachers have an opportunity to analyse and dispute some social phenomena. Furthermore, there was a shift to be done from individualism to collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994), from closed classrooms and isolation to sharing experience and interaction. There was also a necessity in overcoming the so-called “banking” concept of education” (Freire, 2000, p.72). Teachers should no longer have been regarded as narrators and students as passive listeners. Conversely, students should become active constructors and participators of the learning process (Freire, 2000). Thus, a new era in education has reached the Kazakhstani system. The educational policy of Kazakhstan is being transformed as well as the directions for development (Yakavets & Dzhadrina, 2014). The focus is altered onto students. It is rotating around democratic professionalism which is defined by Sachs (2001) as “collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders” (p.

153). A teacher is considered to be a leading actor in the classroom with students, at school in collaboration with colleagues and in the community among parents. Thus, a number of projects were being realized during that time. One of them was action research.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Action research is considered to be a new term in teachers' practice in Kazakhstan. Thus, there are several reasons why it is crucial to research teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of action research in mainstream schools of Kazakhstan.

First of all, action research is originated from sociology and defined as the process of collective work of the members with "shared goals within a general community framework" (Glassman, Erdem, & Bartholomew, 2013, p. 272). The successful realization depends on how well the members of a school community understand the process and communicate with one another to achieve the set goals (ibid.). Moreover, understanding teachers' attitudes may contribute to finding out the problems which arise during the process of conducting action research (Zhou, 2012).

Next is that there is a direct connection between action research as one of the reflection practices and teachers' professional development (Gobena, 2017). Finally, the last one is that there is a lack of empirical study on action research and its effect on teaching practices in Kazakhstan. Therefore, it is important to know the areas of teaching practices being influenced by the process of doing action research.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore secondary school teachers' perceptions towards action research implementation and its effect on their teaching practices in a

mainstream school of Taraz. Guided by empirical evidence and related literature, this research aims to find out teachers' attitudes towards action research in a mainstream school and define which areas of their professional practice it affects.

1.5. Research Questions

For the purpose of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school?

How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

The next part of this chapter explains the choice of the study design. It also contains information about participants, setting and research instruments selected by the researcher to answer the research questions.

1.6. Definition of the Central Phenomenon

The key concept in this study was action research, while the main idea was to identify the teachers' perspectives towards it. The process of action research influence on teaching practice was also essential. Understanding the central phenomenon contributed to exploring the attitudes in details as well as establishing the areas of teaching practice being affected.

The term of action research is emanated from a sociologist, Kurt Lewin's (1946) works. It is determined as "a form of social inquiry through which the members of social groups interact with one another to create social change within their communities" (Glassman, Erdem & Bartholomew, 2013, p. 274). As for education field, it is a systematic process of reconsidering educational practice through the lenses of research (Gobena, 2017). Moreover, according to Lewin (1946) it has a spiral cycle of planning, executing and fact-finding.

1.7. Significance of the Study

There are several reasons why the study is significant. Firstly, the results of this study can be useful for teachers themselves to further reflect on their understanding and practices of action research. Furthermore, as the concept of action research is mostly common and applicable among some selected schools in Kazakhstan, it will be helpful in promoting the idea of action research among teachers of mainstream schools. Thirdly, the study has a pedagogical value, as finding out the peculiar areas of influence of action research implementation is also crucial in terms of professional development assistance. Another reason is that the research community will benefit from the results of study, as it will contribute to the literature on the topic of teachers' attitudes towards action research in Kazakhstan. There is also a lack of empirical study on the topic of action research and teachers' attitudes towards it in Kazakhstan. Finally, the findings can be also used by different educational stakeholders while making policies or projects connected to action research.

1.8. Outline of the Study

This study includes six chapters. The first chapter Introduction presents an overview of the given study, including the background of the topic followed by the statement of the problem, purpose and research questions. Additionally, it describes the significance of the study.

The second chapter provides the literature review which includes an overview of how action research began and developed into an education format of research. It also describes some basic postulates of action research and its drawbacks. In addition, it covers the topic of action research in Kazakhstan.

The next chapter Methodology introduces the design of the study and the reasons for choosing the methodological approach, research site and sampling strategy for conducting the given research. Moreover, data collection instruments are described in this chapter as well as procedures of data collection and data analysis. This section also suggests possible limitations and delimitations of the study.

The fourth chapter includes the findings of the study. Then, there is a discussion part where the results are analyzed and interpreted in accordance with the literature review and research questions. The last chapter concludes the findings of the study and suggests some recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided information on the background of the study as well as its significance. The purpose of the study was to explore secondary school teachers' perceptions towards action research implementation and its effect on their teaching practices in a mainstream school of Taraz. For the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

- How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school?
- How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

The major part of the literature studied relates to the topic of action research as pedagogical instrument. The literature review starts with history of action research in different countries and the views of different scientists on its basis. The next part gives an overview of action research in education, its influence on teaching practice and obstacles it can cause. Finally, the history of action research in Kazakhstan is explored. It starts with introduction of the studies on action research and its effect on teaching practices conducted in Kazakhstan. This is followed by development of action research in Nazarbayev Intellectual schools and mainstream schools.

The analysis of the literature provides a theoretical basis for conducting research on the attitudes of teachers on Action research and its influence on their teaching practices.

2.2. The origin of action research

The history of action research began from sociology. There was a need to study social relations as well as social patterns (Glassman, Erdem, Bartholomew, 2013). Although there was a number of people and organizations standing behind this term and having an impact on its development, the key figure was Kurt Lewin. Lewin (1946) defined it as “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action” (p.35). According to his definition he emphasized two types of research objectives: “conditions” and “effects”. He also indicated the steps of planning which would be the basis of conducting action research (Lewin, 1946).

Glassman *et al.* (2013) highlight that the term action research should not be misinterpreted. The term does not imply a researcher to be the main component in the approach. Conversely, the research itself is considered to be an inquiry through which changes are embedded.

The first use of the term was in the academic article by Lippitt and Radke (Glassman et al., 2013). In their article Lippitt and Radke (1946) pointed out two main characteristics of action research to identify and support changes. Even though their main focus of the study was prejudices, there was the first analysis of the term. Furthermore, they introduced nine principles of action research. Some of them were later replicated by other researchers (Glassman et al., 2013).

Then, the focus was shifted to adult education. Bradford (1967) promoted the idea of altering the quality of life by identifying the problem and creating an action plan. In that context community members were regarded as the main agents of change.

Next prominent scholar in action research field was Donald Schön (1983). In his book “The Reflective Practitioner” he reflected on educational philosophy and organizational learning. His contribution to the development of action research was immense.

Thus, the beginnings of action research were originated in sociology and adult education. As a result of numerous studies, there was a famous action research pattern of Lewin, which consisted of problem identification, intervention, problem adjustment and examining whether the problem was solved (Glassman et al., 2013).

2.3. The core underpinnings of action research in education

A considerable amount of literature has been published on action research in pedagogy. The base of action research in teaching field consists of four main components: reflection, education change, teacher empowerment and professional development.

Stephen Corey (1953) was one of the first to use action research in education. He saw it as a means to combine research with practice. He claimed that action research would result in advancements necessary to a particular educational setting. At the same time the development of action research in education began with the notion of reflection which Dewey (1997) considered to be a crucial element of pedagogy. Moreover, Danielson and McGreal (2000), Kemmis and McTagert (1990), McNiff (1997), and Schmuck (2006) see action research as one of the ways that allows teachers to review and improve their practices. According to Schmuck (2006) one of the conditions required to initiate action research is to reflect on past, future and present professional practices. Meantime, Simmons (1985) describes it as “a tool to help a teacher to think about teaching learning process” (p. 5). The view is supported by Sagor

(2000) who claims that one of the aims of conducting action research is “building the reflective practitioner” (p. 7).

Another aspect of action research is bringing educational changes (Mills, 2000; Sagor, 2000; Schmuck, 2006). Conducting action research individually or collaboratively with colleagues may lead to changes at both classroom and school levels (Hopkins and Ante, 1990; Sagor, 2000; Smeets, Ponte, 2009). Furthermore, action research contributes to teacher empowerment (McMillan, 1996; Schmuck, 2006). Through action research teachers are encouraged to examine their practices and understand the advantages of systematic inquiry (McMillan, 1996). Mertler (2014) also discusses the topic of empowerment. He points out that teachers become empowered to bring changes in their classrooms and schools due to action research. Being aware of “obstructive elements” (Hughes, 2016, p. 6) enables teachers with empowerment. Teachers who are involved in action research begin to rely more on data-based inquiry and avoid using “ineffective practices” (Hughes, 2016). In the same vein, Bissonnette and Caprino (2014) note that action research give teachers the power to “think critically about their own practice, become leaders in local communities of practice and have a positive impact on students’ learning” (p. 13).

Finally, the last and the most crucial element of action research in teaching is continuous improvement. As the main focus of action research in teaching is to examine and reflect upon one’s own practices, teachers become learners themselves. They are involved in the long process of study and research to improve and develop professionally (Koutselini, 2008).

2.4. Action research and continuous improvement

Schmuck (2006) considers that reflection and action research to be “two sides of a coin” (p.10). Likewise, Schön (1983) introduced the concept of reflective practice which later became basis for continuous improvement in teaching field. Therefore, action research was seen mostly as a useful variant of professional development for teachers. It was regarded as one of the ways to make teachers reinterpret their professional practices fundamentally and move toward new approaches (Oliver, 1980; McNiff, 2010).

Action research allows teachers to examine their own practices as well as the process of their students’ learning. Hughes’ small scale study (2016) found that teachers involved in action research had an opportunity to analyse and address current issues by reflecting and working out new solutions. Thus, teaching and learning become the focus of inquiry, and “classrooms become teachers’ laboratories” (Hughes, 2016, p. 7).

In a study which set out to determine the role of action research in teachers’ continuous improvement Garcés, Yicely and Granada (2016) found that teachers bring changes that contribute to development of “themselves, students and their institutions” (p. 40). This qualitative study showed that collaborative action research contributed to professional growth, a better interpretation of teaching approaches and theories, reflection on the research process.

Similarly, Yigit and Bagceci (2017) found that action research could be one of the ways to embed changes in teaching practice. They point out several aspects of the teaching field being influenced by participating in action research such as teaching methodologies, curriculum, general pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, an opportunity to determine the topic teachers consider to be worth studying contributes to useful professional growth (Mertler, 2014; Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014). Accordingly, action research is seen as “content-based, contextually-situated and teacher-centered” means of continuous improvement

(Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014, p. 14). Teachers investigate the topic in their classrooms which allows them to be in the centre of inquiry. The process of research is led by teachers. In addition, analysis is made by teachers themselves, conclusions are drawn based on their personal observations. The results of the research are applied to understand and address the current issues. However, the most important is that teachers are enabled to share their results and research experience with other school members. It creates a platform for educators to have discussions on professional topics as well as to promote the ideas of teacher empowerment and continuous improvement (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014).

2.5. Disadvantages of action research

Even though action research contributes to teacher empowerment and their continuous improvement, there are some problems that appear in the process of conducting it. They can be divided into internal and external.

The internal ones include teachers' attitude and knowledge about action research. In an analysis of action research, Zhou (2012) found that teachers frequently "misunderstand research" (p. 72). There is an explanation for such a situation. Initially, research is usually imposed on teachers by administration. In most cases teachers do not conduct research on a voluntary basis. That is why, they are not willing to understand it or identify necessary topic to investigate. Next reason for misunderstanding is lack of theoretical knowledge. On the other side, there are teachers who are interested in action research, but they lack "theoretical guidance and knowledge of research methodology" (Zhou, 2012, p. 74). Teachers need to be explained the main principles and purposes of action research. Moreover, teachers are not aware of research methods. They do not know what instruments to use in the process of

inquiry. Thus, they are not able to connect their practice to theory. As a result, they do not consider action research as an effective tool for improving teaching and learning.

However, there are external factors that impede the process of conducting action research. The first one is time constraint (Tinker Sachs, 1999; Wong, 1995; Zhou, 2012). Even if all the conditions for successful research are followed, there is not enough time to read, analyse, communicate or just to reflect. Teachers do not intend to spend their time on doing research when they have other important teaching responsibilities. Another hindrance is lack of resources (Zhou, 2012). Teachers are not exposed to a variety of necessary resources at schools. Furthermore, teachers do not know how to find relevant information in the internet. They are not taught how differentiate sources to find out whether it is feasible or not. Finally, the last one which is differences in two notions: teaching and research (Wong, 1995). They are of two different origins: practice and theory. Teachers find it difficult to fit teaching practice into theory or on the contrary combine theory with their practice. As a consequence, there another factor appears, the emotional one. Pressure which occurs due to research makes teachers frustrated, less motivated and objective (Brown, 2002; Zhou, 2012).

Thus, it can be concluded that there are two main types of factors hindering action research. They are internal and emotional which are within teachers themselves, other are external which are beyond teachers' influence.

2.6. Action research in the Kazakhstani context

Action Research is a recent education project in Kazakhstan, and “there is not yet a culture of open research in Kazakhstan” (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p. 54). According to McLaughlin and Ayubayeva (2015), it is explained by teachers' biases, fears and

misunderstanding of the concept of research process. Therefore, a majority of the teachers were not qualified enough to do research in the very beginning of introducing the project of action research (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015). However, later on some of them admitted that action research has become “a part of their practice”, but they did not elaborate further, once a particular problem was solved (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p. 63).

2.6.1. Action research implementation

In 2008 there was a governmental decision to create 20 Intellectual schools in 14 regions of Kazakhstan (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p. 56). Nowadays there are 21 Nazarbayev Intellectual schools around Kazakhstan. The aim of Intellectual schools was to become an experimental platform for new reforms being carried out in Kazakhstan. Later, the experience of those schools should be transmitted to all the secondary schools of Kazakhstan.

Thus, in 2012 the project of action research was started in Kazakhstan (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p. 53). The basis was brought from England and ‘the educators from a partnership between the University of Cambridge and local schools were invited (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015). The project was intended to continue for three years. Initially, there was a group formed consisting of three people in each NIS. The group included a principal, a senior member of staff as Teacher Research Coordinator and a teacher. All of them participated in workshops on regarding the proper conducting of action research. Then, they were supposed to organize two cycles of action research at their workplaces to involve all the staff into action research Kazakhstan. Finally, the third year of implementation there was research done on teachers’ experience and attitudes towards action research (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015).

In an investigation into action research, McLaughlin and Ayubayeva found that teachers misunderstood the word “research”. They regarded it as a “theorising” mostly (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p. 63). In addition, they were afraid of conducting research. They “felt under-qualified for this task” (ibid.). There was also a conflict of old and new values of the teachers.

2.6.2. Action research in mainstream schools

In order to transmit the experience of NIS and cover a bigger number of teachers the Centres of Excellence set up an in-service programme of teachers’ training and professional development system (Fimyar, Yakavets, Bridges, 2014). The programme comprises three levels which are supported by special training materials that have been developed in collaboration with the experts of Cambridge University. In the third level teachers are trained to bring about significant changes into their teaching practice, while in the second level they are taught to contribute to the professional development of the colleagues by coaching and mentoring. Finally, after the completion of the first level teachers are expected to embed changes into the whole school by offering and implementing their school development plan (Fimyar, 2014). Thus, this in-service training programme contributed to development of action research project. Teachers of mainstream schools became aware of action research. Under the guidance of the trainers there were action research projects launched throughout Kazakhstan.

2.6. Summary

This chapter provided the critical analysis of the literature resources related the history of action research in education and teachers’ attitudes towards it. Having reviewed the literature

on this topic, it can be concluded that there are diverse views towards action research from the side of scholars and teacher practitioners.

Action research is considered to be a type of reflection. It is one of the first tools to make teachers reflect on their practice. It also leads to teachers' empowerment. Teachers are given the voices to express their own opinions on educational and social phenomena. Teachers' empowerment leads to school improvement and teachers' collaboration. Furthermore, there is another point to mention. Action research is a way for improving or influencing teaching practices. There are several domains of teaching that are affected by it. They are classroom management, instructions, teaching methods and assessment.

Nevertheless, there are some constraints that should be pointed out. They are time, lack of resources and research skills and knowledge, lack of objectivity.

The analysis of the literature gives an opportunity to overview of history of action research in the world and in Kazakhstan in particular, to reveal the research gaps and outline the directions for future study. Despite the fact that action research has become an area of interest long ago in the world, it is a new notion in Kazakhstani education. Thus, it is necessary to be researched from the point of teachers' view, who are the main agents of change for now.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature overview on the topic of action research, its history, disadvantages and prerequisites for development. The “Methodology” chapter describes and explains the research design used in the given study. It also presents the sampling techniques and instruments used in order to answer the research questions: How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school? How does implementation of action research affect teachers’ practices? The next section includes the description of data analysis process and consideration of ethical issues related to the current study. The final part discussed the limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.2. Research Design

This section is devoted to description of the research design and explanation of the choice. The qualitative design of the study was chosen in accordance with the nature of the research questions. According to the definition of a qualitative research given by Creswell (2007), it is conducted when there is a need in “a complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (p.40). This understanding can be achieved through interviewing and enabling participants to speak and share their stories (Creswell, 2007). Thus, to explore the teachers’ perceptions towards action research qualitative research was applied.

To be more exact, a qualitative interview study was applied. Interviewing is considered to be “the primary data collection strategy in a qualitative project” (Hatch, 2002, p.23). According to Hatch (2002) there are three types of interviews: formal, informal and standardized. Formal interviews are called both “structured” and “unstructured”. There is a set

of questions prepared beforehand. However, an interviewer is also able to change or make up other questions in response to the information given by a participant of the study (ibid.). The formal interview was the most appropriate form for this study, as it could provide with necessary information on the topic.

3.3. Site and Participants of the Study

The site selection and sampling procedures are described in this section.

The research site was a mainstream school in Taraz. It was one of the pilot schools of Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS). Thus, the school started the project of action research in 2016 as a part of transferring NIS experience programme. The teachers of that school have been involved in the process of action research implementation for the last three years. The reason for selecting this site was due to actual action research having already being conducted there. The participants already had experience with Action Research and they already had established opinions about that project.

According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) the way of choosing sampling could have an impact on the analysis. Random sampling can bring vague and broad outcomes, whereas more specific ways could lead to more precise results (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014, p.32). For the current study, the purposeful sampling was used because it can “inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). To be more specific, maximum variation was selected to get different perspectives on the research questions. The following criteria were used to select the participants:

- Subjects: English, Maths, Chemistry, Kazakh and Russian. Teachers of different subjects could represent a variety of opinions on action research through the lens of their

subject, as perception of the project could vary from subject to subject as well as the topics of research due to the specific nature of the subjects.

- Years of conducting action research: more than one year. Teachers who have already had the experience of conducting action research.
- Gender: four women, one man. Male teachers constitute only 20 per cent of the school faculty.
- Research topics. The school teachers chose and conducted action research mainly in three topic areas which were instructional strategies, assessment strategies and classroom management.
- Willingness to participate. The teachers who were willing to participate were recruited.

General information about the participants is presented in the table below. The numeric code of the participants is used there and further in the paper in order to keep their identities confidential.

Table 1.

Characteristics of the participants

Participant code	Work experience	Area of specialization	Years of conducting action research	Gender
Participant 1	15 years	English	3 years	Female
Participant 2	30 years	Mathematics	3 years	Male
Participant 3	20 years	Chemistry	3 years	Female
Participant 4	20 years	Kazakh	3 years	Female
Participant 5	20 years	Russian	3 years	Female

3.4. Data Collection Methods

This section provides information on the methods of data collection. Moreover, it gives explanation of their usage in relation to the research questions presented in this study. Data gathering methods consisted of semi-structured interviews and overt non-participatory semi-structured lesson observations.

Interviewing could give an opportunity for the researcher to know the opinions of the participants and answer the first research question. According to Hatch (2002) open-ended questions would allow the researcher to understand and grasp the perspective of a participant. Moreover, when interviews are combined with observations, they provide more information on the opinions of the participants as well as their intentions for taking specific actions (Hatch, 2002). In addition, lesson observations were necessary to back up information gathered through interviews. It allowed the researcher to determine whether some information is missed or not aligned due to various implicit and explicit factors. An observation template was divided into two columns: descriptive and reflective (Creswell, 2007), so that the researcher had an opportunity to analyse teaching behavior and compare it with the results of interviewing.

Two interviews with each of the five teachers were conducted to collect data and ten interviews were conducted in total. Interviewing was divided into two parts due to numerous interview questions required to provide sufficient answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, there were two parts seeking various aims: the first part focused more on teachers' perceptions of action research, while the second one concentrated on its influence on their teaching practice.

Interview protocols were used as an instrument of data collection and were designed in three languages: English, Russian and Kazakh. They were used to see the order and the questions of the interview and to take notes if it was necessary.

Two types of questions were used: those to provide personal information such as work experience, subject they teach; and those related to their professional experience, their participation in action research, the problems they had, the way they solved them. The interview questions were designed in accordance with the notions appeared in the literature review (see Appendix A). Some probing questions were asked to clear up and get relevant information for analysis (see Appendix B).

Another instrument of data collection was lesson observation, which was designed in English and then translated into local languages to provide the understanding of it by all the participants. It was divided into two parts to give the researcher an opportunity to analyse, compare and interpret data gathered from the interviews and observations (Creswell, 2007). Overall, four domains of teaching were chosen to be observed: classroom management, giving instructions, teaching methods and assessment (see Appendix C).

Finally, both data collection instruments allowed me to get enough information to analyse and answer the research questions.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

There were several steps followed in the process of collecting data.

Meeting with a gatekeeper. Firstly, it was necessary to receive Ethics Approval. After getting Ethics Approval from the NU GSE Ethics Committee in the end of October, 2018, the procedure of data collection started with gaining access to the site and participants of the

study. As the research site was one of the mainstream schools in Taraz, I had a personal meeting with a gatekeeper who was a school principal (Creswell, 2012) to gain access to the site to negotiate about the research in November, 2018. During this discussion I explained all the aspects of my research including the purpose and duration of my study, sampling strategy and data collection, its significance and possible risks. I also explained the ethical considerations.

Sample selection. After the permission for the research was obtained, recruiting the participants for the study started. In December, 2018 I started recruiting the participants for my study. A list of teachers who have already participated in the project of action research was taken from one of the vice-principals responsible for methodological work. The next step was to obtain permission from teachers to be interviewed. The participants were met and informed about the aim and the importance of the research, how the interviews were going to be held and how data would be analyzed, kept and reported. They were also informed about the possible risks of the study. Having obtained the permission from five teachers, a schedule of meetings which was convenient for both sides and did not interfere with job responsibilities was created. Each participant was negotiated about the time and venue of the individual interviews separately. Furthermore, the schedule of the observations was discussed and developed according to school timetable.

Data collection. In January, 2019 individual interviews were carried according to the availability of the participants. Observation was conducted according to the developed timetable.

Table 2.

Lesson observation timetable

	Subject	Grade	Date	Time
Participant 1	English	8	February 6	09.35 - 10.15
Participant 2	Mathematics	9	February, 11	11.15 – 11.55
Participant 3	Chemistry	8	February 15	08.50 – 09.30
Participant 4	Kazakh	7	February 19	14.35 – 15.15
Participant 5	Russian	8	February 26	12.50 - -13.30

The interviews were piloted with a teacher from my school who knew about the project in December, 2018. The pilot testing was necessary to make sure that the questions of the interview were appropriate and clear for the participants. The questions were not changed considerably. There was one more question about future research interest added.

Two interviews with each of the participants were conducted. Two interviews were conducted within the research site in a private classroom of the participants so that interview would not be interrupted. The interviews started in the end of January and lasted till the end of February of 2019. The informed consent form was sent to the participants prior to the first interview (see Appendix D). At the beginning of the interview the Consent form was discussed together with each of the participants. They were again reminded about the purpose of the interview and confidentiality of received information. They were also informed that they could stop the interview any moment they felt uncomfortable or not ready to answer one of the questions. Additionally, they were asked for permission to use an audiotape recorder while taking an interview. As soon as the consent forms were signed, an hour long interviews were conducted in two languages: Russian and English (according to preference of the participants).

The interview protocol was used to ask the questions and take notes. During the process of collecting data, I focused on being objective and respectful towards participants and their opinions. I tried to support them to give the detailed answers by asking some additional questions when it was necessary. At the end of the interview the interviewees were thanked for participating in the given study. The date of the second interview was negotiated with the participants. When the first part of conducting interviews with the participants of the study had finished, the second part started (the second interviews with the same participants). The second part also followed the same principles of the first interview procedure.

Finally, the last stage was lesson observations which were done according to the fixed timetable. The participants were informed about the time and the procedure of the observations beforehand. They were asked to behave naturally and show the daily lesson routine they usually had. It was necessary to create trusting relationship so that the participants could feel free and comfortable during lesson observations.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2007) data analysis process in qualitative research consists of three stages: arranging for analysis, cutting down data by coding and reproducing data in a discussion.

Firstly, all the recorded interviews were transcribed and read to have a whole picture of the responses which were either in English or in Russian. To analyse the received data two cycles of coding were used (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2013). The first cycle included dividing the raw data into chunks and getting preliminary labels and final codes inductively (Saldana, 2015) through descriptive and in vivo coding that gave the researcher space to

assign the labels summarizing the data and to use “the words or short phrases from the participant’s own language” (Miles et al, 2013, p. 74). The second cycle was aimed at categorizing the codes into themes or patterns (Miles et al, 2013). The researcher’ aim at this stage was to demonstrate interrelations between themes and categories.

Ultimately, the results of the study were analyzed and interpreted in allegiance with the research questions. The observations were used to verify the conclusions drawn from the interviews coding.

3.7. Ethical Issues

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical norms and principles of Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. The participants were given the consent form beforehand where they were informed about the purpose of the study, its procedure, their right to reject participation in the research process at any time. The interviewees were aware of the potential benefits and risks associated with the study. The process of research may have contributed to teachers’ reflection. During the process of research participants may have thought over the questions related to action research implementation. Moreover, finding out the peculiar areas of influence of action research implementation was also crucial in terms of professional development assistance.

As Punch (2000) noted “a researcher’s ethical responsibilities” comprise of “academic integrity” and “respect for other people” (p. 56). Therefore, it is a responsibility of the researcher to minimize possible risks for teachers who will be involved in the research.

The following risks were pointed out connected with the research:

- loss of reputation as a teacher in case of breach of confidentiality

- outspread of personal information that teachers do not intend to be distributed
- damage to relationships among colleagues

However, some steps were taken to avoid those potential risks. Firstly, the informed consent form was created before taking interviews and observing to present full information about the study and assure that participation in the research was voluntary (Miles et al., 2014). The received data were stored in my private computer protected by a password. The tape recorded interviews were destroyed after being transcribed. Moreover, the participants had the right not to answer particular interview questions and quit the project whenever they felt uncomfortable to continue. Secondly, all the participants were given pseudonyms so that anonymity could be guaranteed. No video or photo materials were used to reveal the identities of the participants. Furthermore, audiotapes were stored apart from transcribed texts so that no alliance could be done to identify a particular teacher.

3.8. Limitations and Delimitations

There were some limitations in the study. First of all, being a teacher who also participated in the project of action research and who was aware of its process, I could have been biased towards interpretation of the participants' responses. Although the participants were not my colleagues, they may also be biased in turn trying to say what was theoretically correct.

The second limitation was that the teachers may have felt uncomfortable during lesson observations. Even though they were assured to feel free and show the actual lessons, they may have prepared beforehand to demonstrate their best teaching approaches. At the same

time, the researcher could be also biased towards observations trying to notice what she wanted or needed in the research.

Another limitation was that the topic of the research is relatively new notion in Kazakhstani education system. Thus, it could be assumed that the teachers did not form the holistic representation of action research. Although one of criteria for participants' selection was experience in conducting action research, they may not have had understanding of all the details and peculiarities of the project.

Finally, the last limitation was connected with the sampling strategy. Despite maximum variation strategy could provide different perspectives, the number of participants was too small to do it properly.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings of the study aimed at exploring teachers' perspectives on action research and its influence on their teaching practice. The purpose of the study was to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions towards action research implementation and its effect on their teaching practices in a mainstream school of Taraz. A qualitative interview study was used in this study to answer the following research questions: How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school? How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

Five secondary school teachers who were of different age groups and areas of research interest were interviewed. Taking into consideration the general results of the study, the choice of criteria contributed to the general understanding of the issue under the study. To be more specific, characteristics related to the area of specialization and years of conducting action research happened to have significant value since the responses of participants across these criteria differed much.

Totally ten interviews with five teachers were conducted for this study. The area of their specialization differed, which contributed to receiving different perspectives on the research questions. The interviewees also varied according to areas of their research interest. Additional information about a number of years conducting action research and work experience were taken into consideration. To analyse the received data two cycles of coding were used. The first cycle included dividing the raw data into chunks and getting preliminary labels in relation to research questions.

The structure of the chapter is organized in the following way. First, the characteristics of the participants are presented. Then, the findings of the study are arranged into two parts relating to two research questions. The first part is referred to the first research questions and includes the teachers' attitudes towards action research implementation considered from different views. The second part gives the answer to the second research question showing how action research implementation affects teaching practices.

4.2. Results Relating to RQ1: How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school?

In order to answer the first research question, teachers were asked to reflect on their practice of conducting action research. Consistent with the literature, the questions were designed to explore teachers' attitudes towards action research implementation. Thus, the data gathered as a result of the interviews was analyzed and grouped based on the following categories:

- The context for action research implementation
- Teacher's experience of conducting action research
- Difficulties they faced
- Insights they had while doing action research
- Teacher's attitudes towards action research

4.2.1. The context for action research implementation

Although action research practice is widely spread in different countries, it has come to the education system of Kazakhstan recently. It can be also seen from the answers of the participants. They have identified some main sources of getting their knowledge of action

research. The first and the most common source was professional development courses for teachers, particularly three-level in-service training from teacher training institutes or centers called Orleu and Centers of Excellence of NIS. This programme involved a big number of the teachers around Kazakhstan. It was aimed at renewing teaching practice and methods. One of the participants mentioned that action research was one of the directions of that training programme:

In 2013-2014, I took three-level in-service training, which lasted three months. I passed the first level on the basis of the Centre of Excellence. One of the directions for the development of these courses was action research. I completed the courses successfully.

Another source of disseminating information about action research was school administration. One of the participants pointed out that:

In addition, before passing the courses, our school principal, she also took similar courses and conducted action research. That was how I got to know about action research. Even though we did not understand the essence, we just took part in this process.

Finally, the last one was colleagues. The participants of the study became aware of action research with the help of their colleagues, who participated in different in-service trainings or professional development courses.

I was a member of a research group. I did not know anything about action research, but then I joined the group. They explained me the process and the details. However, it was difficult to understand at first. Later on I could get and started participating actively.

It can be noted that the teachers had the external factors to conduct and participate in action research project. Although they did not have internal motivation to do action research, they could know about this research practice for further use and implementation.

4.2.2. Teachers' experience of conducting action research

After getting acquainted with the process of action research, the participants started implementing it in their teaching practice. Each of them had their personal experience of doing action research. Their experience can be considered in three dimensions: emotional, professional, cultural.

Emotional aspect. Interestingly, that almost all the participants mentioned that they were not confident starting the project in the beginning. Even though they had enough background knowledge, they were hesitant about the details of the process. Moreover, some of them expressed some fearful comments that they could have done something incorrectly. Some of them were not sure whether the results of their research were valid and relevant.

In the very beginning of the process, right after finishing the courses, I was afraid that I could not do it on my own. That is why, together with my colleague we created a tandem to conduct action research.

Professional aspect. Despite all the doubts they had while conducting action research, they commented positively about the results of action research. They could notice some significant changes made in their classroom due to the research.

Indeed, there is a dynamic when the study was conducted. For example, I myself discovered a child who had been silent for half a year, but as a result of this work, he started to speak.

Furthermore, one of the participants pointed out that action research practice had some similarities to what they were doing before. However, it helped them structure their practice and systematize the base of knowledge they had.

Although it was an innovation for me, it is intertwined with our methodology. We also attend the lessons, gather to discuss some particular topics on methodology and pedagogy. However, we have different goals, in this study we choose a specific topic, a question that interests us in teaching.

Another aspect of professional area is sharing experience. The participants started to share their teaching experience not only within their school, but further outside it, with the

teachers of local and regional schools. They had an opportunity to discuss the questions collaboratively with colleagues and then distribute the results of their research in the forms of articles and seminars.

At least once a year we hold a seminar to share our achievements. There is a discussion at the level of the city and region. Teachers usually share their experience. They ask questions that they are interested in. Together we try to find some solutions and choose the directions for development.

Thus, it can be stated that in terms of professional aspect there were some positive changes made due to action research implementation.

Cultural aspect. Most of them had an opportunity to get acquainted with the works and articles of foreign teachers and academicians. That is why they could notice some similarities and differences in the system of teaching and research. They have admitted that they were not accustomed to do research at school. Teacher research was associated with university practice.

It was not new for us. Our colleagues from universities are always involved in some kind of research. However, the school teachers were not required to do any research. When action research was firstly, presented to us, my first idea was that it was not necessary.

Another part of cultural aspect was inability to share the experience. Initially, the teachers were not ready to share the results of their studies. Firstly, because they did not see any benefits of it, then, due to their unpreparedness. They did not know how to do it, what was the purpose of it and when and where it could be organized.

We followed all the requirements. We passed all the cycle. We had our results, but then there was a question: what was next. Yet, we shared the results with the colleagues who we had close relationship with. It was informal, in the canteen, sometimes in teachers' room. It was after some time we started to organize the sessions on action research.

Consequently, the areas of teacher's experience of action research include different notions such as emotions, professional development and culture.

4.2.3. Difficulties they faced

The process of action research is considered to be an exciting study of stating the problem and searching for a possible way to address the issue. However, there can be different obstacles met on the way of implementing the process. While analyzing the received data, the following difficulties were indicated:

- time constraint
- organization
- number of children
- specification of subject
- material for reviewing

The first and the most frequently mentioned complication was time constraint. There were several reasons why the teachers highlighted time as the main constraint. First of all, all of them referred to the work overload. They have a number of responsibilities except teaching and doing research. Some of them have homeroom duties, so they a class they are responsible for. Sometimes they devote the time of their lessons to up-bringing purposes. Moreover, communicating with parents takes a considerable amount of their working and free time. They have to conduct monthly meetings and keep in touch with parents almost every day if they want to maintain discipline and good achievements of their students. Another reason is that the teachers do too much paper work. They are overloaded with filling electronic and paper journals. Some of them have mentioned that due to the standards of updated curriculum they have to spend much time filling different documents and writing reports for various purposes. Even though some of them see the positive changes brought by the new programme, they do not think that they spend their time at work effectively because of paper work they have now.

I spend about two or three hours to fill in the electronic journal firstly, then paper, because our administration requires to have paper journals too. Then, I need to check the papers of my students and fill in the results into electronic journal again. After all, I have some time for planning and preparing for my next lessons. Sometimes I do not have time to do research or to do quality research.

Eventually, the last idea that participants have expressed is that some of them are overloaded with teaching hours. There is a minimum of teaching hours that each may have. However, due to the lack of teachers, they have to take more than the minimum and overload their week.

Also, my colleagues, they have the same difficulties, since we have workload of more than 18 hours. Most of my colleagues teach, for example, 27 hours a week, so the lack of time always affects our practice.

As a result, there is another hardship with organization. Teachers work in different shifts, that is why it is difficult for them to cooperate and find suitable time for meetings. Some of them mentioned the “free” day at school, which is given for professional development. Yet, teachers spend this time for their personal purposes.

We are all people. We have some things to do outside the school. For example, I need to go to a bank and solve some financial issues. Also I want to spend some time with my children. That is why, I do not have time to do research this very day, when we are freed of lessons.

Interestingly that three of them described a number of students in a class as an obstacle. Most of their research topics are connected with teaching, so students are involved in the research to some extent. As in most of the lessons students are not divided into groups, there are almost 30 students in each class. However, this is also a driving force to research. The participants wanted to investigate the question of group work.

There are still other problems. I do not how many students study in western classrooms. We have, for example, many children in the classrooms. We do not have always opportunity to pay attention to everyone. Sometimes it creates a hindrance for our research.

Furthermore, two of the participants, the teachers of Chemistry and Kazakh language have reported that specification of their subjects comprises a difficulty as well.

The material base does not allow us to fully carry out this work. The subject I teach requires practice. This practice is not always possible to implement, because there are no material possibilities.

The Kazakh language teacher has also agreed that due to specific nature of the subject there was sometimes a difficulty. As some of the students are not native speakers, while others are, there should be a different approach applied to study some questions.

They forget what they have learned today. Then, they go out and forget about it, because there is no practice of application.

Although four of the participants said that there was a material for reviewing the literature for their research, there was one who said that it was difficult for him to find appropriate books on a chosen topic. The main sources for reviewing were presented in the course books of the professional development sessions and trainings. Nevertheless, they were not enough to conduct a research, so some of them referred to the internet. Thus, one teacher mentioned that he was unable to differentiate the materials that he needed.

The internet base is very rich, that is why I am confused what to choose, what to begin with and what kind of websites are better to use to find information. I know some Kazakhstani sites that share the articles of the teachers from all the regions of Kazakhstan, some created and suggested by the network of Nazarbayev Intellectual schools. Though, I could not there what I really needed for my research.

Thus, it can be concluded that some of the constraints are caused due to some external factors not influenced and solved by the teachers, while others are can be overcome by the teachers.

4.2.4. Insights they had while conducting action research

One of the main postulates which action research is based on is reflection. Teachers learn how to be reflective practitioners. Although they try to conduct it in a scientific manner supporting the results with numbers and comparisons, the most precious is the practice of reflecting. The conclusions that the participants made while doing action research can be divided into personal and professional.

The personal ones are mainly focused on their observations of themselves as a personality. Most of them mentioned that they have learned how to manage their time at work and generally in personal life. They noticed their personal qualities that have been hidden before. They were determined and systematic to finish the research. Moreover, they were open to knowledge and development not only as a teacher but as a person as well. For instance, some of them described the process of doing action research as “an opportunity to plunge into a new area”.

It was not only about teaching. It was about my life, too. I learned to notice the things in my personal life and investigate them, or find the answers to the questions on my own or with my children. It was an interesting period. Now I feel slightly different. I cannot say that it totally changed my life, but it definitely had an influence on it.

Another personal insight was relationship with colleagues. There was a fresh look at them. They were considered from a different position, not on a professional level in a teaching environment. It was totally unfamiliar situation, where they behaved differently, thus, they showed some unexpected qualities, the positive ones.

When I was conducting a coach session on action research for my colleagues, I prepared some interesting games to explain the process. I was surprised to see my colleagues being so active, open-minded and easy-going. It was real fun. They jumped and cried and generally acted like children. We rarely have such kind of moments, when we can relax and learn something new not only teach it. I think that everyone enjoyed that session.

Turning to professional insights which include professional development and reflective skills. In terms of professional growth, the participants mentioned the methods that were new in their teaching practice. Due to the lesson observations and constant discussions they exchanged a number of “teaching things”. Moreover, they had a chance to probe them and comment on their effectiveness.

While discussing our research topics, we have also shared some interesting exercises that can be used at our lessons. It is interesting to know what else you can do to motivate students, because they are different now. That is why you need to change.

One more professional insight is reflection. While conducting action research within tree-level in-service training, the participants had to write a report on what they were doing, why and how. They were receiving feedback from their trainers with a detailed description of what was good, what could be improved. Thus, they had an experience of reflecting and thinking over their teaching practice and research. They also announced the idea that reflection was a part of their practice, but it was more organized now. They saw the advantages of reflecting in a written form.

It was time - consuming to write all of these reports and follow the criteria. I needed to write about 3000 words, and I did not know what to write. Later on, when the research had already started, there was a big amount of information to fit in those 3000 words. It was helpful. It was like an analysis of your professional skills. It was new, because before the analysis was done by administration or by my colleagues and never by myself.

So, it can be stated that there were conclusions made by the participants that had a connection with their personal and professional lives.

4.2.5. Teachers’ attitudes towards action research

Summarizing what has been written above, the attitudes of the participants towards action research implementation can be described. Taking into account the emotional aspect of

action research implementation, it can be noted that teachers formed the attitude of fear and hesitation in the beginning due to the lack of knowledge. However, analyzing further answers of the participants it can be concluded that they have changed their attitude to more confident one. The following main themes were highlighted in the process of analysis:

- success
- positivity
- development
- reflection
- effectiveness
- change

Most of them considered their projects to be successful in terms of results. They could finish it and share the results with others. Moreover, they could notice positive dynamic in their classrooms and among the colleagues.

Everyone is improving in his own way. I can see it from lesson observations or from the sessions they create for us. I can see some professional progress.

Development and reflection were already mentioned as the parts of the teachers' insights. It contributed to the improvement of their teaching practice. Finally, the last and the uniting theme for all of them was change. Not only the teachers' attitudes have changed, but also their personal and professional areas were under the influence of action research.

The attitudes of the participants can be also seen in their desire to continue doing action research on other unexplored topics. All of them found it effective, and if all the constraints could be eliminated, they would definitely take up a new theme.

I would love to study the motivation of poorly performing children, how to raise their self-esteem, how to make them feel comfortable, what forms, what activity will affect the learning process of poorly performing students. In general, I want to say, if a person does not develop, does not research something, he will not come to any conclusions. Therefore, my colleagues and I try not to dwell on a certain type of work.

Thus, it can be summarized that in the process of getting acquainted and implementing action research the participants have formed a positive attitude towards it. Moreover, in spite of all the difficulties enumerated by them they still see it as an effective practice to do research that benefits learning and teaching.

4.3. Results Relating to RQ2: How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

In order to answer the second research question, teachers were asked to answer the questions about relationship of their teaching practice and action research. Moreover, there was a number of lesson observations conducted to reflect on the areas being influenced by action research implementation. Thus, there were four spheres of teaching pointed out.

- classroom management
- giving instructions
- teaching methods
- assessment

4.3.1. The influence on classroom management

All the participants had different areas of research interest. Classroom management was the research interest of one of the participants. However, other participants have also mentioned that this area was affected when they used action research. Thus, the teachers spoke about group work as one of the effective means of lesson organization. One participant chose

classroom management as her for action research and she came to the conclusion that group work was helpful in terms of organizing a class with a big number of students. While another teacher commented:

We can engage in groups only on certain topics, at least only in small groups. I, for example, do not practice group work extensively. I practice either pair work or work in small groups, because in large a child can get lost. Leader work more, while the rest sit in the shadow of those leaders.

Although it may be known before, teachers explained that due to research they could investigate this topic in details, see the advantages and drawbacks of this method, probe different strategies in the current situation. While describing the effect that action research had on this particular part of teaching, they used such adjectives as “big”, “immense”, “tremendous”. The lesson observations showed that most of the teachers organized group work very skillfully. They made it purposefully to enhance the learning process. So, it can be stated that teachers who were involved in the process of research were able to apply the results in their practice.

4.3.2. The influence on giving instructions

Another aspect of classroom management is giving instructions. The participants have also spoken about importance of giving instructions. Some of them were in the group research on this topic, others had an opportunity to be shared the information on the given theme.

Together with my colleagues we studied the topic of giving instructions. We formed a group together with our young colleagues. They had less teaching experience, that is why they announced their problems. We chose the one that were common for all of us. It was giving instructions. Research helped us identify the weak points we had while giving instructions. What is the most important it showed us what should be done to improve it.

They could notice some positive progression in their practice. The lesson observations indicated that most of the teachers did not face any problems when giving instructions. Every detail was considered, and the process was smooth.

4.3.3. The influence on teaching methods

The topic of teaching methods is interrelated with the data of the first research question. This area was mostly influenced in accordance with all the participants. Even though all them had different research topics, their studies helped enrich their teaching methods base. It was an indirect impact. There are several reasons why teaching methods is the area of the biggest influence. Firstly, while being introduced and involved in the process of action research teachers were exposed to different literature and professional development sessions, so they had an opportunity to be familiarized with a number of approaches which could be applied in their classrooms.

The most interesting part of sessions for me was to know different ways the coaches used to organize the work. Some of them used games, others showed us some very fascinating videos and shared some educational websites. It was always fascinating to participate in the sessions and then think over own teaching practice.

Another way was sharing teaching experience. Teachers had an opportunity to meet with others on a regular base. They were able to discuss not only the questions related to other research, but also all other concerns they had about their teaching practice. Not experienced teachers worked in collaboration with experienced ones who were open to share and receive knowledge as well.

I think that it had a great influence on my colleagues, especially young ones. Before we did not have a chance to discuss some professional topics. Although we have constant pedagogical meetings with administration, we do not speak. We just discuss some official questions related to documents. This time we tried to meet in our library or empty classrooms to do the quality research. We had endless talks about our students, teaching methods and other stuff.

The influence of teaching methods was implicit, yet, it was affected by the research done by the participants. So, it can be considered that action research had an indirect impact on one part of the teaching practice.

4.3.4. The influence on assessment

Another important stage of teaching is assessment. This element of teaching practice was influenced the least. It can be explained by some reasons. Firstly, the system of assessment in Kazakhstan has undergone some considerable changes. Thus, this topic is not studied fully yet. Secondly, teachers considered the questions of assessing the students as the easiest one.

We get used to traditional methods of assessment. We put marks, students and parents are aware of them. Moreover, they know what to expect. Nowadays the system has totally altered. There are no marks, just control works. Students are stressed out.

That is why, teachers have been mostly focused on students' motivation, how to raise students' motivation in the context of these changes. Before there were just several students who were low-motivated, now they had majority of them.

We considered the process of enhancing students' cognitive activity, which forms and methods are better for a teacher to activate students, since in the system of updated educational content it is very difficult to do. When a child is not motivated by points. Just the same question: what should be done to stir up a child and interest him in the learning process.

Interestingly that the participants whose research interest was in different areas of teaching practice wished to choose the next topic for research as motivation of students.

Even though it is relatively unexplored topic among the participants, they have studied some close themes like motivation of the students.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the study being discovered in the process of interview and lesson observation analysis. The first part described the teachers' experience of conducting action research, obstacles they met and conclusions they made in this process. Moreover, it gave general summary of the teachers' perceptions of action research. The second part pointed out the areas of the teaching practice under the influence of action research implementation. The next chapter will also discuss the given findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study which was focused on the exploration of teachers' attitudes towards action research implementation. The aim of this chapter is to present the explanation taking into account various views and directions. The findings will be discussed in their relation to the literature and the research questions.

The chapter consists of two main parts. First, teachers' attitudes towards action research are considered from different angles. Then, action research implementation is described in the context of Kazakhstan and its influence on teaching practice.

5.2. Teachers' attitudes towards action research

The central phenomenon of the study is the process of action research. According to Lewin (1946) it has a cyclic character and includes several stages: planning, implementing and searching for possible solutions. Later on there was a popular action research pattern of Lewin which comprised four steps (Glassman et al., 2013). The current study found that the participants were aware of the cyclic nature of the research. Moreover, they have followed four steps that were very similar to those identified by Kurt Lewin.

5.2.1. Action research in education context

The notion of action research came to education from sociology (Lippit, Radke, 1946). action research in education is viewed in four dimensions: reflection, education change, teacher empowerment and professional development.

Reflection. Stephen Corey (1953) pointed out that action research was a good way to combine research with practice. Some of the participants claimed that it was a good opportunity for them to discuss the questions they had and think over their own teaching practice. It could be noted that it was a means to incorporate some theoretical knowledge and practice. Another interesting finding was that action research contributed to the development of teachers' reflective skills. All the participants agreed that reflection was a part of conducting action research. Moreover, they highlighted the importance of reflecting. This idea supports the views of Dewey (1997) who stated that reflection was one of the essential elements of pedagogy. He also claimed that action research started with reflection. Other authors maintained the idea of action research as a tool to create a reflective teacher (Sagor, 2000; Schmuck, 2006; Simmons, 1985).

Education change. A number of authors had an opinion that action research could be the reason of educational changes at both classroom and school levels (Miles, 2000; Hopkins & Ante, 1990; Sagor, 2000; Schmuck, 2006; Smeets & Ponte, 2009). On this question, the study found that the participants could notice some positive transformation in their classrooms with their students and even at school with their colleagues. For instance, the teachers started to share their experience and develop the culture of research in their school. They have also enumerated some considerable changes that happened to their students. Although it was not done immediately after research, the shift has been made.

Teacher empowerment. Action research enables teachers with an ability to express their own opinion on different teaching topics as well as to take responsibility over their professional development and teaching (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014; Hughes, 2016; Mertler, 2014; McMillan, 1996). This can be clearly seen in the analysis of the participants' answers.

The findings showed that teachers were involved in different coach sessions where they shared the results of their studies with the colleagues from different schools. Moreover, they were given an opportunity to discuss the concerns their colleagues had to find possible solutions. Another aspect that demonstrated teacher empowerment was within their school. They were able to share their experience and communicate with the teacher who they did not contact before. Thus, it can be concluded that the teachers' projects became the reasons of changes in their classrooms and schools (Mertler, 2014).

Professional development. Professional development is the topic that runs through all the parts of the study. The participants mentioned some of the categories of their professional practice that were under the influence of their action research projects. They could also notice some productive results in terms of professional development. This finding corroborates the ideas of Koutselini (2008), who claimed that conducting action research was a long process of studying developing professionally.

Thus, it can be stated that the concept of action research in education context presented in the literature is in agreement with the findings revealed in this study.

5.2.2. Action research and professional development

The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Hughes (2016) who stated that “classrooms became teachers' laboratories” (p.7), thus, they were able to analyse and address current issues by reflecting and working out new solutions. The participants of this study have mentioned the problem with a number of the students in their classrooms. As a result, some of them decided to study the question of group work to organize learning effectively. Another example is assessment. Due to reconstruction of assessment system in

Kazakhstan, there new issues appeared. So, the participants were interested in raising students' motivation in the context of new assessment system.

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that their action research projects contributed to enrichment of their teaching methods. They could see how to apply some particular methods and try to use them in their own practice. This finding supports the study of Garces, Yicely and Granada (2016) which links action research and a better interpretation of teaching approaches and theories.

The areas that were under the influence of action research pointed out by the participants differed slightly from those found out in the study of Yigit and Bagceci (2017). They highlighted several aspects of the teaching field such as teaching methodologies, curriculum, general pedagogical knowledge, while the current study has revealed other categories of teaching practice. However, there is one point in common. Choosing the research interest on their own contributed to more conscious approach of conducting action research (Bissonnette & Caprino, 2014; Mertler, 2014).

5.2.3. Disadvantages of action research

There are some issues that appear in the process of doing action research. They can be divided into internal and external ones.

The first among internal ones is misinterpreting research. According to Zhou (2012) teachers are usually assigned to do action research, that is why, they do not have willingness to understand the details of the process. However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research. The participants were aware of the terms related to action research as well as its cyclic nature. They knew the essence and the purpose of this kind of teacher

research. Another reason which is mentioned by Zhou (2012) is that there is a lack of “theoretical guidance and knowledge of research methodology” (p.74). The participants attended three-level in-service training which them an opportunity to get acquainted with the process of action research. Moreover, they were exposed to practice with the supervision of their trainers and systematic feedback from them.

The external factors include time constraint and lack of resources (Tinker & Sachs, 1999; Wong, 1995, Zhou, 2012). The results of the study are consistent with those ideas partially. The participants agreed that due to various reasons and circumstances they did not have enough time to do research. Yet, only one of them said that there was a difficulty to find an appropriate resource on their research topic. Even though they were given a number of websites and books to get information from, they were unable to differentiate which one was necessary and credible.

Finally, the last one is the differences in two notions: teaching and research. The participants said that they were not accustomed or prepared to do research at school, as originally research was associated with university field. This finding is in agreement with Wong’s (1995) idea of combining teaching practice with theory and on the contrary fitting theory in their practice. As a result, teachers may feel depressed, frustrated and less motivated (Brown, 2001; Zhou, 2012).

It can be concluded that there are some inconsiderable differences in results of the current study and the earlier studies on the question of action research difficulties.

5.3. The influence of action research on teaching practice

Action research implementation began with the emergence of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools in 2012 (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015). It was considered to be a new notion in Kazakhstani system of education, because there was culture of teacher research at schools (ibid). This idea is supported by the findings about cultural aspect of teachers' experience of action research. The participants mentioned that in the beginning they struggled to adjust to new requirements of conducting action research. In order to understand how action research influenced teaching practice of the participants, it is necessary to describe the background history of its implementation.

5.3.1. Preconditions for action research

The participant who had the longest period of work experience (30 years) mentioned that there was a need for changes. She witnessed all the reforms and transformations related to education system. Action research project was a driving force of such changes in the mind of teachers and school system generally. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the perceptions of teaching and teachers themselves have completely changed (Silova, 2009).

According Hargreaves (1994) the shift from individualism to collegiality could contribute to the development of democratic system of education. action research project was a catalyst of that shift. The participants reported several times about sharing their experience within their school and outside it. They could notice the advantages of experience exchange in their professional sphere. Interaction with colleagues had an indirect influence on such areas of teaching practice as classroom management, instructions and assessment. Constant discussion of pedagogical topics led to positive changes in their perception of education system in general.

It was inevitable period of alterations, as the old system could not meet the demands of new independent Kazakhstan (Yakavets & Dzhadrina, 2014). The participants could observe this as well. They commented that modern students had their own peculiarities that differed totally from those there were before. They needed other methods applied to be motivated. The participants were in search of those methods to interest their students. Action research project assisted in filling this gap in teaching field.

5.3.2. Action research implementation

Action research implementation started from a partnership of the University of Cambridge and local schools. It was originally implemented in Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, and then transmitted to mainstream schools. It took about three years to implement, test and research on the further effect of the project (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015). One of the findings of this study showed that the teachers were afraid of conducting action research at the beginning. They often ‘felt under-qualified for this task’ (McLaughlin & Ayubayeva, 2015, p.63). There are similarities between this finding and the results of the current study. The participants of this study have also expressed the feelings of fear and doubt.

Next stage of action research implementation was realized through the Centers of Excellence which were established in 2012 to provide teachers with continuous professional development. Due to the programme of three-level in-service training which included the module of action research, the participants were taught how to conduct action research (Fimyar, Yakavets & Bridges, 2014). The training covered all the school community starting from the principal and ending with young teachers. It can be seen from the findings that the principal was the first person who started to do action research involving other teachers. Then, along with participation in the training, the participants organized their won groups and

conducted their independent studies. It has also influenced on teaching practice. The whole school community was involved in the process of action research. There were systematic meetings with the teaching staff to discuss the questions and organize training sessions.

Thus, it can be concluded that action research had an impact on teaching practice. There were several areas which it affected the most. For example, classroom management and teaching methods were the most common research interests, while instructions and assessment were less chosen. Nevertheless, there were changes in reflecting and reinterpreting their professional practices (McNiff, 2010; Oliver, 1980; Schon, 1983).

5.4. Summary

This chapter discussed the most significant findings of the study relating to the research questions and in relation to the literature reviewed. Firstly, teachers' attitudes towards action research were considered. The term action research was described in the education context. According to literature it has four main components such as reflection, educational changes, teacher empowerment and professional development. All these four components are present in the participants' answers.

Secondly, the difficulties teachers meet while conducting action research suggested by literature are not mentioned in the findings of the study. There are some differences in lack of resources and understanding the concept of action research. However, the point about professional development is aligned with that of literature. The findings showed that the areas being influenced by action research were consistent with the results of previous studies.

Finally, the influence of action research on teaching practice was immense. It is supported by a considerable number of the authors. Action research in Kazakhstani context

was a tool to bring changes to education system and transform some areas of teaching practice. Moreover, it was a means of disseminating the culture of research at schools of Kazakhstan.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter showed explanation and interpretation of the research findings taking into meanings from different angles. This chapter will draw conclusions from the main findings, suggest recommendations for various stakeholders, and discuss implications for further research. The study aimed at exploring the teachers' attitudes towards action research and its influence on their teaching practice. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions were addressed: (1) How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school? (2) How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

The chapter includes two main sections. The first section summarizes findings relating to the research questions and presents conclusions drawn from these findings. The second part describes the recommendations based on the conclusions of the study. It will also have suggestions for the further research.

6.2. Revisiting research questions

6.2.1. How do secondary teachers perceive action research implementation in a mainstream school?

There were several conclusions made related to the first research question and based on the results of the study. First of all, it should be noted that the formation of knowledge about action research process started from the three-level in-service training. The participants were taught through the view of their trainers. Then, they formed their own opinion about this type of research. Although the participants were afraid at the beginning of the process, they

formed a positive attitude towards action research throughout the process. They could see some positive changes in the professional and cultural aspect of this process. Secondly, they have enumerated a number of obstacles met in the process of conducting action research. However, they did not have importance in forming the attitude of teachers. In spite of some difficulties both of external and internal character the teachers were able to complete their projects and summarise the results of their research. Thus, all of them had a positive experience of doing the research at school. Another conclusion is that action research has become a catalyst of some changes in personal and professional life. It developed not only research skills as a teacher, but also the skills of differentiating credible sources of information in daily life. Finally, the last one is connected with reflective skills. Teachers have fully reviewed their ability to reflect. Action research project was a good opportunity to think over their teaching practice and generally education system and different aspects. Thus, while interviewing it could be clearly seen that teachers were open to a dialogue. They were ready to discuss different topics, evaluate, analyse and give feedback to their own actions.

6.2.2. How does implementation of action research affect teachers' practices?

There are four areas of teaching practice that are under the influence of action research. Each of them were affected to different extent. The most affected was teaching methods. Most of the teachers were interested in finding new methods to organize the process of learning. Even though it was not their direct aim, they were searching for innovative approaches to interest their students. It shows teachers' consciousness and professionalism. Due to experience exchange they were able to satisfy their desire to vary their lessons. The second in the list of teaching areas was classroom management. Most of the teachers' research interests were presented in this sphere in different variations. It also characterizes the teachers as

responsible and conscious workers. Finally, the last two are instructions and assessment that were under a small impact of action research process. Though, they were touched. The lesson observations showed that teachers tried to apply what they were researching for. Moreover, their enthusiasm about the results of the studies could be easily noticed in the interviews. They were looking forward to see whether it was applicable in practice or whether practice coincided with theory.

6.3. Recommendations

This section describes some recommendations elaborated on the basis of the conclusions drawn on the study. In addition, it will present some suggestions for further research on the given topic.

6.3.1. Recommendations for policy makers

The main recommendation for policy makers is to review the workload of school teachers to allocate some time on research. The main obstacle that all the participants met in the process of conducting action research was time constraint. That is why, teachers need some free time to do quality research. This recommendation goes in line with what was suggested by Tallericco (2005) who emphasized the importance of supporting teachers who are involved in research in terms of time. There is a way to create a flexible schedule or reduce an amount of paper and now electronic work that teachers have to deal on a daily basis.

Another is that teachers have no choice whether they need to do research or not. If they have participated in training and professional development courses, they are obliged to do research. Even though there were some positive results due to action research projects, the obligation did not contribute to sincere and conscious completion of the project. Castillo-

Burguete, Dolores, de Alva & Dickinson (1982) pointed out that it is necessary to stimulate and support teachers who are involved in action research.

6.3.2. Recommendations for school administrators

The recommendations for school administrators are also originated from the problems that have arisen in the process of action research. Firstly, it is necessary to create an appropriate timetable for the teachers. Obviously, it is impossible, to provide each teachers with a suitable schedule, though, there is a chance to help those who are interested in conducting action research.

The second one is enrichment of library resources. Teachers need some special place where they would feel the atmosphere of research. Library can be an ideal place for it. Teachers need a good database and books for further development and literature review on the chosen topic. Moreover, there is a lack of literature resources on action research in local languages. School administrators may supply the resources in local languages to make sure that all teachers have the equal access to them.

Thus, school administrators can be a bridge between policy makers and teachers to fill in the gaps that are current in the process of action research implementation.

6.3.3. Recommendations for further research

Taking into account the limitations of the study the following recommendations for further research are suggested. Firstly, being a teacher and knowing the process of action research implementation in-depth, the results can be biased. To avoid subjectivity other people connected to education can be also invited to verify the results and findings.

Lesson observation as a research tool in this study has its limitations as well particularly in the follow-up reflection from the notes, as it can include some personal biases and subjective opinion of the researcher. Therefore, it could be useful to replace lesson observation with document analysis or change the structure of an observation list.

To eliminate the limitation with the topic of the study which is a new term in the education system of Kazakhstan, it is necessary to do one core big-scale research which will involve teachers from different regions of Kazakhstan. Finally, the last one is to increase a number of participants in order to get different perspectives on the given topic.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview questions

1. What is your work experience?
2. What kind of professional development trainings on Action Research have attended?
Please describe them.
3. When and where did you learn about action research?
4. Have you conducted action research at your school? If yes, how and why? What was the topic?
5. What motivated you participate in Action Research?
6. What kind of difficulties did you face during Action Research implementation? How did you deal with them?
7. What was the easiest part of it?
8. What have you achieved by conducting Action Research?
9. How did it influence your teaching practices?
10. How did it influence your colleagues?

Appendix B

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: What is your work experience?

Interviewee: My teaching experience is 28, 5 years. I have been working in secondary education for a very long time since 1990 as a teacher of the Kazakh language. At that time, it was necessary to raise languages, and I was sent to Taraz with the instruction to teach the Kazakh language. Since 2005, I was appointed on the position of a deputy director for educational work. I have been working for 14 years as a school administrator. I went through all the reforms, all the programs, all the innovations that our state planned to conduct. It all went through me.

Interviewer: What kind of professional development trainings on Action Research have attended? Please describe them.

Interviewee: In 2013-2014, I took level courses (at that time they were called so) advanced levels, which lasted three months. I passed the first level on the basis of the Center for Excellence. I completed these courses successfully. One of the directions for the development of these courses is research in action. We defended the projects on Action Research. At school, we conducted coaching on this topic, and also conducted research within our department. We did not exactly follow all the rules and procedures, because our educational structure differs from Western standards and models, so we conducted this type of research with colleagues who also completed similar courses.

Interviewer: When and where did you learn about action research?

Interviewee: For me it was an innovation, but it is intertwined with our methodology. We also attend the lessons during the subject week, choose a research topic. But we have different goals, in this study we choose a specific topic, a question that interests us in teaching.

Interviewer: Have you conducted action research at your school? If yes, how and why? What was the topic?

Interviewee: I researched the importance of group work in the development of communication skills in the lessons of the Kazakh language. I spent it with my other colleagues. I acted as a mentor. I had several mentees. We carried out research with them, planned joint lessons, studied literature in order to come to some conclusions.

Interviewer: What motivated you participate in Action Research?

Interviewee: At that time, group work, although it was from Soviet times, but no matter how efficiently and actively in every lesson was it used this form of work. It was used earlier in the traditional form, as a lesson-competition, as a lesson-competition, in open lessons, but every day in the lessons we could not be reconstructed at that time. We are used to working in the traditional format, it is to work collectively or individually to work. And here group work can be applied at every lesson and at every stage of the lesson. Thanks to this research, we now know how to apply this form of work for a specific purpose.

Interviewer: What kind of difficulties did you face during Action Research implementation? How did you deal with them?

Interviewee: There were difficulties. I will not say that everything was good, because we do not own time. We wrote this everywhere, because we have a large workload, for example, I spend as a teacher, I do not spend as an administrator, so I don't have enough time left for

research. Also, my colleagues, they have the same difficulties, since we have a workload of more than 18 hours, that is, most of my colleagues work 1.5 times, for example, 27 hours a week, so the lack of time always affects our practice. A very large workload in addition to our lessons and our research, therefore, it was very difficult, for example, to gather teachers in a group. Why? Because some work in the first shift, others work in the second shift. Therefore, I say that research is unacceptable in our practice, because we have a very large workload.

There are still other problems. I do not know how many children study in Western classrooms. We have, for example, many children in the classrooms. We do not always have the opportunity to pay attention to everyone. Moreover, the lesson time has decreased. During these forty minutes we need to interview the children, conduct the entire lesson in stages, it is very difficult to pay attention to each of them. Even the forms of work that we plan to conduct in class, due to the preparedness of children, especially language, are very difficult for children to put into practice, because they do not have to. And they forget about how they are learned today, and then they came out and forgot about it, because there is no practice of application. Due to the specification of the subject, as for some students the Kazakh language is the second language of instruction, something could not be done.

Interviewer: What was the easiest part?

Interviewee: The easiest part was to teach children to this form of work. And the children really liked the group form of work, because this form of work develops children's creative skills, communication skills, the ability to find a common language, listen to each other, find some unexpected ways out or conclusions to do. In this respect, my children quickly got used to this form of work. I still use this type of work depending on the learning objectives.

Interviewer: What have you achieved by conducting Action Research? How did it influence your teaching practices?

Interviewee: I understood that group work should be carried out, and it should not be in the form of a competition, there should be identical tasks, reproductive tasks should be. I talked about this in my recommendations to the teachers. Then I shared the results of the research in the form of coaching for the teacher, also in the form of a report for my colleagues. We also wrote an article on the research topic and defended the creative work on this topic.

Interviewer: How did it influence your colleagues?

Interviewee: There was a positive result. They are now, for example, most, I will not say everyone, because we have teachers who come again, we have to work with them again, train again, hold training seminars, can apply this form of work. Through observing the lessons, I can see what they use, sometimes I help by saying where it is appropriate to apply, where not.

Interviewer: What research topic would you like to choose in the future?

Interviewee: I would love to study the motivation of poorly performing children, how to raise their self-esteem, how to make them feel comfortable, what forms, what activity will affect the learning process of poorly performing students.

In general, I want to say, if a person does not develop, does not research something, he will not come to any conclusions. No wonder there is the proverb: "Live and learn." Therefore, my colleagues and I try not to dwell on a certain type of work. Every lesson, when you come, the children are waiting for you to bring something new to this lesson. And if you repeat the same thing, they are not interested, now children are not like that. We are not the only one carry information, there are a lot of sources of information now, so what you say may be not

interesting for them. And if they are not interested, children can be passive in class. This lesson will seem long to them, which will never end. And the child must be active, he must feel comfortable. Thanks to my colleagues I become aware of different forms of work. I attend their lessons. I will see something and apply it at my place. If I were engaged in research, we would again come to some necessary conclusions.

Appendix C

Lesson observation protocol

Descriptive (description of the events, activities, and people)	Reflective (recording personal reflections that relate to their insights, hunches, or broad themes that emerge)
Classroom management	
<p>A teacher starts the lesson from greeting the students. There are 27 students in a classroom. The teacher divides the class into small groups according to the cards. Each card has a syllable. Students match the syllables to form a word. They find the correct syllables quite quickly, as the word is connected to the previous topic.</p>	<p>Students are relaxed while being divided into groups. It seems that they have already practiced working in groups. They can easily find their groupmates. They find their places to sit as a group. There are some leading students who manage the work of others.</p>
Giving Instructions	
<p>The teacher explains the tasks in a very simple and understandable way. She asks other students to read the task. Then, she asks some clarification questions to be sure that all the students get the assignment. She also mingles around to observe the work of groups to see whether they are</p>	<p>Most of the students are very attentive while listening to the instructions. However, there are some of them who do not listen at all. They either continue doing next task or focus on other things. Overall, it seems that the students listen more when the task is explained by the teacher, rather</p>

completing the task correctly.	than it is read by one of their classmates.
Teaching Methods	
<p>Teacher uses an activity called “Running Dictation” to make students move. She presents the text through this activity.</p> <p>Teachers shows the video about the topic of the lesson.</p>	<p>Students are very active while doing running dictation. They want to do it as quickly as possible to be the first.</p> <p>The vides is relevant to the topic, and students are really interested in the topic.</p> <p>Some of them take notes while watching the video.</p>
Assessment	
<p>Teacher uses group assessment after finishing working in groups. Teachers presents rubrics to evaluate group work.</p> <p>All necessary criteria are included to assess the final presentation of the groups.</p>	<p>Students feel comfortable to assess each other according to rubrics. They can provide good feedback guided by the criteria presented in the rubrics. However, some of them prefer to be silent letting their groupmates speak instead of them.</p>

Appendix D

Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

I am a student of Master's Program in Educational Leadership at Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University (NUGSE). As a part of my master programme I am conducting a research titled "Teachers' perceptions towards Action Research implementation and its effect on their teaching practices in a mainstream school of Taraz".

You are kindly invited to participate in this research which will include two individual interviews, one lesson observation on a voluntary basis. The purpose of the interviews is to explore the participants' views on implementation of Action Research as well as its influence on teachers' teaching practices. Each interview will take about 50-60 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded with your permission as it will help me with data analysis. The interview recordings and transcriptions will be available only to me and my research supervisor. Afterwards they will be destroyed. The purpose of the lesson observation is to find out which areas of teaching practices are influenced by Action Research implementation. There will be a template to fill in which will be also deleted afterwards.

To protect anonymity of participants' names and identity I will use pseudonyms and I will also provide confidentiality of all received information.

There are some benefits connected with the study. Teachers will have an opportunity to reflect on their practice towards conducting Action Research.

If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my advisor:

a researcher: a MSc Education Leadership program student, _____, +7 777

a research advisor: _____

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;

- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.