

Influences of criteria-based assessment on English language teachers' teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan

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Influences of criteria-based assessment on English language teachers' teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan.

Abstract

The Kazakhstani educational system has undergone substantial changes in terms of altering both curriculum content of education and the assessment system, which has been shifted from 5-scale (traditional) to criteria-based assessment. Subsequently, teaching practices had to be adapted to new assessment in order to correspond to changes in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, teachers experience considerable changes in various aspects of their practices including vision of assessment, collaboration, professional development and mastering own professional practices. However, there has not been any empirical study to explore how teachers understand the newly introduced criteria-based assessment and its influences on their teaching practices as well as the challenges they might face in implementing it in their classroom.

Thus, this qualitative research was conducted to explore how the criteria-based assessment has influenced and shaped the teaching practices of English language teachers in one of the mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. The research questions explore typical teaching practices before implementation of criteria-based assessment, alterations in practices due to new assessment system and attitudes of teachers towards criteria-based assessment. The purposeful sampling was used to select participants of the study. Five English language teachers of both genders and different teaching experience participated in semi-structured interviews and provided useful insights about the influences of criteria-based assessment on their teaching practices. The study found out major changes in such teaching practices as understanding of assessment, personal vision building, classroom teaching practices, collaboration and professional development. The collected data showed that despite the challenges of criteria-based assessment's implementation, teachers became

more united and established new collaboration practices, they shifted classroom practices to active learning and teachers' role has been changed to facilitator of students' learning. However, more experienced teachers still do not believe in the effectiveness of criteria-based assessment even though they could see its positive impact on the teaching and learning process. The study makes recommendation for policy and practice in relation to assessment practices in schools.

Key words: *criteria-based assessment, teaching practices, mainstream school*

**Критерийлі бағалау жүйесі ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің оқыту
тәжірибесіне қалай әсер етті: Қазақстандағы бір жалпы білім беру мектебінің
мысалында**

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандық білім беру жүйесі білім берудің мазмұны мен 5 баллдық бағалау (дәстүрлі) жүйесінен критерийлік бағалауға ауысқан кезде елеулі өзгерістерге ұшырады. Сондықтан оқытудағы және бағалаудағы жаңа педагогикалық тәжірибеге сәйкес болу үшін оқытудың жаңа әдістеріне бейімделуге тура келді. Осылайша мұғалімдер өз практикасында бағалау сұрақтары, басқа мұғалімдермен қарым қатынас, кәсіби даму мен өз тәжірибесін жақсарту сияқты көптеген аспектілердегі өзгертулерге тап болды. Дегенмен, мұғалімдер критерийлерді қалай бағалайтынын және олардың оқыту тәжірибесіне әсер етуін, сондай-ақ осы бағалауды қолдану процесінде кездесетін қиындықтарды зерделеу мақсатында эмпирикалық зерттеулердің жеткіліксіз көлемі өткізілгенін атап өту керек.

Педагогикалық тәжірибеде орын алған өзгерістерді шешу үшін сапалы әдісті қолдану арқылы зерттеу жүргізілді. Зерттеу мақсаты жақында енгізілген критерийлік бағалаудың Қазақстандағы жалпы білім беру мектептерінің біріндегі ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің оқыту тәжірибесіне қалай әсер еткенін және қалай өзгерткенін зерттеуге бағытталған. Зерттеу сұрақтары критерийлік бағалауды енгізгенге дейін оқытудың типтік әдістерін, жаңа бағалау жүйесімен байланысты тәжірибедегі өзгерістер және мұғалімдерді критериалды бағалауға қатысты көзқарастарын зерттейді. Зерттеу қатысушылары мақсатты іріктеу арқылы таңдалды. Жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбатқа әр түрлі жұмыс тәжірибесі бар екі жыныстағы бес ағылшын тілі мұғалімдері қатысып, критерийлік бағалаудың оқыту

тәжірибесіне әсері жөнінде өз көз қарастарымен бөлісті. Зерттеуде барысында бағалаудың түсінігі, сол мәселеге қатысты жеке көзқарастың қалыптасуы, сыныптық оқыту тәжірибесі, бірлескен жұмыс және кәсіби даму сияқты оқу үрдісіндегі өзгерістердің негізгі бағыттары анықталды. Жиналған деректер критерийлік бағалауды жүзеге асырудың қиындықтарына қарамастан, мұғалімдердің бірігіп, жаңа бірлескен жұмыс тәжірибесін құру арқылы, оқыту тәжірибесін белсенді оқытуға ауыстырып және мұғалімдердің рөлі оқушылардың оқуын жеңілдету үшін өзгертілгенін көрсетті. Дегенмен, тәжірибелі мұғалімдер оқыту мен оқу үдерісіне критерийлік бағалаудың жағымды әсерін көре тұра, оның сәттілігіне әлі сенбейді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу мектепті бағалау әдістеріне арналған нұсқаулықтар ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: *критерийлік бағалау, оқыту әдістері, жалпы білім беру мектеп*

**Влияние критериальной системы оценивания на практики преподавания
учителей английского языка: кейс одной общеобразовательной средней школы**

Казахстана

Абстракт

Казахстанская образовательная система претерпевает существенные изменения касательно изменений в содержании образования и системы оценивания, которая изменилась с пятибалльной на критериальную систему оценивания. Следовательно, практики преподавания учителей подверглись изменениям для того, чтобы адаптироваться к новой системе оценивания и соответствовать изменениям в образовательном процессе. Таким образом, учителя испытывают значительные преобразования в различных аспектах преподавательской деятельности, включая видение оценивания, взаимодействие с другими учителями, профессиональное развитие и улучшение собственных практик преподавания. Однако, недостаточное количество эмпирических исследований было проведено, для того, чтобы изучить как учителя понимают критериальное оценивание и его влияние на их практики преподавания, а также трудности, с которыми они могут столкнуться в процессе применения данного оценивания.

Для того, чтобы изучить изменения, произошедшие в практике преподавания, было проведено исследование с использованием качественного метода. Целью данного исследования является изучение того, как критериальное оценивание повлияло и изменило практики преподавания учителей английского языка в общеобразовательной школе Казахстана. Вопросы данного исследования направлены на изучение практик преподавания, которые были использованы учителями до внедрения критериального оценивания, изменения произошедшие в практиках преподавания, связанных с переходом на новую систему оценивания и

взгляды учителей на критериальное оценивание. Участники исследования были отобраны целенаправленным методом отбора. Пять учителей английского языка с различным опытом преподавания приняли участие в полу структурированных интервью, поделившись своими взглядами о влиянии критериальной системы оценивания на их практики преподавания. Проведенное исследование определило основные аспекты практик преподавания учителей, которые подверглись изменениям, включающие понимание оценивания, определение личного видения в оценивании, практики преподавания уроков, взаимодействие с другими учителями и профессиональное развитие. Собранные данные показали, что несмотря на трудности внедрения и применения критериального оценивания, учителя стали более единым коллективом и внедрили в практику новые коллаборативные практики и изменили свою роль как учителя, воспринимая себя как учителя, которые помогают и способствует обучению учеников. Однако, более опытные учителя все еще не верят в успешность критериального оценивания несмотря на то, что они признают положительное влияние как на практики преподавания учителей, так и на образовательный процесс в целом. Также, исследование предлагает рекомендации касательно практик оценивания в школах.

Ключевые слова: *критериальное оценивание, практики преподавания, общеобразовательная школа*

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The teaching practices of teachers have always been one of the main foci of studies in the field of education. Beginning with 1970s, when the behaviorist theory of teaching and learning was substituted by the cognitivism, the teacher's role became crucial in the children's education. Teachers were no longer the people who just followed the instructions from above, they transformed into stakeholders with their own beliefs, attitudes and practices influencing students' learning (Borg, 2009). Thus, focusing on the teaching practices, researches pay special attention to the assessment practices providing the arguments on its effect on various aspects of education. The research on teachers' beliefs and practices conducted among schools in Singapore concluded that both the development of students and the fulfillment of curriculum in the classroom depend on the assessment practices that teachers follow (Chew & Lee, 2013). Confirming the idea of the importance of teachers' assessment practice, Chih-Min and Li-Yi (2013) state that "...it is universally acknowledged that improved classroom assessment practices can contribute to students' better learning outcomes" (p.2). Moreover, the importance of assessment practices became even more evident after the transition from 'assessment of learning' (summative) to 'assessment for learning' (formative) that led to fundamental change in teaching practices (Duncan, & Noonan, 2007). However, the studies on the teaching practices are constrained by the assessment methods and are not developed to the other fields of teachers' work such as reflection on practice, inquiry and collaboration (Wilson, Turner, Sharimova, & Brownhill, 2013), especially in the context of educational reforms. Moreover, in the context of Kazakhstan, "the requirements of the assessment system determine the forms of pedagogy employed in the classroom" (Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE), 2014, p.30) based on the classroom observations

and opinions of teachers. It is stated by the teachers that the traditional assessment system shapes teaching practices in a particular way. Teachers are limited in the teaching approaches, because they are forced to narrow down students' learning to memorizing and recounting facts in order to assess their progress in every lesson (NUGSE, 2014). However, teaching practices cannot be changed only under the influence of assessment system that teachers implement. Additionally, the Kazakhstani government set up the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in 2011 in order to provide teachers with the quality knowledge about teaching approaches and methodologies that would be the additional support for the educational reform's implementation. The CoE conducts the training programs for administrative staff and teachers of schools about the latest teaching techniques and management of educational process to make stakeholders efficient change agents (Wilson et al., 2013). In addition to the CoE, Nazarbayev Intellectual schools (NIS) were opened across the county to approbate the secondary education reform with its subsequent implementation in all schools of the country. However, the teachers of NIS that have been interviewed by the research team stated that they have concerns about the pace of reform, the way in which new methodologies are applied and that the reform may become just the 'mimicry' of the international practices rather than their efficient implementation (Fimyar & Kurakbayev, 2016).

One of the crucial aspects of educational changes is the role of teachers as change agents and understanding of their contribution to implementation of reforms. According to Fullan and Miles (1992), the successful implementation of a reform is directly connected with the teaching process as at the early stages, teachers become learners that respond to initiative by means of altering beliefs and practices. As to the reform initiatives in Kazakhstan, they are concentrated on the number of schools to reach, rather than to provide the quality (Wilson et al., 2013). In other words, Kazakhstani reform is wide, but

not deep, even though deep changes involve altering teachers' beliefs about norms and pedagogical practices (Wilson et al, 2013).

The OECD report on school resources in Kazakhstan underlines issues similar to those identified by the previous studies. Along with the successes of the Kazakhstani reforms, their implementation does not include the consultations with such stakeholders as teachers, parents and administration, and, consequently, their voice is not heard. It leads to the creation of frameworks of professional development that do not correspond to teachers' needs as the challenges and difficulties that teachers encounter are poorly addressed. As a result, the weaknesses of teaching practices are hidden and not resolved (OECD, 2015).

In order to address the issues caused by the introduction of the reform, including the criteria-based assessment, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan takes measures towards supporting the teachers and improving teaching practices. The government is providing the teachers with the professional development programs and courses of qualification improvement as well as including the cooperation between schools as one of the priorities of education development (MES, 2016). However, the issues with teaching practices are also connected with the transition to the trilingual education (Kazakh, Russian and English), making teachers of STEM subjects first learn English and then teach in English. The introduction of the English language as the medium of instruction in high schools in 2020 raises concerns about both the ability of teachers to explain subjects matter and concepts in English and the readiness of students to further study them using their second or sometimes third language. Thus, the role of English teachers at the current stage of the reform implementation cannot be underestimated as they are responsible for the knowledge that students acquire at the lessons of English. The introduction of the criteria-based assessment is another reform that is being implemented

in Kazakhstani schools but not much is known how it influences and shapes the teaching practices of English language teachers. Therefore, this study that addresses the current state of changes in teaching practices of English teachers is aimed at fulfilling this research gap in the Kazakhstani context.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan (MoES) has recently introduced new system of school education, the “updated content of education” that is comprised of updated curriculum and new criteria-based assessment. It is stated that the quality of education directly depends on teachers and successful implementation of reform is impossible without high level of pedagogical excellence in teachers (MoES, 2016). In this regard, teachers are provided by the government with professional development courses, trainings, seminars, workshops and financial support. Teachers also have the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues, thus, improving the teaching practices and achieving the goals set by schools (OECD, 2015). However, the success of such professional and financial support provided by the government is not measured. In other words, the government provides teachers with trainings and workshops, but the changes in teaching practices are not tracked. Moreover, as stated above, government’s support is provided to prepare teachers for the reform that includes the transition to the criteria-based assessment. Yet, the connection between the criteria-based assessment and possible changes in teaching practices has not been established and the positive influence of new teaching practices on the criteria-based assessment reform’s implementation has not been studied.

One crucial point concerns the needs of teachers towards the implementation of the criteria-based assessment. Despite the number of professional development courses, the government does not fully satisfy the needs of the professional community. While teachers

are supported by the government by means of various professional development courses, little attention is paid towards the teaching practices, and difficulties that teachers face as change agents are poorly addressed. Moreover, the teaching practice is mostly perceived on the level of the classroom instructions, applied methods and techniques, without paying sufficient attention to other aspects of teaching practice such as proper reflection, personal goals and collaboration. One of the causes of such understanding of the teaching practice is the absence of clear standards of what a successful teaching practice is (OECD, 2015). Thus, the understanding of the impact of the new assessment system on teaching practices is crucial in terms of providing teachers with sufficient and adequate professional support.

As to the criteria-based assessment, its educational effects are studied mostly regarding its impact on students' academic performance. Thus, Furtak (2017) stated that the assessment is a powerful tool for improving teachers' understanding of what students know and how to improve their knowledge. Black and William (1998) provided sufficient evidence which prove that criteria-based assessment promotes students' autonomy, facilitates in achieving learning objectives and increasing motivation. In contrast to the well-studied impact of criteria-based assessment on students' academic performance, there is a lack of understanding of how it influences the teachers' practice apart from the changes in their assessment practice and need for professional development. Moreover, "most research studies have focused on its (formative assessment) application in science rather than in humanities education..." (Carless, 2011, p.155) which constitutes an existing gap in the comprehension of language teaching and learning under new assessment system, especially in the context of Kazakhstan.

As a matter of fact, the fundamental changes in educational system lead to complex process of altering teachers' beliefs, norms and practices (Wilson et al., 2013). According to the World Bank (2013), "...the impact of many reforms depends on specific design

features, and teacher policies can have very different impacts depending on the context and other education policies in place” (p.3). In other words, reforms may influence the teachers’ practice unpredictably and it is necessary to monitor and observe changes that teachers as professionals undergo during school reform processes. Moreover, in the focus of reforms, assessment is regarded as the tool that can shape and improve both teaching and learning (Davletkaliyeva, Muldasheva, Izteleuova, Kulbayeva, & Satova, 2016). Consequently, the understanding of the changes in teaching practices caused by the criteria-based assessment system is of high importance as it can improve both teaching process and learning outcomes. Thus, this study investigated into the influences of criteria-based assessment on English language teachers’ teaching practices in one school in Kazakhstan.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate what effect the introduction of the criteria-based assessment had on the teaching practices of the English language teachers at personal, classroom and school levels. The study aimed to explore how the recently introduced criteria-based assessment has influenced and shaped the teaching practices of English language teachers in one of the mainstream schools in Kazakhstan.

1.4 Research Questions

For the purpose of the study, the following research question was addressed: How has the criteria-based assessment influenced teaching practices of English language teachers at a mainstream school in Kazakhstan? Additional sub-questions included:

1. What were the typical teaching practices of English language teachers during the implementation of traditional system of assessment?
2. How have the teaching practices of English language teachers altered after the introduction of the criteria-based assessment?

3. What are the attitudes of English language teachers towards the criteria-based assessment and the changes, if any, in their teaching practices as a result of this assessment method?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is mainly shaped by the novelty of the topic as the reform of assessment in Kazakhstan is a recent innovation that has not been extensively studied yet. Moreover, the studies that refer to the criteria-based assessment are mostly focused on its influence on academic achievement of students. However, the voice of teachers towards the new system of assessment's implementation, its difficulties and challenges remain unheard. Thus, this study looked into the teachers' changes in teaching practices as a result of criteria-based assessment and it provided teachers of a mainstream school with an opportunity to speak and share their experiences and reflections on what changes they see in their teaching practices; how positive these changes are; and what challenges they face as a result of these changes in their classroom practices. Moreover, the challenges and successes that teachers of English have faced so far may contribute to the further implementation of the criteria-based assessment, because the perspectives of the participant teachers can help in identifying the current impact of reform on stakeholders, whether there is the 'implementation dip', what kind of support teachers need and also it will increase awareness of the role of teachers in reform's implementation in Kazakhstan.

The study may also contribute to the school and its teachers where the study was conducted. The attitudes of teachers towards the criteria-based assessment and their opinions about the possible or negative changes in their practices may vary demonstrating the challenges that teachers face as well as the successes in teaching practices' alteration due to the criteria-based assessment implementation. Thus, the teachers in this study got

the opportunity to reflect on their practices, share their points of view and identify areas for further improvement. Such reflections may positively affect the teaching process and students' academic performance at the school. Secondly, the research can be beneficial for other schools and teachers of Kazakhstan due to several reasons. Firstly, the criteria-based assessment has been recently implemented in Kazakhstan and its effect on teaching has not been studied well, as there exists a perception that the effectiveness of new assessment system is taken for granted. Next, the transition from traditional educational system to modern international teaching practices are considered to be efficient. This assumption is based on the evident success of the teaching practices in other countries. Yet, the teaching practices of Kazakhstani teachers have not been paid sufficient attention to. In other words, the understanding of the experience of teachers who implement the criteria-based assessment can be advantageous for all the teachers who undergo the same changes due to the new assessment system. As to the broader educational community such as policy makers, the findings of this study may contribute to more effective implementation of the criteria-based assessment, because the reform is an ongoing process that can be changed in order to increase its effectiveness. Even though data, collected in the current research, is based on the interviews with the teachers of only one school of Kazakhstan, information provided by them can show how the teaching practices of an average Kazakhstani teacher are changed under the implementation of the criteria-based assessment and what challenges teachers face in their teaching practice. Moreover, the research may provide a broader picture of teachers' needs while implementing the new assessment system and how the reform influences their practices.

Therefore, this study may contribute to the various aspects of the educational field in Kazakhstan. It may provide useful insights about the impact of criteria-based assessment on teachers and their teaching practices. It may also attract the policy makers

and educational school leaders' attention to the teachers' role in implementation of reforms, the challenges they face, and the professional and moral support they need to implement successfully the reforms. The study may also contribute to bridging the gap in the existing literature on the influence of criteria-based assessment on teachers of English in the Kazakhstani context.

1.6 Outline of Chapters

This chapter provided the background of the research and its problem statement as well as the purpose of the study followed by its significance. The next chapter, 'Literature Review', discusses previous studies on the criteria-based assessment and influence of reforms on teaching practices. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the research including the research design followed by the description of sampling procedures, research site, process of participants' selection, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4, presents the study's findings emerged from analysis of the data. The next chapter, 'Discussion' provides an analysis of the findings in light of empirical data and insights from literature. The last chapter, 'Conclusion', provides the summary of the study results, its limitations along with the recommendations to policy makers, practitioners and further research. The last chapter is followed by the references and appendices.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature from both the local and international contexts. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview and analysis of the existing literature on some of the factors that influence teaching practices. Firstly, this chapter defines and describes what teaching practices are and how they are regarded in international context. Secondly, the main factors affecting teaching practices of different subject teachers and changes in practices are discussed in this chapter. Finally, the chapter provides insights on the notions of 'criteria-based assessment' and its impact on the teaching practices in the international and Kazakhstani contexts.

2.2 Teaching Practices

At present days, the education systems all over the world undergo a huge variety of changes including alteration in assessment system, students and teachers' roles, understanding of leadership, and learning and teaching practices. Mostly, such changes are accompanied by the evaluation of new systems' effectiveness in terms of school performance and students' learning outcomes. Although educational reforms are directed to improve the educational process and students' knowledge, it also has an effect on other stakeholders including the changes in teachers' practices. Thus, teaching practices has recently become the focus of the range of researches as they reflect the implementation of reform and directly influence students' learning and academic outcomes, that is why the classroom teaching practices has become the object of increased attention. However, it is considered that teaching practices are not merely constrained by the classroom, they also represent the multidimensional process that touches upon other professional activities such as collaboration with colleagues, team work, participation in school development, mentoring and other types of involvement in school processes (OECD, 2009).

There is a number of notions related to teaching practices that specify their particular features. One of the frequently discussed notions in the research literature is the “effective teaching practices” or “effective teacher” that is also referred as “good teaching”, “excellent teaching”, “highly accomplished” and “better teaching” (Tavakoli, & Baniasad-Azad, 2017, p.675). Despite the differences in terminology, all of the notions mentioned above are used to describe a teacher with effective teaching skills who uses different methods and strategies of teaching aimed at students’ achievements (Co, Sammons, & Bakkum, 2014). The qualitative research of Haynie (2010) that included surveys, interviews and observation of Biology, Algebra, History, middle school Algebra and English teachers defined four key areas of best practices: high academic expectations for all students, proper management of time and resources, learning-centered classrooms and proactive planning. As the matter of fact, these criteria of best teaching are focused on the classroom and students and do not take into account other areas of professional practice. However, some teachers claim that teaching practices can be considered effective when they are exam-oriented (Tavakoli, & Baniasad-Azad, 2017) which is only partially aligns with the concept of student-centered approach. In this regard, the teaching practices become the instrument of passing the exam rather than the means of developing students. Moreover, exams’ requirements become the central authority that shape teaching practices.

In contrast to the opinion of teachers who consider that practices should be aimed at passing exams, there is the view of school teachers involved in the mixed-method study that effective teachers are those who improve their practices by means of continuous professional development (CPD) and seek for the opportunities to improve the classroom practices (Kingston, 2012). The point that teaching practice goes beyond the classroom is also supported by the teachers who took part in the mixed sequential study that researched teachers’ beliefs about ‘good’ teaching practices. The results showed that majority of

teachers pointed out the importance of efforts to improve their teaching and the presence of moral and social awareness extending the dimensions of a good teacher's role (Devine, Fahie, & MacGillicuddy, 2013). The particular aspect of teaching practices beyond the classroom is the leadership teaching practices. According to Muijs, Campbell, Kyriakides, and Robinson (2005) the shift from the previous form of top-down leadership to the leadership distributed among all the stakeholders is important in terms of providing teachers with the opportunity to contribute to a school community. Moreover, teacher-leaders are capable of cooperating with colleagues and other stakeholders what can positively influence learning and teaching practices (Muijs, Campbell, Kyriakides, & Robinson, 2005).

Classroom teaching practices are differentiated by a variety of factors including subject, age of students, education level and other aspects. One of the major studies, focused on describing the teaching practices of European school teachers, describes the teaching practices from the perspective of active and non-active teaching methods (Isac, Da Costa, Araújo, Calvo, & Albergaria-Almeida, 2015). Active teaching practices reflect the constructivist approach, i.e. student-centered learning takes place involving analysis, evaluation and synthesis of knowledge (Isac et al., 2015). In contrast, about 70% of surveyed teachers reported that they use non-active practices, namely, recalling learned information, copybooks checking and evolving lower order thinking skills. Thus, it was identified that the best teaching practice is the balanced mix of instructional and constructivist practices (Isac et al., 2015).

As to the language teaching practices, they also vary from the active and passive approaches, but, in terms of language teaching, passive practices are regarded as teaching grammar, while active practice is represented by the communicative approach. A mixed-method study among 190 English teachers of secondary school showed that

implementation of teacher practices depends on the ability to manage students' behavior (Choi & Lee, 2018). Some teachers admit that it is easier to use teacher-centered practices such as teaching grammar, because it requires less time for preparation and simplify the control of students. In contrast, other teachers claim that they cannot focus on grammar teaching as it is impossible for them to talk for 50 minutes in a row (Choi & Lee, 2018). In addition, language teachers' practices are shaped by the demand to incorporating cultural components into lessons, using teaching practices that they were taught with and trying to use professional development opportunities (Borg, 2003).

2.3 Factors Affecting Teaching Practices

Teaching practices are strategies, approaches and methodologies that a teacher develops throughout his/her professional career. However, teaching practices do not exist in isolation from different aspects of teacher's work such as collaboration with colleagues, interactions with parents, students and administration, government policies and others. Thus, teachers' professional views and beliefs constantly change due to both professional and personal reasons. Moreover, the context in which the teaching occurs also influences teacher's practices as teaching is considered to be learning that depends on the variety of factors (Mutambuki & Schwartz, 2018). These factors may be found at schools as well as outside of them and the reaction of teachers may be both positive and negative.

One of the factors that is considered to influence teaching practices of teachers globally is educational reforms and policies. Thus, it is important to understand how reforms and changing policies impact teachers' beliefs, because "...any educational reform is contingent upon teachers' willingness to implement the reform in their classroom teaching" (Yook & Lee, 2016, p.522). Any reform requires a lot of effort from all the stakeholders, because even small changes touches upon the life of all participants of educational process. According to Asanova (2007), a large-scale reform has higher

chances to be successful only if stakeholders contribute to its implementation by means of building new roles and relationships amongst them. However, stakeholders need support and guidance from policy makers, because the vision of policy makers and stakeholders should coincide in order to pursue the same common goals. Asanova's study among Kazakhstani teachers showed that the government did not provide teachers with sufficient number of trainings and preparation time prior to introduction and implementation of reforms in schools, although teachers shoulders much of the responsibilities of implementing all these reforms. The main goal of any educational reform is the improvement of students' learning outcomes, thus, policy makers should support teachers in order to help them change their practices in favor of educational process.

There is a variety of factors that impede the changes in teaching practices and create obstacles to positive perception by teachers the necessity to change. According to Zimmerman (2006), there are many barriers that can make teachers resist the changes, they include "failure to recognize the need for change, habit, fear of the unknown, fear of threats to their expertise or their allocation of resources and fear of threats to existing friendships within the school" (pp.239-240). The key word in all these reasons is 'fear', because any change interrupts the work routine that teachers are accustomed to and forces them to face something unknown. Interestingly, all the fears are intrinsic and may be removed if teachers are provided with support and encouragement. In contrast, there is such notion as "pressure" that also has a great impact on teaching practices. The situation of pressure on teachers occurs when government chooses a shortcut in establishing the particular teaching practices. The case of primary school curriculum reform in England and Finland showed that the teachers were obliged to adopt particular practices in their teaching under the external pressure, what resulted in the loss of motivation and self-identity (Ko, 2010). In other words, teaching practices cannot be changed naturally if

teachers are forced to adapt new approaches of teaching. The positive changes in teaching practices can happen only if a teacher wishes to improve the approaches under particular circumstances. Possibly, a government forces teacher to start using specific teaching practices, because it takes less time and resources to implement a reform. However, regardless of a reform's pace and country where it takes place, there are some common factors influencing teaching practices. The longitudinal study conducted by Day, Stobart, Sammons, and Kington (2006) in England demonstrated that reforms lead to destabilization of existing teaching practices as they require new behavior and teaching approaches and they do not always pay attention to teachers' work and identity. In addition to the necessity to change in teaching practices because of large-scale factors such as new policies and reforms, there are also internal factors that can have a negative impact on teachers. One of such factors is the high stakes exams of students that dictate teaching methods and approaches. English language teachers who took part in a case study claimed that the change in the test format forced them to accommodate teaching practices to the needs of the test type (Barnes, 2017). Moreover, teachers are not encouraged to change *how* to teach, but they are required to change *what* to teach, thus, the teaching practices are restricted by the content rather than by the methods (Barnes, 2017).

Apart from such large-scale factors as reforms and final exams that have a negative effect on changing teaching practices, there are internal school-related factors that also play an important role in changing teachers' teaching beliefs and approaches. There is a factor that lies beyond any control which is the age of a teacher and teaching experience. There is a widespread opinion that the more experienced a teacher gets, the more difficult it is to change the beliefs and attitudes towards educational practices. In most cases, these are the teachers who are blamed for showing resistance towards changes due to their unwillingness and absence of readiness for change. However, the genuine reasons can be

completely different from what is generally thought about experienced teachers' teaching practices. The research conducted by Hargreaves and Goodson, (2012) revealed interesting findings concerning the changes in professional lives of teachers with long career caused by educational reforms. Interviewed teachers stated that educational reforms make them feel lost, because their practices, beliefs and approaches became useless due to new policies. Indeed, it is easier for new teachers to adapt to new educational demands as they do not have established practices that were developed during the entire professional life. Thus, teachers with already worked out practices feel puzzled and lost, because they are forced to start all over. In addition, during the period of being lost teachers may feel pressure, because policy-makers use different strategies to influence behavior such as reasoning, rewarding and sanctioning (Webster, McNeish, Scott, Maynard, & Heywood, 2012). As to rewarding, it is beneficial for teachers and encourages them to improve their teaching, but sanctioning can be demotivating in the times of stress and pressure to teachers caused by the governmental decisions to change policies. Policy makers make a lot of effort in order to motivate and encourage teachers to develop and apply new teaching practices, but in some cases the educational reality becomes the strongest hindrance on the way of change. The qualitative research conducted among the teachers of English has proved that reality of school environment's negative influence on teaching practices that a teacher tried to adopt. It is stated by the teachers that "... educational realities often neutralized their attempts to try new ideas, methods or activities" (Yook & Lee, 2016, p. 530).

The issues in changing teaching practices, discussed above, are mostly connected with the conditions in which the changes are taking place. The rapid introduction of reforms, enforcement to change practices quickly and absence of proper support do not allow teachers to evolve their practices naturally. However, if a reform is accompanied by

the prior preparation of teachers and equipping them with necessary tools and mechanisms, the change of teaching practices may become a positive and beneficial experience for teachers. Such factors as professional development programs and collaboration with colleagues can be stated to have a positive impact on changing and developing teaching practices.

It is evident that developing teaching practices positively influence the academic successes of students. However, process of acquiring new practices should be guided and thought out by policy makers as they should develop and conduct professional development courses prior to the introduction of any innovation. The impact of professional development courses on teachers' practices, attitudes and beliefs is the focus of many different researches. The review of 15 studies on collaborative professional development (CPD) revealed that teachers' behavioral changes due to CPDs include "greater confidence amongst the teachers, enhanced beliefs about self efficacy, willingness to cooperate with other teachers and decrease in resistance and openness towards trying new things" (Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, & Evans, 2003, p.4).

Moreover, the collaborative practices are proved to have a positive impact on using teachers' and students' time, improving both teaching and learning practices as well as on improving the moral state of teachers during the time of making difficult stressful changes (Cordingley et al., 2003). It is considered that supportive colleagues are the key in establishing teachers' and schools' effectiveness due to the increased support, sharing successful practices, improving the sense of community and school culture (Day et al., 2006). The main idea of collaborative teaching is that a teacher can learn more if he or she shares ideas, strategies, methods, innovations, etc. Thus, the collaborative professional development is more effective than an individual one. The studies show that there is "... weak evidence of the ability of individually orientated CPD to influence teacher or pupil

change” (Webster et al., 2012, p.9). Even though some studies show the significant changes of teaching practices due to participation of teachers in CPDs, other studies show that the beliefs of some teachers are so strong that they cannot be affected by the CPD courses or any other external factors. For example, the study of Borg that was conducted among teachers using semi-structured interviews showed that an intensive 8-week CPD had a strong impact on the teaching beliefs of 6 English language teachers (Borg, 2011), while the earlier longitudinal study of Peacock who tracked the changes in the teaching beliefs of 146 prospective EFL teachers revealed no effect of CPD on teaching practices (Peacock, 2001). Therefore, teaching practices and beliefs are resistant towards the external influence if a teacher does not want to alter any aspect of the professional practice, but there is the higher possibility of involvement of a teacher in professional development if he or she is surrounded by colleagues who strive for improvement. That is why it is considered by some researchers that teachers have personal responsibility to improve their practices. The research conducted by (Poet, Rudd, & Kelly, 2010) among 4,932 teachers demonstrated the unexpected results: almost all surveyed teachers agreed that they have the professional responsibility to improve and develop their practices. Consequently, the necessary condition of any improvement is the personal attitude and willingness to contribute to professional development. One of the possibilities to change own practices is self-reflection. It is considered that quality self-reflection directly depends on the open-minded enquiry as with the help of it a teacher challenges himself or herself and gives a start to the process of improvement (Maughan, Teeman, & Wilson, 2012).

In many cases, the change in teaching practices is framed within the internal practices of teaching practices. As an example, the onion model of change suggested by Cheung et al (2008) describes the levels of teaching practice influenced by the

environment. It includes the factors that a teacher alters towards his or her own beliefs and concentrated on teacher's identity and mission (Cheung et al., 2008).

However, it is necessary to specify that teaching practices go beyond every teacher's own professional changes and involves different dimensions of teacher's work including collaboration with colleagues. The change of teachers' practices and beliefs is inseparable from the institutional development as "... one cannot wait for another" (Fullan, 1993, p.3). Thus, Fullan (1993) suggests that there are 4 capacities of teaching change that are interrelated and support each other:

- Personal vision-building. This is the understanding of "why am I teaching" that comes from within and identifies the purposes and meaning of teaching. Personal vision-building is mostly related to the beginning teachers, but in the times reforms and changes all the teacher face the re-establishment of their professional visions;
- Inquiry. Learning is the essential part of teaching, because the educational process is not static and requires the continuous development;
- Mastery. This is the core element of changes in teaching practices as it facilitates the establishment of successful practices into teaching. Moreover, the educational reforms require the mastery of teaching practices as it identifies the successfulness of innovations;
- Collaboration. The above mentioned factors of change cannot exist successfully in separation from the opportunity to cooperate with other colleagues. Collaboration supports improvement of teaching practices by means of mutual support, analyzing each other's practice and giving the objective feedback".

Thus, Fullan's four capacities of change represent the many-sided framework for studying the changes in teaching practices due to the fact that this framework takes into

account all directions of teachers' work including personal development, classroom practices and collaboration.

2.4 Criteria-based Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of education as it provides students with evaluation and feedback on their performance. The type of assessment used in a classroom and its implementation is extremely important as it shapes the learning and defines academic performance. Kazakhstan, as other post-Soviet countries, used the scale system of assessment, where "1" is poor performance and "5" is excellent performance. However, this type of assessment had its own drawbacks in terms of subjectivity and lack of a particular criteria to give certain grades. Moreover, the 5-scale assessment was presented only by 3 marks (3, 4 and 5) in reality, because teachers did not tend to assess students with a mark lower than 3. In addition, such type of assessment did not provide students with what they should work on, rather, students were evaluated for what they have already done. Thus, it was concluded that Kazakhstan needs transition from traditional assessment to the modern one that would meet international standards with improved students' assessment methods that would also take into account the needs of low-performing students (OECD, 2015). In this regard, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) were initiated to test and adopt new curricular and pedagogical approaches including new assessment system that was a part of integrated educational program. It was decided to use a program that would not only provide students with factual information and assess its memorization, but would develop wide range of skills of students and provide them with the ability to use theoretical knowledge on practice (State Program of Education and Science Development in Kazakhstan for 2016-2019, 2016).

The government's efforts to change the post-soviet educational system in order to improve teaching and learning led to the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. The term 'criteria-based assessment' is referred to:

“... the process based on the comparison of academic achievements of students with the particular, collectively worked out criteria that are clear to all stakeholders (students, parents, administration) and correspond to the objectives and content of education, promoting the forming of cognitive competence of students” (The concept of implementation of Criteria-based assessment, 2012, p. 3).

Considering the core of criteria-based assessment, it is divided into two types: formative and summative. Out of them, formative assessment holds the main focus of researches' attention as, in contrast to summative assessment, it is aimed at learning process rather than outcomes. The Kazakhstani educational system uses the term 'formative assessment' to refer to the assessment that defines the current state of students' skills and knowledge level by means of interaction of students and teachers at lessons, allowing students to understand what they should work on and how to achieve learning objectives (The concept of implementation of Criteria-based assessment, 2012). Researchers also use terms 'assessment for learning' or 'criterion referenced assessment', although all these terms are referred to the same concept and method of assessment. Florez and Simmons (2013) define formative assessment as “the process that promotes students' involvement in their own learning as a teacher does not just assess what has been learn by students, but guides the students on how they can improve and achieve better results” (p.2). It is also stated that formative assessment is the way that both teachers and students go hand-in-hand from the starting point to the next level (UNESCO, 2004). Some researches even claim that formative assessment is an integral part of good teaching (Bennett, 2011). Formative assessment is inseparable from summative, because apart from

its primary purpose, documenting what students know, summative assessment supports formative by means of providing the insight on the achievements and knowledge gaps of students (Shepard, 2006).

The introduction of any reform, policy or program requires sufficient preparation time for teachers not only to develop new teaching methods and strategies, but also to increase the awareness of necessity of new policies' introduction. The study of Hallam (2009) on the introduction of the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) program concluded that the contribution of senior management team in allowing sufficient time for staff training and planning raising their understanding of the program's necessity guaranteed the effectiveness of program's implementation. The same idea is relevant to the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. It has many positive effects on the teaching practices, but it requires time for teachers to understand all the benefits and improve the teaching practices. The influence of formative assessment on teaching practices is beneficial for both students and teachers. There are two main effects on teaching practices revealed by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. Firstly, teachers stated that even though it took a couple of years for them to adapt to new teaching environment, it was beneficial for them in terms of learning how to interact and share ideas with other teachers on a regular basis (OECD, 2005). Secondly, "teachers found that formative assessment actually helped them to save time, allowed them to focus on the needs of weaker students and to incorporate varied teaching methods into their repertoire" (OECD, 2005, p.70). Thus, formative assessment saves the most important resource of teachers, time, that they can use to improve collaboration, spend more time with students and improve their personal teaching practices. As teachers have more time, they can think through the lesson planning more thoroughly, paying attention not only to *what* to teach, but also come up with different strategies on *how* to teach, thus, making it beneficial for all

students. Teachers mentioned that due to formative assessment, the focus of planning shifted from what students do at lessons to what they learn (OECD, 2005). While the teachers' practices improve, they have a favorable effect on teachers' interaction with students and learning environment. Teachers have to make dramatic changes in their teaching practices, because their role is being changed, consequently, students become the center of educational process. As a result, teachers start paying more attention to the needs of students and interacting with them differently and consider students' achievements more carefully (OECD, 2005). The result of altered teaching practices is the change of classroom environment, the classroom is no longer a place for confident and outgoing students only. Teaching practices, developed through implementing formative assessment, allow all students to perceive classroom as a safe place for taking risks and making mistakes (OECD, 2005).

2.5 Summary

This chapter presented the insights into the researches on the changes in teaching practices that focus on the alterations due to various educational reforms. It also provides the review on the effect of the formative assessment on the learning environment and interaction with students. As the focus of the formative assessment is mostly on the students' learning, there is the lack of understanding of the influence of the criteria-based assessment on teachers themselves and their teaching practices. Therefore, the study contributes to bridge the gap in understanding of changes in such teaching practices as classroom practices, inquiry, mastery and collaboration caused by the shift from the traditional to the criteria-based assessment in the Kazakhstani context.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter provides details about the research design and methodology employed in this research study to answer the main research question, “How has the criteria-based assessment influenced teaching practices of English language teachers at a mainstream school in Kazakhstan?” Thus, this chapter provides insights and rationales for the chosen research design, methods of data collection, research site, sampling and research participants, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Design

The main focus of this research study is the teachers and their teaching practices that are influenced by the changes in the assessment system in Kazakhstani schools. The study employed qualitative method due to several reasons. The main reason is the research question that required thick data about teachers’ perspectives on, and experiences of, implementing criteria-based assessment and how it has influenced their classroom teaching practices. Therefore, qualitative research design was chosen to allow for in-depth interviews with the participants. A qualitative research has “ability to represent the views and perspectives of the participants in a study” and can give the meaning “to real-life events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers” (Yin, 2011, p.8). Moreover, the qualitative research is characterized by the inductive approach that uses the obtained data in order to come up with the concept about some phenomena (Yin, 2011). In this regard, qualitative research provides the researcher with the opportunity to gather the information, analyze it and make conclusions based on the opinions of the participants. In addition, the qualitative research allows acquiring the understanding of such understudied social process as the Kazakhstani reform’s influence on teaching practices by means of studying the experience and opinions of school teachers.

Thus, the qualitative method allowed the researcher to have face-to-face interactions and in-depth discussions with the participants in order to obtain more detailed information on the topic.

In this study, the collected information, opinions of participants, their experience and views served as a basis of the grounded theory that was used to understand the effects that criteria-based assessment has on teaching practices. The grounded theory was seen as one of the best-suited explorations of the changes in teaching practices caused by the introduction of the criteria-based assessment in the context of Kazakhstan. The aspects of the grounded theory approach corresponded well to the needs of this study. Firstly, grounded theory is not focused on a particular theory. In contrast, it is concentrated on gathering the data and analyzing it in order to develop an understanding of a particular phenomenon and draw conclusions from the data (Khan, 2014). Secondly, the grounded theory is considered a good design if the existing theories cannot be used in order to fully explain the studied issue as, apart from other qualitative approaches, it is emphasized on the theory development rather than the theory testing (Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014). Moreover, the procedures of the grounded theory design include the possibility to return to participants multiple times in order to understand the opinions and views of the research participant in details (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the grounded theory allowed researching the participants' teaching practices as well as the changes they have made to their practices due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment.

3.3 Research Site

One of the priorities of the secondary education development in Kazakhstan is to update and improve the assessment practices in order to enhance students' academic achievements (SPESD, 2016). However, the process of the implementation of the newly introduced assessment practices falls on school teachers' shoulders. The reform implies the

changes in such teachers' practices as classroom practices, effective collaboration with colleagues and experience exchange. Thus, this research is focused on the possible impacts of the criteria-based assessment reform on the teaching practices of secondary school teachers. One mainstream state school was chosen to be the research site, because it was necessary to conduct the research in the most widespread type of schools of Kazakhstan and exclude such factors as additional funding or special conditions of education like those of the private or specialized schools. The focus of the qualitative research on one mainstream school also provided the opportunity to explore the topic in-depth rather than going for breadth.

Moreover, the teachers of the mainstream school have been implementing the criteria-based assessment for the second year, thus, teachers were able to compare their teaching practices during the traditional assessment system with the current practices and provide their opinions on the possible alterations in teaching practices. The informal conversations I had with teachers of the mainstream school prior to beginning this study revealed that their teaching practices were undergoing certain changes due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment. Therefore, I decided to choose this school in order to generate and collect rich data.

3.4 Participants

As the research is focused on the changes in teaching practices due to the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, teachers who had already experienced these changes were selected to participate in the research. Thus, the purposeful sampling was used as it allowed choosing the particular group of respondents that could provide rich information corresponding to the interest and focus of the study. Moreover, the purposeful sampling was considered to be the best-suited type of sampling for this research as it is designed to gather the rich data and gain the in-depth understanding of the studied topic

(Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The teachers who are implementing the criteria-based assessment were narrowed down to the English subject teachers of Grades 5 to 8 only due to some careful considerations. Firstly, nowadays the government is promoting the trilingual policy of education in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. Next, the updated content of secondary education is aimed at transition of subjects in grades 10 and 11 to the English as the language of instruction, thus, the role of English language teachers in secondary school is crucial. Finally, being the teacher of English myself, it was possible to get more in-depth understanding of changes in teaching practices, analyze them and come up with conclusions. Therefore, the teaching practices of English teachers were the main focus of study, because they can influence both the current level of English language of students and further study of other subjects. As to the number of participants, only five teachers were selected to participate in the research according to the particular criterion. Only English language teachers of grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 who have experienced both traditional and the newly introduced criteria-based assessment were selected as they can provide the data on the possible changes in their practices due to the criteria-based assessment implementation. The invitation letters were sent to about 10 teachers to express their interest and availability to voluntarily participate in the study. After receiving positive responses, I selected only 5 of them who I thought were able to provide rich and sufficient data about changes in their teaching practices due to the criteria-based assessment implementation. These five teachers represented the teachers of different experience level including teachers with experience of less than 10 years and more than 10 years, as well as gender such as male and female teachers, and of various grades (i.e., 5 to 8). The common thing in all five teachers was that all of them had been implementing the criteria-based assessment for about two years. This sample's aspect is crucial to the research, because the number of years that teachers work at a school is one of the factors

that defines the ability of teachers to change their teaching practices. Thus, the selected teachers were able to provide the researcher with the rich data and the in-depth analysis of changes these teachers have brought about in their teaching practices due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection process was carried through conducting semi-structured interviews with the research participants individually. The interviews allowed the researcher to entering the world of the participants and get the insights and understanding of their experiences, practices and opinions about the phenomenon under study. Interviews also helped me establish certain level of trust and rapport with the participants through face-to-face communication with them for an extended period of time (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

There were other reasons for conducting semi-structured interviews. First of all, “a good interview is a discussion rather than a question and answer session” (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013, p.131). Secondly, a researcher has a better opportunity to obtain more detailed views, opinions and experiences while conducting semi-structured interviews (Khan, 2014). Moreover, semi-structured interviews provide a researcher with the flexibility, in other words, the interviewer has the possibility to guide the interview taking into account the answers and opinions of the participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The first interview with each participant lasted for about 60 minutes and the second one for about 30 minutes, because this amount of time allowed me to obtain the rich data on the topic and avoided so-called ‘interview fatigue’ that can appear if an interview lasts for more than 1- 2 hours (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Each participant was interviewed two times in order to get the deeper understanding of the changes in their teaching practices. Moreover, in order to get the complete understanding of the participants’ teaching

practices, it was necessary to explore their classroom practices, the process of planning, collaboration and reflection. The primary interviews were directed into understanding of the general opinions and views about influence of the criteria-based assessment on the teaching practices' alterations. The second interviews focused on the specific changes the participants see in their teaching practices due to implementation of the new assessment system. This was done so because "further interviews have the potential to uncover something new or unexpected" (Wray, Markovic, & Manderson, 2007, p.8).

The data collection process also included the document analysis as it could provide the basis for interviewing the participants. As to the analysis of the assessment policies, it was conducted prior to the interviews in order to understand how the criteria-based assessment is identified, what the main principles and objectives of this assessment system are. Regarding other document analysis, it included lesson plans and reflections of the teachers on the conducted lessons. The data analysis process also included coding of the interviews, which provided me with the set of key words that were met multiple times in participants' answers. Then, the set of themes emerged from the key words, which constituted the topics of findings answering the research questions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The consent is "meaningless unless it is informed" (Cropley, 2015, p.81), that is why the informed consent clarifies all the points of the research and the role of the participants without any deception or exaggeration. I fully complied with the ethical principles of NUGSE throughout this study. Therefore, an informed consent form was shared with the participants in order to help them understand the nature and purpose of the study and then decide to participate or not to participate in the interviews. The participants were also informed that they can withdraw the research at any time.

As my research included human subjects and studying their opinions and experiences, I tried my best to ensure the anonymity of the participants (other than from myself) and confidentiality of the data obtained from them. Firstly, pseudonyms were assigned to both the research site and participants in order to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in the locked classrooms ensuring that nobody could see the participants or hear the interviews. Secondly, the collected data such as the recordings and transcripts of the interviews were protected by using sophisticated password on my personal laptop that only the researcher has access to. Moreover, the information that may identify the individual participants was omitted, making them unidentifiable. The hard copies of transcripts were stored in a locked cabinet accessible to researcher only. The gathered data was also not shared with anyone else. Thus, the anonymity and confidentiality ensured by means of the consent forms and safe data storage minimized the risks for the research participants.

3.7 Limitations

Even though the research provides sufficient findings on the alterations in teaching practices, there are some limitations of the study. Firstly, the study was conducted only one mainstream school in a particular location, therefore the research findings may not reflect the experience of teachers in other mainstream schools in other regions of Kazakhstan. Another limitation is the selection of the participants as only five English language teachers were selected that does not allow taking into account opinions of other English language teachers. Moreover, the answers of the participants may be influenced by the variety of factors that may impede the understanding of all the changes that teachers might have undergone. These limitations may be addressed by future researches that can study more than one school or the bigger number of participants comparing the results with the findings presented in this research.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted in order to identify the changes in the teaching practices of the English language teachers in one mainstream school due to the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. The data were collected by means of conducting two rounds of semi-structured interviews from 5 English language teachers of grades 5 to 8. Two rounds of interviews assisted the researcher in obtaining an in-depth understanding of the teachers' vision of the criteria-based assessment, attitudes towards both traditional and criteria-based assessment, challenges these teachers faced due to the reform implementation and the changes in their teaching practices.

The findings are presented according to the framework of changes in teaching practices outlined by Fullan (1993) and discussed in Chapter Two in this thesis. Therefore, the findings are presented in three key themes: (1) Participants vision and understanding of the criteria-based assessment and its advantages and disadvantages; (2) Influences of the Criteria-based Assessment on Teachers' Practices; (3) Challenges of implementing the criteria-based assessment.

The first theme, which is about the participants' vision and understanding of the criteria-based assessment and its advantages and disadvantages, provides insights about the teachers' understanding of the recently introduced criteria-based assessment and its benefits and drawbacks in comparison with the traditional assessment system. It is also focused on the teachers' personal vision-building about criteria-based assessment. The next theme, which is about the 'influences of the criteria-based assessment on teachers' practices, presents the alterations and changes in the pedagogical practices that these teachers underwent due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment in their school. It also talks about the advancement of their teaching methods and both personal

and pedagogical skills. It also presents how the practices of collaboration and communication among the teachers of English as well as with teachers of other subjects have improved. The last theme, Challenges of implementing the criteria-based assessment, contains the data on difficulties that teachers encountered in different aspects of their work such as classroom practices, communication with parents and attitude of students, as a result of implementing the new assessment system.

4.2 Participants Vision and Understanding of the Criteria-based Assessment and Its Advantages and Disadvantages

This section includes the findings about the overall understanding of the criteria-based assessment by the English language teachers of one secondary mainstream school in Kazakhstan. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes in their teaching practices, this theme also covers such aspects of the teachers' vision of the criteria-based assessment as its benefits and drawbacks, importance, and overall influence on teaching practices of the teachers.

4.2.1 Vision of the criteria-based assessment.

The interviewed teachers share a common vision of the criteria-based assessment. All of them agree on the points that the criteria-based assessment is aimed at the development of students' academic knowledge and other skills such as critical thinking, analytical skills, objectivity and others. Teachers also mentioned that new assessment system has a direct association with such words as "feedback" and "praising" (Participant 2) in order to make students feel that they achieved something good even when they have minor successes and areas of improvement (Participant 4). However, the term "feedback" is understood differently by teachers with different experiences. For example, the Participant 2 with the experience of 3 years in implementing criteria-based assessment, identifies feedback as the core purpose of implementing the new assessment system. She

believes that in the traditional assessment practices (old assessment system), “teachers just provided students with a mark such as 5 or 4 without sufficient comments on students’ performance”. At the same time, this participant explains that in her understanding, feedback means saying to students such words as “excellent”, “good” or “Ok” according to how well a student has worked at a lesson, which improved students’ performance assessment. Although this participant outlined the significance of giving detail feedback to students, the quality of feedback seems to be missing because the use of words such as “excellent” and “good” may make students feel good but these do not help them improve their learning outcomes until such areas of improvement are identified and communicated to students. The other two participants with teaching experience of less than 5 years had difficulties with identifying their personal vision of the criteria-based assessment. For example, the Participant 1 explained new assessment system as “the criteria-based assessment was introduced... maybe... in order to make students understand what they should do to get some particular number of points”. On the opposite, the teachers with the teaching experience of more than 15 years could provide more elaborate answers to the question “What is your vision of the criteria-based assessment?” They outlined that the criteria-based assessment is directed at students’ more profound acquisition of the English language by means of unifying standards of teaching and progress assessment. They explained that the transition to all four language skills assessment, listening, reading, writing and speaking, allow them to have more standardized approach to teaching among the English language teachers. It is connected with the previously implemented practice of teachers to pay attention to skills that every teacher suggested to be more important for learners. One of the participants stated:

Before, I was focusing my lessons on grammar skills improvement and text translations while other colleagues regarded speaking or reading comprehension

as more crucial skills to develop. We barely involved students in writing activities or group work. Well... I guess, the current practice of all four skills assessment improved the English language teaching and learning (Participant 4).

Participants 3 and 4 did not hesitate to operate with such terms as “descriptors”, “success criteria”, “objectives”, “feedback” and “reflection” while describing their notions of assessment, showing an in-depth understanding of what the criteria-based assessment is about. Another participant claimed, “with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, I can clearly see all the volume of knowledge that students should acquire and produce, because they have a set of objectives supported by descriptors that help to achieve every objective”. However, Participant 3 admitted that assessment against descriptors is still challenging for her, that is why she supports every task with 5 descriptors (old assessment system) and comes back to 5-scale assessment, because “... it is clear for me, it is clear for students and they do not have any misunderstandings about their progress” (Participant 3). Although more experienced teachers try to shift from traditional to the criteria-based assessment, they admit that it is more difficult for them to accept new assessment than for those who spent less years teaching according to the traditional assessment.

The unexpected finding concerns more experienced English language teachers and their vision of new assessment. Interestingly, despite demonstrating quite an in-depth understanding of the criteria-based assessment and its importance, by the end of the interview, Participant 3 claimed,

I, personally, do not believe in new assessment system and I think it will not show improved results and high achievements. I believe that it is impossible to change the attitudes of people who worked many years with the scale assessment system and make them accept the criteria-based assessment. I cannot say that I have learnt

something new or that my knowledge has improved. I use same methods and same strategies of teaching and assessment.

Although Participant 4, who is also more experienced teacher, did not demonstrate any resistance towards the new assessment system, she expressed:

Some moments of assessment are still far from my understanding. I truly believe that the language should be assessed mostly by students' speaking and writing skills. I really do not understand why I should assess a student and give the feedback on his/her work if he/she only, for example, fulfilled a table. Moreover, tasks that students complete are converted into percentages and percentages - into marks for terms and a year. Some students who, in my opinion, work no more than on mark "3" for a term, can easily get "4". This is really strange for me (Participant 4).

The beliefs of these teachers that the new assessment does not work better than the previous system and that the results of students will not improve may be connected with the pace of the reform implementation. Due to the necessity to introduce the reform to all schools of Kazakhstan in a very short period of time, teachers were taught how to promote active learning, use new books and implement the criteria-based assessment system. However, the big picture about the new assessment system including its purpose, possible benefits, and how it should work was not paid sufficient attention to, thus, making teachers feel unsure of its success.

4.2.2 Benefits and drawbacks of the criteria-based assessment.

The interviewed English language teachers pointed out that one of the major advantages of the criteria-based assessment is that "...now both teachers and students can see the big picture of their knowledge expansion and development" (Participant 2) due to the appearance of objectives, criteria and descriptors, what makes "the work of teachers

more specific, directed and even easier in some way” (Participant 4). Moreover, the assessment practices of the participants have improved by means of using a set of objectives that should be achieved by students within a term. The major advantage of objectives’ implementation, according to the interviewed teachers, is that it allows avoiding prejudices towards students’ performance by means of more objective assessment of students. In other words, every objective leads to the choice of tasks supported by the set of descriptors that explains students what they should do in order to achieve an objective. It even makes the work of teachers easier in some way since “students can use descriptors in order to conduct self-assessment or peer-assessment, thus, simplifying the process of giving feedback” (Participant 5). Moreover, such aspects of the criteria-based assessment as descriptors and success criteria protect teachers from being accused in prejudices towards students. Participant 3, who considers herself as a strict teacher who is unbiased towards students and always marked their performance against her own criteria without any indulgence, seems relieved when saying that “Nobody can blame me for punishing students with grades or intentionally lowering their grade points, because now I have all proves: works of students, descriptors and criteria” (Participant 3). Thus, the criteria-based assessment helps avoid both discouragement of students with bad marks and accusations of teachers on the manipulation with bad marks. “Because students will not hear anymore from a teacher that you do not know anything on the topic! You have ‘2’ marks for the lesson! Take your sit!” in front of a class” (Participant 4). This quote reflects that teachers will assess and give grades to students based on a clearly defined criteria so students will not accuse teachers of giving them low marks. Another positive influence of the criteria-based assessment is the change in the teachers’ perception of their role in the teaching and learning process. All the teachers pointed out that they ‘gave the floor’ to

students instead of talking the entire lessons by themselves. The participants underlined that it has led to active students' learning and use of more innovative teaching methods.

According to the interviewed teachers, there are two main drawbacks of the criteria-based assessment implementation: high-stakes summative assessment and inconsistency between the ongoing assessment during the education at school and the final assessment test, UNT (Unified National Testing). Teachers express their concerns on the amount of stress both students and teachers experience during summative assessment after every unit and at the end of every term. On the one hand, students can feel relaxed throughout the number of lessons, however, when it comes to summative assessment, students do not sleep at nights preparing for their knowledge check. Nevertheless, teachers feel even higher degree of stress, because they realise that they are "in charge of every summative assessment work" (Participant 1), and if some students do not succeed in receiving sufficient number of marks, "it is a teacher to be blamed on students' failures, as these are teachers who are responsible for students' learning throughout a term" (Participant 5). Moreover, especially at the very beginning of the criteria-based assessment implementation teachers "could not adjust the summative assessment works' level to the appropriate level of difficulty. Sometimes it was too difficult, so, even more able students could not succeed, sometimes - too easy, so even weaker ones could receive too many points" (Participant 3). Therefore, teachers feel an increasing level of stress due to the high level of responsibility for the final grades of students and the "vulnerability of the teaching process to all imperfections in teaching practices and in how the educational process is organised at schools caused by the new assessment system" (Participant 4). In other words, teachers are anxious about the consequences of the mistakes they can make in the lesson plans, in the methods used in teaching or improper differentiation, because it can lead to

the decrease in points that students get for summative assessments and, as a result, low grades for a term.

Moreover, teachers realise that when graduating from the school, students will have the final exam that is entirely different from the tests that students pass within the school education period. Teachers seem to be puzzled while discussing this issue, they feel lost, because “the focus of school education was shifted to the assessment of all 4 skills while the final exam still requires from students the in-depth understanding of grammatical aspect of the language” (Participant 4). While teachers have to shift their focus from studying only grammar, to practicing 4 language skills and their improvement, the final test is fully aimed at checking the profound understanding of grammar rules without paying any attention to speaking, writing, reading or listening skill.

4.2.3 A teacher's role.

As to the role of a teacher in the criteria-based assessment, all participants regardless of their experience or gender answered that currently the central role at lessons is given to students where teachers are mentors, supporters and guiding force. The participant 5 explained:

New assessment system has changed the teacher's role. Before we were ‘knowledge-givers’ who were explaining and providing all the information to students, but now the teacher's role is to make students obtain knowledge by themselves, support their learning and help them to overcome difficulties.

Although a teacher is no longer seen the ‘central figure’ or only source of knowledge in educational process and that it is the students who take the foreground of the educational process, all the interviewees pointed out that a teacher cannot just step aside and merely observe students' work. In the participants' opinion, teacher still has a critical role in fostering students' learning. In other words, the teacher must have the ability to organise

effectively teaching and learning process as part of the criteria-based assessment implementation. One more significant aspect of the assessment reform is the capability of teachers to make students see their own successes, that is why the increased attention is paid to different types of assessment, especially self-assessment and peer-assessment. In this regard, in addition to other duties, teachers should "...teach students how to conduct unbiased assessment and provide them with a vital school of life-long learning and improvement" (Participant 5). An interesting finding is that teachers find their role as teachers more important than it has ever been before. All participants expressed their worries about the increased responsibility entrusted upon them with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. The teachers feel that students' progress entirely depends on how well a teacher can conduct assessment of individual students and track progress of every student. The Participant 4 expressed concerns regarding the assessment of students' performance stating that "If I pay less attention to assessment of some students' performance, I can overlook successes or gaps in knowledge. It can impede improvement of students' knowledge or, what is even worse, it can lead to the loss of students' motivation to study the language". Participant 3 demonstrated similar understanding of the teacher's role and pointed out:

Teachers should be certain about how they conduct assessment of students' performance, they should analyse students' learning, reflect on it, identify strengths and weaknesses and work on them. Such role of a teacher has become crucial with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment.

The above-mentioned concerns as expressed by the participants reveal that teachers face several challenges while implementing the criteria-based assessment.

4.3 Influences of the Criteria-based Assessment on Teachers' Teaching Practices

This section presents the data collected on such aspects of teaching practice as teachers' characteristics, collaboration practices and teaching methods that underwent changes due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment.

4.3.1 Changes in teachers' skills and characteristics.

All the participants claimed that the implementation of the assessment reform began for them with the changes made in the lesson planning. Four out of five teachers see it as a positive change as one of them stated:

The changes in the structure of lesson plans made us think about expected outcomes of students at lessons. Now, while planning, teachers have to think about what students should be able to know and do at the end of the lesson. It can significantly improve the quality of students' learning outcomes, if a lesson is well-planned (Participant 2).

While the majority of the participants mentioned that changes in the lesson planning provided them with much better qualities such as the ability to make their teaching process more interesting and engaging for students, as one of them stated, "...more focused and directed due to the set of objectives that we have to achieve, which I find particularly useful in my teaching. So, teaching became more organised and directed" (Participant 1). Another teacher expressed quite opposite views towards the elaborate lesson planning required by the criteria-based assessment. She went onto say that the lesson planning is a waste of time. When asked "how has the process of planning changed?", she answered:

Oh my God... With the traditional assessment system, I did not have to write the detailed plans for my lessons. I have been working as a teacher for more than 20 years and I had the so-called status of "trusted teacher". Trusted teachers did not have to make plans, we could just have some notes, that's all. Now, I have to make

detailed lesson plans, UNFORTUNATELY. These lesson plans are of 2-3 pages, so it takes a huge amount of time: I have to think of objectives, differentiation, etc. So, a lot of time is WASTED during the planning stage. Especially, it takes a lot of time when there are the cross-curricular links with other subjects: Math, Biology, etc. I, personally, like such topics and lessons, but the preparation is killing me.

With regard to various skills development, all the participants agreed that they see evident improvement in their professional and personal skills. The first skill that all the teachers mentioned is the flexibility, because this quality is crucial for successful implementation of any reform. These teachers admit that they "...had to become more open to something new, ready to acquire knowledge and be flexible in the continuous learning" (Participant 4). Another improvement that they teachers see is their time-management skills, as one of them said, "...the pace and content of work has changed. Well...I think that teachers should have good time-management skills in order to catch up with the modern education trends and adapt changes quicker, become life-long learners" (Participant 3). This idea is also supported by the Participant 1 who stated, "I can see the changes in the way I learn: I can handle loads of information easier, analytical skills improved, I can choose better more relevant and appropriate information for lessons".

According to the collected data, the criteria-based assessment also contributed in the development of both teachers and students' critical thinking. The participants pointed out that criteria are made up in the way that they allow not only to conduct the assessment of students' current knowledge, progress and achievements, but also to develop different skills of teachers and students. Participant 4 expressed that there is a positive attitude towards the influence of new assessment on the development of higher order thinking skills. She provided the following example:

I changed my vision of the work with textual information. If previously my focus

was on the content of texts, their translation and answering questions, now I can cut a text into pieces, make students retell the info from their part to each other and discuss what they have learnt from a text. During discussions, I ask their opinion on the topic and try to develop their thinking skills. I really like about CBA that it really develops critical thinking. Students can express their thoughts, ideas, opinion during writing, speaking and discussions. Even when we have tasks on listening or reading, we discuss the information anyway and by means of discussion students develop their critical thinking, their outlook and, consequently, my outlook too.

Concerning the outlook of teachers, more experienced teachers seemed to be excited about the knowledge they can gain due to the necessity of having an in-depth understanding of what they are going to assess. For example, the Participant 3 said that she was terrified at the beginning of using criteria-based assessment because she could not assess what students were saying due to the lack of her knowledge on some topics like fashion or music, “So, I realized that in order to make the quality assessment and provide feedback on the work of students I had to improve my knowledge on so many topics” (Participant 3). The teacher looked excited when explaining that due to the necessity to assess, she felt motivated to broaden her understanding of various topics and that she could learn what a ‘hoodie’ is or discover modern genres of music that she has not heard of before.

Interestingly, apart from the professional skills and knowledge improvement, two of the participant teachers mentioned important personal skills that are necessary for the reform implementation. Participant 2 outlined that one of the most important qualities of a good teacher is to have empathy for students and others. She stated,

It is also important for a teacher to have the empathy towards not only students, but their parents too. We should have the understanding of their feelings and struggles that they experience due to the introduction of the new assessment system, because

this is the most stressful part of the reform for them.

Supporting the views expressed above, Participant 3 claimed that “New assessment requires from teachers better understanding of students’ personal peculiarities, individual learning styles and ways in which they perceive the information better”. This finding is interesting, because usually teachers, including some of the participants in this study, complain about parents not taking interest in their children education and not cooperating with teachers, but these two teachers have realized that it is important to care for parents and understand their difficulties and limitations. These teachers believe that having a positive attitude towards work with students and parents is an opportunity to unite with parents, express sympathy and get closer.

There are also some aspects of teachers’ work that have not undergone any changes. Surprisingly, all the interviewees stated that their classroom practices and teaching methods have not changed significantly, they only became more directed to the objectives’ achievement. As to the more experienced teachers, they suggested that “Maybe courses that I attended helped me to understand new system in details and do not have any alterations in my teaching methods” (Participant 4). While less experienced teachers stated they do not have sharp changes of their classroom practices, because they did not spend many years of teaching according to the traditional assessment system. Moreover, the universities and colleges they graduated from have provided them with the latest teaching methods and techniques, thus, they did not have to make many changes in their teaching practices in order to effectively implement the criteria-based assessment.

In spite of the data on changes that teachers have made in their teaching practices due to the assessment reform implementation, one participant outlined that no changes can be made if a teacher does not want to change. Participant 3 expressed a strong position on this point by saying, “I believe that if a teacher (it does not matter how old a teacher is)

does not want to change himself/herself and does not want to be flexible, such person should change the profession". In addition, she stated that only those teachers who are ready for life-long learning, who have the ability to adapt, change and improve should stay in the teaching profession.

4.3.2 The practices of collaboration and experience exchange.

Taking into consideration the data collected from the interviews with teachers, it is clear that the administration of the school provides teachers with freedom of collaboration, suggesting some professional development courses as support to teachers. Firstly, administration promotes teachers' capacity-building by means of providing teachers with opportunity to participate in various professional development courses, seminars and workshops. However, the participation is not mandatory; in other words, teachers can choose what they want or want to develop in terms of their professional knowledge and skills. Thus, they participate in the courses that they truly need. Moreover, such practice provides teachers with the experience exchange, because they share obtained knowledge with other colleagues if necessary.

However, it is clear from data that more experienced teachers and less experienced teachers do not have equal opportunities for professional development. While more experienced teachers enlisted various PD courses such as 2-weeks courses on the assessment, 6-months courses on the updated content of education, 4-months CLIL courses, less experienced teachers have only mentioned 3-months level courses on the basics of teaching. Moreover, when more experienced teachers were asked "what kind of professional development do you need in order to supplement the assessment reform implementation?", both of them answered that everything is clear and they do not require any additional courses, because the courses are not always efficient and "the content of the courses is usually same or at least overlaps with the content of other courses" (Participant

3). This answer supports the point on the unequal distribution of the opportunities to attend the courses. When asked the same question, less experienced teachers admitted that they would appreciate the possibility to develop their professional knowledge, but “I have not had this opportunity even though I really want to participate in courses” (Participant 1). Participant 5 kept repeating throughout the interview, that he experiences difficulties with the formative assessment and still struggles to understand how to conduct it appropriately, however, he has not had the opportunity to attend any courses on the criteria-based assessment.

As to the experience exchange at school, teachers conduct seminars, round tables and workshops on the issues concerning the criteria-based assessment. Teachers also have the opportunity to participate in courses organized by the Center of Excellence in order to improve their knowledge of the criteria-based assessment and teaching methods. Even though the English language teachers experience inequality regarding the professional development, they have the established practices of experience exchange among themselves. According to the participants' answers, the experience exchange is the main tool to overcome difficulties of the criteria-based assessment. For example, Participant 1 stated, “With the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, we started to have more discussions, exchange our ideas and try to overcome challenges collaboratively”. The teachers outlined that the process of collaboration happened to be more spontaneous rather than a scheduled one. They admitted that all English language teachers gather once a term to come up with a layout of the subsequent term, discuss summative assessments' dates, identify the content to be covered. However, while covering the point on collaboration, all teachers agree that they can gather without any schedule in order to provide each other support in the challenging moments of the criteria-based assessment. In spite of the evident collaboration among teachers regarding some theoretical aspects of the criteria-based

assessment, teachers admitted that in practice they still plan all lessons and summative assessment works individually. Moreover, one of the teachers claimed:

Colleagues do not really like when you visit their lessons. The majority of the colleagues (including me) have prejudices towards the reasons why other colleagues visit lessons. We think that other colleagues come to our lessons to see what is wrong in lessons, find mistakes or label teachers as “bad” or “good”. We have not got used to the idea that colleagues come to lessons to learn something from us or to see how a teacher copes with some difficulties in assessment or other lessons’ aspects (Participant 4).

Moreover, the Participant 5 described that the culture of the reflection-on-lessons should be improved, because mostly, the feedback after lessons observation is not appropriate. He pointed out that he prefers “...to hear some minuses of my lessons and discuss the ways to solve these issues. This is really IMPORTANT. I want to see my mistakes in the assessment and get the feedback on the descriptors and criteria” (Participant 5). Less experienced teachers also expressed the willingness to learn from more experienced teachers which is possible by means of collaborating with mentors. The less experienced teachers admitted that the role of a mentor is crucial for those who have just started to work at school regardless of the assessment system, because “after the reform implementation, we all are in the same conditions, teaching experience with traditional system is not so significant as it was before. Still, we can learn some secrets of more experienced teachers’ teaching and their methods” (Participant 1). In addition, less experienced teachers expressed the idea that with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment the role of fresh teachers has changed. She describes the possibilities of less experienced teachers as following:

In the times of the traditional assessment system, we could barely share our creative

ideas with more experienced teachers and we were not taken seriously. Now, with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, our knowledge is extremely important, because we can share with other teachers what we have learnt at universities, for example, some new techniques or ways to teach grammar, vocabulary, etc and contribute to the improvement of the teaching process (Participant 2).

Thus, the introduction of the criteria-based assessment provided teachers with new opportunities to collaborate and exchange their experience, overcome difficulties collaboratively and involve every teacher in improving teaching practices regardless of the length of their teaching experiences.

4.4 Challenges of Implementing the Criteria-based Assessment

The introduction of the criteria-based assessment has caused a wide range of issues that concern students' learning, teaching process as well as the issues with parents' understanding of new system and the teachers' status. Amongst others, the following issues were highlighted by most of the participants.

4.4.1 Preparation time.

One of the main challenges that every teacher has faced is the amount of time they spend on preparation for their lessons. One of the teachers stated:

Now I have to be 3 times more prepared for my lessons than I used to be. Before, I needed only to revise some information on a topic. Now, I have to study different books prior to my lessons, but what is *more important* I need to come up with an idea of how to make assessment of content that is totally new for me (Participant 4).

However, according to Participant 5, "The time-consuming process of preparation for a lesson is balanced by the absence of home task and necessity to check it". According to

this participant, teachers now spend less time in giving and checking home work due to the new assessment practices.

Nevertheless, preparation for lessons worries teachers less than the loss of students' motivation to study the language that teachers connect with the absence of grades for every lesson. Although all the participants agreed on the positive influence of the criteria-based assessment on the educational process, they find it difficult to come up with ways to instill the values of life-long learning in minds of students without punishing or rewarding them with previously used grades. Interestingly, teachers do not hide the feeling of nostalgia about 5-scale assessment system admitting that they used grades to monitor behavior and participation of students and that the absence of diaries causes even more problems, because "...now, when I want to write some remarks on misbehavior of students and tell them *"You will get '2' marks for a lesson"* I cannot do it anymore" (Participant 1)". In addition, more experienced teachers agree that they still struggle to outline the progress of students and they sometimes come back to 5-scale assessment at their lessons.

Interestingly, teachers with teaching experiences of less than 5 years stated that they have not experienced major problems with the implementation of the criteria-based assessment. Thus, Participant 5 claimed "Honestly, I cannot remember any moments or aspects of the criteria-based assessment that would be huge problems for me. The only thing I am struggling with is everyday formative assessment of every student. Other aspects seem pretty clear". On the one hand, less experienced teachers state that they struggle with such aspects of assessment as formative assessment, motivation of students and absence of grades. On the other hand, they ensure that the above mentioned challenges are not considered to be major issues for them. According to the collected data, such misunderstanding can be caused by either lack of criteria-based assessment's understanding or more composed attitude towards the current challenges. It is also a

question about how seriously these teachers take the new assessment and its implementation.

4.4.2 Parents' involvement.

The issue that also worries the interviewed English language teachers is the misunderstanding with students' parents caused by the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. Teachers seem to be frustrated by the lack of parents' involvement, because, as it was mentioned above, teachers have the increased amount of paperwork. One of the reasons of the increase in paperwork is the need to provide detailed explanation of summative assessment's rubrics and descriptors to parents, the feedback "...that contains detailed information about the level of students on every skill: what they are good at and what they should improve" (Participant 3), but parents do not care about the content of assessment, majority of parents "are interested only in final grades of students without paying attention to reasons for the marks" (Participant 1). One of the teachers looked a little angry when asked "do parents understand new assessment system or at least try to understand it?". She answered, "Even though lessons are conducted from Monday to Friday, there is the practice in our school to come to work even on Saturday, which is called 'the day for parents', when parents can visit any teacher and get clarifications on students' performance and achievements. However, almost nobody comes to teachers to discuss THEIR OWN CHILDREN'S progress" (Participant 3). Indeed, while conducting the research, I visited teachers mostly on Saturdays and, in the course of my visits, I could barely see some parents coming to school for clarifications of their children's marks. Participant 4 also cannot hide her disappointment with the low level of parents' involvement. She states that one of the criteria-based assessment's advantages is the "...possibility of parents and teachers to unite. Teachers and parents can become one team that works towards the improvement of learning and students' knowledge. Unfortunately, I

do not observe this happening” (Participant 4). Thus, the data shows that while the reform in assessment is changing the minds of students and teachers, parents are the only stakeholders who “...still show more concerns with their children’s final grade, whether it is 4 or 5, rather than paying attention to other aspects of students’ learning” (Participant 2). While 4 out of 5 teachers claimed that parents’ involvement is still one of the major challenges of the criteria-based assessment, Participant 5 stated that one of the aspects he likes about the new assessment system is that:

New system changed the attitude of some parents, they want to know not only the final mark, but also why a student has got this mark and what they should do in order to improve their children’s language skills and increase the final percentage.

4.4.3 The teachers’ status.

According to the teachers’ opinion, the above-mentioned problems are worsened by the very low level of the teachers’ status and declining authority and influence over students. With the 5-scale assessment system, teachers had greater authority as they could punish students for misbehavior by giving them low marks. Therefore, students were forced to respect or sometimes even fear some teachers, because teachers could use grades as a tool of fixing students’ behavior and discipline at the school. With the introduction of the new assessment system, teachers do not have the authority to punish students, thus, they feel disempowered. The discussion of the teachers’ status was not the intention of interviews, however, 3 out of 5 teachers raised this issue and provided the information on their concern over declining teachers’ status which they believe is associated with the lack of authority given to teachers. The participant 2 expressed her dissatisfaction with the influence of the criteria-based assessment on the teachers’ status claiming that, “The criteria-based assessment was aimed at providing students with more freedom and independence. However, it turned out that the more independence students have, the lower

the level of teachers' authority". The data demonstrated that the participants regard freedom of students and the high level of teachers' status as contradictory notions and they feel puzzled about how to make both of them work well together.

4.5 Summary

In summary, these findings present teachers' evolving understanding of the criteria-based assessment, its importance, benefits and challenges of implementation. The findings also discussed the changes teachers have experienced in their teaching practices in order to implement criteria-based assessment in their classes. These changes include enhanced skills in assessing student more objectively and increasing collaboration and sharing best practices, whereas the challenges include lack of preparation time for teachers, lack of parental involvement and understanding of criteria-based assessment, and declining teachers' authority.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research study examined how introduction of the criteria-based assessment has influenced teaching practices of the English language teachers and what changes these teacher's practices have undergone in a selected school in Kazakhstan. It has also investigated how the teachers' views of assessment, its role and importance have altered. This chapter discusses and analyzes the study's major findings, supported by both literature and empirical data, and aims to answer the research questions. The findings are discussed under certain themes including personal vision building, changes in classroom practice, professional development, and collaboration amongst teachers.

5.2 Personal Vision Building

This aspect of teaching practices determines the teachers' understanding of their role and place in teaching along with the teaching purposes and meaning. The vision building is mostly related to the beginning teachers as they try to identify themselves professionally in teaching. However, in terms of the educational reforms, more experienced teachers also face the changes in this aspect of teaching practices, because they have the reformation of their professional identity.

According to the data gathered through the semi-structured interviews, all the teachers agree on the changes they have made in their role as a teacher from the 'person who conducts lessons' to 'facilitator' who stimulates and supports students' learning'. While using the traditional assessment with the 1-5 scale grading system, teachers were the center of every lesson, because they taught topics and checked students' acquisition of those topics. With the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, teachers facilitate and manage students' learning and enhance their further development. However, this alteration is caused by the necessity to adapt new assessment practices and shift the focus to the assessment of every student formatively, thus, forcing teachers to undergo pedagogical

changes due to the requirements of the new assessment system. Such involuntary changes resulted in the loss of self-identity of primary school teachers in England and Finland (Ko, 2010). Similarly, the teachers in my study also underlined that they felt lost at the first stages of the criteria-based assessment implementation. The longitudinal study of Day et al. (2006) showed that the reason of the destabilization in teachers' personal vision is the lack of reforms' attention to teachers' work and identity. Nevertheless, teachers have to build new roles, because this is the only way to make large-scale reforms successful (Asanova, 2007). The participants in my study also revealed that they had to change their role as a teacher and their pedagogical practices (teaching methods) to ensure that the new reform, criteria-based assessment, is successfully implemented.

Moreover, the vision-building process is more challenging for experienced teachers due to the fact that their teaching practices have established throughout their professional life. Changing long-held belief and practices is always a challenge. Both more experienced and less experienced teachers in my study claimed that it is easier for less experienced teachers to adapt to new assessment environment, because they do not need to deconstruct old practices but adopt and adapt the new practices, whereas the experienced teachers have to unlearn the old practices and relearn the new ones. This point of view aligns with the findings from the research conducted by Hargreaves and Goodson (2012) where participants stated that teachers with worked-out practices feel lost and puzzled, because they have started all over again while beginning teachers just need to embed new technologies and methods into their teaching practices.

Similarly, some teachers in my study still feel lost and puzzled in identifying their role in the teaching and learning process due to the misunderstanding of what to teach and what goals to achieve. While the educational program is directed to the development of all four English language skills, the UNT checks only the profound knowledge of grammar

topics, thus, making teachers lose the sense of what they should teach and why they should teach it. While the study of Tavakoli and Baniasad-Azad (2017) points out that some teachers claim that teachers can be considered effective when they are exam-oriented, it contradicts with the research participants' opinion. They consider that making exams the primary objective of teaching distracts teachers from the core of the criteria-based assessment and makes teaching less learner-centered.

As to the changes in teachers' beliefs, the study of Borg (2011) of six English language teachers showed that professional development courses significantly influenced their teaching practices, while the longitudinal study of Peacock (2001) tracked no changes in the teaching beliefs of 146 English language teachers. The findings of my study are also aligned with the Peacock's study findings, as more experienced teachers who participated in various professional development courses expressed their disbelief in the new assessment system. According to the Webster et al. (2012), there is a variety of factors that can be a hindrance to recognize and believe in new assessment system. In case of the current research, the possible reason why more experienced teachers claim that they do not believe that the new assessment system can be successful is the pace of the reform. Probably, teachers could not grasp the reasons and motives for changing the system due to its rapid introductions in the schools of Kazakhstan, thus, not being able to build solid understanding of why this reform and how it works.

Although some teachers in my study do not believe in the successfulness of the recently introduced assessment system, they pointed out that their role as teachers and to a great extent their teaching practices have changed and they have done so in the best interest of students' learning. As a result, these teachers pay more attention to the needs of every student, consider students' achievements more carefully and create the classroom where students can feel safe for making mistakes and learn from them (OECD, 2005).

5.3 Vision of Assessment and Changes in Classroom Teaching Practices

The changes in the assessment system and transition from the 5-scale to formative and summative assessment have led to the alterations of teachers' assessment vision followed by the changes in teaching methods. It is evident from the research participants' answers that the criteria-based assessment is more beneficial for teaching and learning than the traditional one. However, some teachers underline the advantages of the 5-scale assessment system that the criteria-based assessment lacks.

The research participants' visions of the criteria-based assessment differ and reflect the lack of its full understanding. While the criteria-based assessment is referred to as "...the process based on the comparison of academic achievements of students against the particular criteria, promoting the forming of cognitive competence of students" (The concept of implementation of the criteria-based assessment, 2012, p.3), some teachers struggle to identify its core and define what the criteria-based assessment is. Some teachers associate the criteria-based assessment with the feedback, other teachers identify it as a tool for identifying what students should work on and improve, more experienced teachers also emphasize that this type of assessment helped teachers to see the volume of knowledge students should acquire and produce. These visions of the criteria-based assessment only partially align with the definition of Florez and Simmons (2013), who pointed out that it enhances students' involvement in learning, where teachers guide them to improve knowledge and achieve better results. The different participants' visions of the criteria-based assessment can be caused by the limited time for teachers to prepare to its implementation. Considering this point, the study of Hallam (2009) of the program reform in the United Kingdom concluded that teachers' understanding of the program and its successful implementation depends on the sufficient time for staff training and planning.

As to the participants' understanding of advantages and disadvantages of the criteria-based assessment in comparison with the traditional 5-scale assessment, all the participant teachers pointed out that the former improves the teaching and learning process, contributes to students' subject knowledge as well as enhances the advancement of teaching classroom practices. While most teachers concluded that the absence of the scale system is the advantage of the criteria-based assessment, as the scale assessment is subjective due to the absence of particular criteria and does not take into account the needs of every student (OECD, 2015). Some teachers expressed the opinion that it had crucial advantages over the criteria-based assessment. Surprisingly, less experienced teacher admitted that the obvious benefit of the scale system was the possibility to control and discipline students by using grades and teacher-centered practices that contradicts with the widespread opinion that only teachers with long careers experience have resistance towards changes. On the other hand, more experienced teachers also confessed that they still apply scale assessment in their teaching in terms of making 5 criteria for tasks and evaluating students' performance by using grades. The fact that some teachers pointed out that absence of grading is the drawback of the criteria-based assessment can also be considered as the lack of understanding of its core purpose. All the participants agreed that another challenge in the criteria-based assessment is that its implementation is time-consuming, because it requires more thorough preparation, thought out planning and attentiveness to students' needs. This finding contradicts with the one mentioned in the OECD report (2015) where teachers claimed that formative assessment helped them save time as it allowed them to focus on the needs of low-performing students and incorporate different techniques into teaching practices. Despite several challenges and disadvantages, the research participants claimed that the criteria-based assessment is more beneficial than

scale assessment due to the increased attention to all students and improved assessment procedures.

Regarding the changes in the classroom practices, all teachers referred to the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered practices. According to Choi and Lee (2018) study of 190 English language teachers of secondary school, some teachers consider using teacher-centered practices easier, because it requires less time for preparation and simplifies the transfer of knowledge to students. Similarly, the research participants in my study admitted that it is challenging for those with more experience of teaching to implement new classroom teaching practices. As to the less experienced teachers, they always applied active teaching methods, because during the period of studying in higher educational institutions they studied and practiced the usage of such methods. Moreover, despite the challenges in applying learner-centered approach, all the participants specified its necessity due to its evident contribution to the teaching and learning process. This finding contradicts with the results of the study among European school teachers by Isac et al. (2015) where the results showed that 70% of the surveyed teachers use such non-active practices as memorization, recalling learned information and copybooks checking even though they realized that such practices develop only lower order thinking skills. In contrast, the interviewed English language teachers in my study demonstrated the willingness to apply active teaching methods and to develop the higher order thinking skills even though they struggled with their implementation at first. In addition, after teachers got accustomed to new methods, they could observe their positive influence on students' learning and continued to improve the active teaching methods.

Thus, the vision of assessment and classroom teaching practices are closely connected as one influences the other. In terms of the assessment reform implementation, the participants in this study felt that they had to alter their vision of assessment, thus,

changing their attitudes towards classroom teaching practices. If previously teachers conducted assessment for the sake of assessment, after the criteria-based assessment introduction they began assessing students for the sake of their knowledge improvement and higher-order skills development. It resulted in the necessity to apply the active methods of teaching which, according to the interviewed teachers, is the evident advancement of their teaching practices.

5.4 Professional Development and Gaining New Skills

Professional development is an essential part of the teaching practices and their improvement as the educational process is not static and requires continuous professional growth (Fullan, 1993). It is considered that effective teachers are those who improve their practices by means of continuous professional development (Kingston, 2012). Moreover, considering the necessity to apply the new assessment system in teaching, the English language teachers underwent alterations in both professional and personal skills.

Firstly, the professional development courses are the key for successful reform implementation due to the need of teachers to obtain an in-depth understanding of the criteria-based assessment as well as the big picture of the updated content of education. According to the results of 15 studies on the collaborative professional development (Cordingley et al., 2003), PD courses enhance the development of greater confidence among teachers, contribute to changes in teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy, increase the willingness of teachers to cooperate with colleagues and decrease the openness towards trying new teaching practices. Respectively, the data collected from the interviews with the English language teachers showed that the professional development courses improved collaborative culture at the school whereby the English language teachers work with each other and with teachers of other departments due to the need of mutual support. Interestingly, not all the teachers are provided with the equal opportunities for attending

professional development courses what coincides with the study of Asanova (2007) among Kazakhstani teachers, which showed that the government does not provide teachers with the sufficient number of trainings for the reform implementation. Although more experienced teachers were provided with sufficient number of PD courses, the contents in those courses did not always contributed to improvement of teaching practices due to the repetition of the same content in all courses. Moreover, the content of PD courses mostly concerned new teaching methods and techniques, ICT skills and types of assessment. Thus, some courses could provide more experienced English language teachers with useful knowledge on classroom teaching practices while other courses were a waste of teachers' time.

Secondly, the teaching is considered to be learning that depends on the variety of factors including the context in which teaching occurs (Mutambuki, & Schwartz, 2018). This opinion coincides with the research findings as the English language teachers claimed that with the assessment reform implementation, they started to perceive themselves as learners who experience changes in their professional skills as well as in their personal traits. It was identified through the interviews with participants that they had to adapt to new assessment system not only by means of applying new teaching methods, but by means of altering their professional skills. It coincides with the finding of Mets (2015) who identified that teachers had to gain new skills due to the reform's influence on a school system. While Mets (2015) pointed out teachers' need to develop everyday learning, teachers in the currents study specified 'flexibility' in terms of being able to change and adapt their teaching practices to the needs of students. Another skill that teachers gained is time-management. The English language teachers pointed out that time-management is a crucial skill for them within the criteria-based assessment implementation both in and outside a classroom. In other words, teachers need to manage

their time appropriately in order to have enough time for sufficient reflection after lessons, proper preparation for subsequent lessons and distributing time so that they could pay attention to the performance of every student at lessons. Interestingly, teachers also identified their personal traits that underwent alterations due to the reform in assessment. One of the major personal quality that evolved is empathy towards students and their parents. They explained the appearance of this trait by the increased amount of time spend on work with students and parents, resolving the misunderstandings of the criteria-based assessment that students and parents have, and helping to overcome difficulties faced by students.

Taking everything into account, the professional development is a necessary tool for improvement in teaching practices even though the opportunities of participation in the PD courses are not equally distributed among all teachers. Despite such inequality, all teachers could cultivate new skills that enhance the teaching and learning process.

5.5 Collaboration With Other Teachers

Collaboration among teachers is regarded the core element of improving teaching practices because collaboration enables teachers to share ideas and learn from each other and make collective effort to develop effective teaching practices in schools (Fullan, 1993). In this regard reflection becomes increasingly important in the work of every teacher, because it contributes to the understanding of what works well and why. Collaboration allows teachers to disseminate best practices within and across the school.

Similarly to the study of Yook and Lee (2016), the data obtained in my study showed that school routine becomes the hindrance for teachers to reflect on their practices and exchange experience. Teachers frequently have the lack of time due to work overload, thus the collaboration is narrowed down to the mandatory meetings once a term or unscheduled meetings of 2-3 teachers for 10 minutes for discussion on urgent problems.

Despite the lack of time, teachers claimed that the introduction of the criteria-based assessment required teachers to come together, work as a team, and learn from each other. This reform united teachers, because teachers encountered many challenges during implementation of the reform and most of those challenges and issues required to be solved collectively by teachers. Moreover, supportive colleagues are the key in establishing improved teaching practices and moral state of teachers during the time of stressful changes (Day et al., 2006).

Surprisingly, in terms of the assessment reform, the beginning teachers can be valuable part of a school community and contribute to the collaboration if they are treated appropriately. The beginning teachers in this study pointed out that they have particular knowledge of new teaching methods that can be shared with more experienced teachers, however, not all the experienced teachers want to learn from experience of teachers who have just started to work. In order to improve the collaboration among less and more experienced colleagues, beginning teachers may be given more autonomy and time, because teachers-leaders are able to cooperate with other colleagues as well as with other stakeholders which positively influences the teaching practices (Muijs et al., 2005).

In order to exchange successful practices, teachers may self-reflect at first so that teachers could challenge themselves and give a start to the process of improvement (Maughan et al., 2012). However, teachers agree on the lack of reflective skill, as reflection is often perceived as criticizing or an attempt to identify weak points of a teacher. On the one hand, teachers reflect on their own practices as they try to improve their lessons and incorporate better methods of teaching. On the other hand, teachers admitted that they do not practice reflection on practices of other teachers due to the misinterpretation of reflection. Nonetheless, the participants understand that they need to work on creating a more enabling and secured environment at the school in order to

remove teachers' fears about being criticized and enhance their trust and confidence that engaging in reflective practice (reflection on own and other colleagues' lessons) will be mutually beneficial. Teachers participated in the qualitative study conducted in Estonia also suggested that mutual support is advantageous as "in terms of community the importance of a stable integrated team and colleagues' support as an effective factor in staying in teacher's profession was pointed out" (Mets, 2015, p.169).

Therefore, the changes in the English language teachers' teaching practices are evident in different aspects of teachers' work. Needless to say, alterations in teachers' practices including, vision of assessment, teacher's role, collaboration, inquiry, mastery and personal vision-building are inseparably connected with each other. Despite many difficulties and challenges that teachers encountered during the assessment reform implementation process, there is a shift from teacher-centered teaching methods to more learner-centered pedagogies aimed at promoting active learning in students.

5.6 Summary

To conclude, this chapter discussed the major findings of the study, identifying alterations in the English language teachers' teaching practices framed by four capacities of change by Fullan (1993). The personal vision-building of teachers is still an ongoing process, because even though their role in the educational process has been changed, teachers still lack full understanding of the criteria-based assessment's core purpose. Therefore, some teachers still occasionally refer back to the traditional assessment system of using 5-scale-grading to assess students' performance. Other alterations of teaching practices concern the improvements in collaboration with colleagues and professional development. Teachers consider these changes as positive influence of the criteria-based assessment as they can feel more united with other teachers in the school.

Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The chapter summarizes the results of the study addressing the research questions. The purpose of the research was to investigate what effect the introduction of the criteria-based assessment has had on the teaching practices of English language teachers in a mainstream school in Kazakhstan. Specifically, the research aimed at identifying the changes that English language teachers underwent on personal, classroom and school levels due to the new assessment system. The chapter also provides an overview and implications of findings according to the research questions, the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

6.2 Summary of Findings

In order to reveal the main alterations in English language teachers' teaching practices, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How has the criteria-based assessment influenced teaching practices of English language teachers at a mainstream school in Kazakhstan?

Additional sub-questions included:

- What were the typical teaching practices of English language teachers during the implementation of traditional system of assessment?
- How have the teaching practices of English language teachers altered after the introduction of the criteria-based assessment?
- What are the attitudes of English language teachers towards the criteria-based assessment and the changes, if any, in their teaching practices as a result of this assessment method?

Regarding the typical teaching practices that teachers had while implementing the traditional assessment system, several main findings were identified. First, all interviewed

teachers regardless of their experience consider that the traditional 5-scale assessment system is connected with non-active learning. Students were regarded as passive learners and knowledge receivers, while teachers had the central role in the teaching and learning process. In other words, lessons included the introduction of a topic, transmission of related knowledge and further check of its acquisition by students. One more finding that I consider important is the attitude of teachers towards the traditional assessment.

Interestingly, teachers of both levels of experience identified the advantages of the scale system that the criteria-based assessment lacks. The evident benefit of the traditional assessment for teachers is the possibility to control and discipline students by using grades as reward or punishment. Although assessment should not be regarded as the means of influence on students' behavior, teachers consider this feature of traditional assessment as a tool for controlling and disciplining students. As to the criteria-based assessment, teachers consider it beneficial in terms of enhancing the active participation of students in the learning process. Moreover, the benefits are also connected with the improvement of professional and personal skills of teachers, development of collaborative practices and continuous professional development. However, with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, teachers noted the loss of their authority due to the increased independence and freedom of students. It is especially painful for more experienced teachers who feel lost, because their previous teaching practices appeared to be useless when implementing new assessment system. However, the reform cannot be successful without paying sufficient attention to the struggle of more experienced teachers, especially taking into account that the majority of teachers in Kazakhstan are more experienced teachers. Thus, in spite of simply holding experienced teachers responsible for resistance, their teaching practices may be respected and the teachers themselves may be appreciated for what they have been doing and the way they have been doing. In other words, the experienced

teachers may be made active part of the assessment reform so that they understand, appreciate and own the reform.

As to the alterations in English language teachers' teaching practices, the gathered data revealed significant changes in various aspects of teaching practices. The main change teachers see in their practices is that their role as a teacher has changed from that of a knowledge giver to that of a facilitator of students' learning. The criteria-based assessment has also promoted team work and collaboration among the English language teachers as well as with teachers of other departments. First, teachers shifted their classroom teaching practices from rote memorization to active learning and this change in their teaching practice has in turn enabled them to redefine their role as teacher and professional self-perception. As compare to the traditional assessment system, the new assessment practices have motivated teachers to place students at the center of the educational process, where sufficient attention is paid to giving constructive feedback that allows students understand their strengths and possible areas of improvement. Moreover, it influenced the alterations in professional identities of teachers making them perceive themselves as teachers-facilitators or guiding force in teaching and learning process. Changes in personal characteristics are also evidenced in English language teachers due to introduction of criteria-based assessment. The range of skills obtained by these teachers include time-management, reflection, flexibility, critical thinking and life-long learning. Moreover, some teachers claimed that they also developed new personal characteristic, namely, empathy, which they considered as essential characteristic of a teacher who works in the time of reforms. They stated that they feel more empathetic with students and parents and try to engage them in understanding of assessment criteria. Therefore, the positive influence of the assessment reform is evident among the teachers of English in the mainstream school. Even though teachers were forced to make changes, these alterations

benefitted their practices and the teaching process in general. Such positive alterations may become the basis for the successful reform introduction, because if every teacher can understand advantages of new assessment for both students and teachers, the motivation level can increase while the resistance of teachers can gradually decline.

Considering the attitudes of teachers towards new assessment system, some of them have contradicting opinions about this reform. On the one hand, all interviewed teachers regardless of their experience or other factors pointed out a vast range of benefits of the criteria-based assessment. Thus, they indicated mainly positive influence of new assessment on teaching and learning processes, motivation of students, classroom environment, collaboration among teachers and improvement in professional practice. On the other hand, despite the positive attitude of the English language teachers towards the criteria-based assessment, more experienced teachers admitted that they still use the 5-scale format and do not believe in effectiveness of the reform. Possibly, the main reason for their disbelief in new assessment system is the absence of an in-depth understanding of the criteria-based assessment's core purpose. In other words, teachers do not understand why they should use new assessment, what the reasons for these changes are and why they should start learning how to teach from scratch again. This problem is also connected with the professional development courses that teachers attended. Teachers claimed that the content of the courses is similar to each other and, apparently, the courses did not provide teachers with the insights of the criteria-based assessment and the reasons why it is necessary to implement it. Considering that teachers are the core element of any reform implementation, they should have the in-depth understanding of its core and the reasons to implement it.

Thus, the gathered data provided the insights into alterations in various aspects of the English language teachers' teaching practices as well as covered the research questions.

6.3 Limitations

There are three major limitations in the study that can be addressed in future research. First, only one mainstream school of Kazakhstan was chosen as the research site, subsequently, it might not reflect the opinions and attitudes towards the criteria-based assessment of teachers in other schools. The second limitation concerns the sample size, which is five teachers of the English language. Even though two-round interviews could gather enough data for providing useful insights into alterations in teaching practices, the findings may not represent the views and perspectives of other English language teachers across Kazakhstan. The third limitation is the time constraints for data collection process, which took approximately seven weeks and is considered a short period for extensive data collection. More time would have helped to go for longer engagement with the participants and deeper exploration of their views, beliefs and practices in relation to the newly introduced assessment system.

6.4 Recommendations

The recommendations for further research are based on the limitation of the current study. Firstly, further research can study a larger sample of teachers from other schools and regions of the country as the implementation of new assessment reform and its impact may vary depending on the context in which teachers work. Secondly, other stakeholders such as parents and administrators can be involved into the research as they can provide another perspective on the work of teachers and changes in their practices. One more recommendation for further research is to conduct a longitudinal study as it will allow to examine the changes in the teaching practices over a period of time. It may allow a

researcher to identify the alterations in teaching practices at the different stages of the professional life. Moreover, it can be especially useful at the initial stages of a reform implementation as a researcher can observe the process of changes in various aspects of the teaching practices from the point when they commenced.

The recommendations for policy makers include the necessity to address the challenges that teachers face due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment. Firstly, the resistance of teachers may be treated not as their unwillingness to use new assessment system, but as the natural process of discomfort with the changes in their teaching practices—the practices they have long been embracing. In order to address the resistance, the content of professional development courses may be revised so that teachers could understand the core purpose of new assessment. Moreover, the professional development regarding the criteria-based assessment may begin with the introductory course that contains a detailed explanation about why new assessment system is necessary, its benefits for teachers and students, what challenges teachers can face, how to overcome the challenges and examples of countries which implement the criteria-based assessment successfully. Secondly, policy makers may create mechanisms for addressing the problems of teachers with criteria-based assessment implementation timely and provide them with their solutions. In other words, if policy makers understand the challenges of teachers, they can organize corresponding seminars, workshops or courses in order to resolve the issues that teachers face. It can decrease the amount of stress teachers take in implementing the reform and can also establish direct connection between teachers and policy makers. One more suggestion is connected with the loss of teachers' authority which may be solved by means of allocating 10% of total points in every term for active participation of students in lessons. Thus, it can lead to more diligent behavior of students during the lessons and increased level of teachers' confidence and authority.

The recommendations for practitioners are related to the administration of schools as they can enhance the development of successful practices. Firstly, the administration can create regulations for more experienced teachers in order to show respect for them and for their experiences. Taking into account that more experienced teachers find lesson plans a waste of time and loss of the previous privileges, administration can come up with a simplified template for lesson planning so that more experienced teachers do not have to spend lots of time in developing detailed plans but fill in the template easily. Second recommendation concerns less experienced teachers, especially those who started to work at schools after graduation from a university. Such teachers can make a significant contribution to the teaching community of a school. Beginning teachers can share with more experienced teachers with the knowledge on the criteria-based assessment, assessment techniques and methods that they have obtained at a university, thus making them a valuable part of a school community.

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Appendices

Appendix A**Invitation Letter to Gatekeeper / Principal**

Date: _____

Mr. / Ms. _____

Principal

ABC School _____

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear Principal,

My name is Mariya Bondarenko. I am a student of Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education in Astana. I am conducting a research study on “How criteria-based assessment shapes English language teachers’ teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan”. The purpose of the qualitative study is to investigate what effect the introduction of the criteria-based assessment has had on the teaching practices of English language teachers on personal, classroom and school levels. In other words, the study aims to explore how the recently introduced criteria-based assessment influences and shapes English language teachers’ teaching practices in one of the mainstream secondary schools in Kazakhstan.

Therefore I invite your school to participate in this study that will contribute to more effective implementation of the criteria-based assessment. The research may provide a broader picture of teachers’ needs while implementing the new assessment system and

how the reform influences their practices. The research also will contribute to the various aspects of the educational field in Kazakhstan.

I assure you that the study does not have any risks regarding the well-being, health, safety, emotional and psychological state of participants. The study does not involve any evaluation of the professionalism or teaching practices and experience of teachers. It is rather aimed only at the exploration of the changes in the teaching experiences and practices. If your school and teachers express interest in participating in the study, about 5 teachers of the English language will participate in 2 semi-structured interviews of about 60 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. They will be provided with an informed Consent Form having details about the participants' rights, potential risks and benefits, measures that will be taken to minimize risks and to ensure anonymity of participants and the school, and confidentiality of data throughout the study. Their participation will be voluntary and you can withdraw your permission any time without giving any reason.

If you have any query or require more information about the study, please contact me at 87755217541 or mariya.tsybulskaya@nu.edu.kz.

After confirming your permission for the study to be conducted at your school, if you are not satisfied with how this study would be conducted, or if you would have any concerns about the research or your rights as a participant, you can contact thesis supervisor at +7

(7172) 69 49 65 or write to NUGSE Research Committee at email:

gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz.

Appendix B

Invitation Letter to Participants

Date: _____

ABC School _____

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear teachers,

My name is Mariya Bondarenko. I am a student of Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education in Astana. I am conducting a research study on “How criteria-based assessment shapes English language teachers’ teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan”. The purpose of the qualitative study is to investigate what effect the introduction of the criteria-based assessment has had on the teaching practices of English language teachers on personal, classroom and school levels. In other words, the study aims to explore how the recently introduced criteria-based assessment influences and shapes English language teachers’ teaching practices in one of the mainstream secondary schools in Kazakhstan.

Therefore, I invite you to participate in this study that will contribute to more effective implementation of the criteria-based assessment. The research may provide a broader picture of teachers’ needs while implementing the new assessment system and how the reform influences their practices. The research also will contribute to the various aspects of the educational field in Kazakhstan.

I assure you that the study does not have any risks regarding your well-being, health, safety, emotional and psychological state. The study does not involve any evaluation of your professionalism or teaching practices and experience. It is rather aimed only at the exploration of the changes in the teaching experiences and practices. If you express interest in participating in the study, you will participate in 2 semi-structured interviews of about 60 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. You will be provided with an informed Consent Form having details about the participants' rights, potential risks and benefits, measures that will be taken to minimize risks and to ensure anonymity of participants and the school, and confidentiality of data throughout the study. Your participation will be voluntary and you can withdraw your permission any time without giving any reason.

If you have any query or require more information about the study, please contact me at 87755217541 or mariya.tsybulskaya@nu.edu.kz.

After confirming your permission for the study to be conducted at your school, if you are not satisfied with how this study would be conducted, or if you would have any concerns about the research or your rights as a participant, you can contact thesis supervisor at +7

(7172) 69 49 65 or write to NUGSE Research Committee at email:

gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for teachers

Title of the Study: How criteria-based assessment shapes English language teachers' teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan.

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to voluntarily participate in a research study conducted by Mariya Bondarenko, Master student at Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education in Astana. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how the recently introduced criteria-based assessment influences and shapes English language teachers' teaching practices in one of the mainstream secondary schools in Kazakhstan.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: If you would like to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two individual interviews that will take 60 and 30 minutes respectively.

The interviews will be focused on your classroom teaching practices, collaboration practices, challenges and changes that you have made due to the introduction of the criteria-based assessment. The interviews will take place during November 2018 - February 2019. If you permit, the interview will be audio recorded.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The study does not have any risks regarding the well-being, health, safety, emotional and psychological state of participants. The study does not involve evaluation of the professionalism or teaching practices and experience of teachers. It is rather aimed only at the exploration of the changes in the teaching experiences and practices. The risks of the study may concern the questions about difficulties and challenges in teaching practices that teachers might be facing due to the implementation of the criteria-based assessment as such questions can make teachers feel uncomfortable about their teaching practices. I assure you that the data obtained through the interviews will not be used for evaluating your work and will not be shared with the school

administration, principal or other third persons. Moreover, you have the right and freedom to not to answer a particular question, to stop the interview or to withdraw from the research at any time without any penalties. Your and the school names will also be protected by means of assigning pseudonyms and following the NUGSE Ethical Guidelines.

The main benefit is the possibility to reflect on your practices, share your points of view and experience and identify the possible room for improvement. Such reflection may positively affect the teaching process and students' academic performance. The data and findings of the research will contribute to more effective implementation of the criteria-based assessment at both school and country levels.

COMPENSATION. There is no payment and other direct benefits given to those participating in the study. A copy of the research results will be available at the conclusion of the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY. Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent possible. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the information received from you highly confidential. While transcribing the collected data, pseudonyms will be assigned to individuals and organization in order to ensure the anonymity of the research participants. The information that may identify the individual participants will be omitted, making them unidentifiable. Moreover, such collected data as recordings of interviews will be stored on the researcher's personal computer and protected by the password, and the interview notes will be locked in the room that only the researcher can access. The gathered data will not be shared with third persons.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and would like to participate in this study, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the choice 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 can also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer or stop the interview anytime and no negative consequences will result.

POINTS OF CONTACT. If you have any questions regarding this project, you can contact me (the researcher) at +77755217541. 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 thesis supervisor at +7 (7172) 69 49 65 or write to NUGSE Research Committee at email: gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT. Please check all that apply and sign this consent form if you agree to voluntarily participate in this study.

I, _____, have carefully read the information provided. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I can at any time withdraw my consent, and this will not have any negative consequences for me personally and for my school. I understand that the information collected during this study will be treated confidentially. Therefore:

- I agree to participate in this study at my own free will
- I give permission for the interview data to be included in the research report, publications, and presentations resulting from this study but without using my personal and my school's actual name.

Consent for Audio-recording of Interview:

- I give permission for my interview to be audio-recorded

[] I do not give permission for my interview to be recorded

Research Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D

Interview guide (Sample of interview questions)

Project title: How criteria-based assessment shapes English language teachers' teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan.

The interview guide contains sample questions that will be asked during the semi-structured interviews; other questions will be asked according to answers given by participants. The provided sample questions are aimed at the understanding of the changes in different aspects of teaching practices.

Sample questions:

- **Personal Vision-Building**

1. How would you describe your role as a teacher in teaching and learning?
2. What do you really like about teaching?
3. What is it that you do not like about teaching? Why?
4. What has been your preferred method of teaching? Why?

- **Perceptions about Criterion-based Assessment**

1. How important do you think is assessment in the teaching and learning process?
2. What role does assessment play in influencing teacher's teaching and student learning?
3. How do you see the criterion-based assessment?
4. what is good about this assessment system?
5. what are the challenges about implementing this assessment?

- **Influence on teaching Practices**

1. How has the criteria-based assessment influenced your teaching practices?

2. What changes did you have to make in your teaching methods to implement this assessment system in your class?
3. What personal teacher's characteristics did you have to change to implement the criteria-based assessment system?
5. What changes did you have to make in your lesson planning and lesson preparation procedures when you started to implement the criteria-based assessment?

- **Inquiry**

1. Do you reflect on your teaching practices in order to make the changes and improvements to implement the criteria-based assessment more effectively?

- **Mastery**

1. Did you attend any professional development courses on the criteria-based assessment before you started to implement it? Do you find them useful? Why?
2. With the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, do you try to apply new methods/tools/techniques in the teaching process?

- **Collaboration**

1. How often do you have the opportunity to exchange your experience about teaching with other colleagues?
2. Do you participate the workshops and seminars voluntary? Describe the seminars and workshops on the experience exchange.
3. In your opinion, is it necessary to exchange the ideas on innovative methods and techniques of planning and teaching? Why?

- **Challenges**

1. What are the critical challenges in implementing criterion-based assessment?
2. Why these challenges?
3. How do you address these challenges?

4. What support do you receive from school leadership and department head for implementing this assessment?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol Transcript

Research title: How criteria-based assessment shapes English language teachers' teaching practices: a case of one mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan.

Date: December 15, 2018

Time: 10.00

Interviewee: Participant 2

Position: the English language teacher

Interviewer: Good morning. My name is Mariya. What is your name?

Interviewee: Good morning. My name is.

Interviewer: This interview is directed at the understanding of your perception of the criteria-based assessment, its implementation and influence on your teaching practices. Could you, please, first of all tell me, what university you graduated from.

Interviewee: I graduated from the Kostanay State Pedagogical University, my major is "the teacher of English".

Interviewer: Tell me, please, what is your age and what is your teaching experience?

Interviewee: I am 25 years old. I have been teaching for 3 years and 4 months now.

Interviewer: What is your teaching experience with the traditional assessment system and the criteria-based assessment system?

Interviewee: I was teaching using the traditional assessment system the very first year of teaching, after graduation. Then, for 2 years and 4 months I have already been teaching with the criteria-based assessment. So, the second year of my teaching experience, the criteria-based assessment was introduced in grade 1 and i started implementing it.

Interviewer: What grades are you teaching now?

Interviewee: Well..... Currently, I am teaching grades 3, 6 and 7.

Interviewer: How would you describe your role as a teacher in the teaching and learning process?

Interviewee: Do you mean the period when i started implementing the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewer: I mean in general, regardless of the assessment system, what is your role as a teacher, in your opinion?

Interviewee: Well... my role... well... Now, with the implementation of the updated content of education, we, teachers, do not stand in front of the students the whole lesson and explain the topic. Now students try to obtain knowledge by themselves the majority of

time and they practice at home what they have learnt at school. So, it is very different from what was happening before the introduction of the updated content of education, because students were getting all the knowledge from teachers. Teachers were explaining everything and directing the process of students' learning. Now students can seek for answers by themselves.

Interviewer: So, briefly saying, what was the role of a teacher before and what is it now?

Interviewee: Hm.... in the past teachers were hmmm how to say it.... Teachers were transferring knowledge, were the center of a lesson. Now teachers conduct a lesson, but in a different way, because the focus is not only on a teacher, it has been shifted to students. Students now play a crucial role in getting knowledge. So, before teachers were mostly 'knowledge -givers', but now teachers' main role is to support, help and make students more active, make them obtain knowledge by themselves from different sources like Internet and guide students.

Interviewer: What do you like about teaching? I mean not about some particular assessment system or content of education. What do you like about teaching in general?

Interviewee: I like that students obtain knowledge after my lessons and that they can get something useful for them. I can see that students become more interested in the subject, in the English language.

Interviewer: What you don't like about teaching?

Interviewee: I do not like that the status of teachers is on a very low level now and students can do anything they want, because a teacher is not the authority for them. I remember the times when i was a school student. It was totally different. A teacher's word was the law for us, we did everything that teachers told us and didn't have the right to dispute or try to disprove the words of teachers. Now students, I mean not about English, I mean in general, feel more freedom and some of them do not respect opinions and instructions of teachers. I am saying this from the perspective of the grade 7's curator, because this is really difficult to prove students that they should be obedient and follow teachers' instructions. Students became more impudent. So, i think the status of teachers weakens.

Interviewer: So, regarding the status of teachers, do you think that the criteria-based assessment, being a part of the updated content of education, has an influence on the status of teachers. How does it affect the status?

Interviewee: Hm.... I can see the changes in students, their behavior and attitude towards education. But I don't see that the new system can influence somehow the status of teacher. As to me, this system doesn't influence me as a teacher and i don't feel any changes in students' perception of a teacher. So, I don't see some significant changes.

Interviewer: So, am i right that the new system doesn't affect in any way your status as a teacher among students?

Interviewee: Yes, you are right. The new system is directed at the changes in students' learning rather than on teachers' teaching

Interviewer: Do you personally find it difficult to change your teaching and adapt it to the needs of the new assessment system?

Interviewee: You see, if I had the experience of 20 years, it would be difficult for me to "switch". I would need to start from scratch, study everything. I would have some

particular knowledge of teaching methods and techniques and it would be really difficult for me to adapt and change. But my experience is relatively little: i had only one year of teaching using the traditional system, so i didn't experience some huge changes in my practice. The only major change was that marks for every lesson was cancelled. I was not stressed or under pressure because of the transition, because we were taught how to teach using modern techniques and methods, we had seminars and workshops.

Interviewer: So, if I got it right, you consider little experience as a plus for the reform?

Interviewee: Yes, i can see that it is easier for me to start implementing new assessment system than to teachers with 10 or 20 years of teaching experience. It is mostly connected with the absence of marks and appearance of criteria, descriptors, new books, new content in the books. No doubts that they feel more stressed about new system and they find it difficult to adapt to it. As to the teachers with experience less than 5 or 10 years, when we started to work at school, we started teaching using new books, new programme. Of course, we were learning and still learning how to teach using the criteria-based assessment system, but at least we don't feel lost in the "flow" of new information. I think it is more difficult for more experienced teachers to implement new system, because they have to start their teaching from the very beginning. They already have their own vision of teaching, methods, but less experienced teachers are more flexible i think.

Interviewer: Talking about methods of teaching, what was your most preferable method during the traditional system of assessment?

Interviewee: I like the method of using visuals like photos, videos, presentations. You can see that now there is an 'ActivBoard' in every classroom, so we can show videos, play audios. So, I prefer showing rather than just trying to explain with words. I also find efficient the method of independent searching of information and learning something new from different sources. I think this method develops the interest in the subject and in learning in general.

Interviewer: Did you start using these methods when the criteria-based assessment was introduced?

Interviewee: I cannot say that the choice of methods depends on the assessment system. I always use these methods in my practice, because i find them the most efficient for my students.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you. Could you, please, tell to what extent is the assessment system (I don't mean the particular assessment system, I mean in general) important in the process of teaching and learning?

Interviewee: I think it is extremely important, especially for students, because due to the assessment students can have motivation about learning. I mean everyday learning, because in the times of the traditional assessment system, students had marks almost for every lesson, so they had the motivation, I mean mostly extrinsic motivation, to study. Now, students' opinions about the absence of marks have differed. Students who usually do not complete their homework and are not prepared for lessons really like that they don't have marks. Their behavior didn't change: they didn't get ready for lessons before and they still do not prepare for lessons. But students who used to try to achieve mark '5' for every lesson feel upset they they don't get marks now. It is strange, but they used to like coming back home and showing their parents how many 5's they have got for lessons. It is

now difficult for both parents and students not to have marks, because parents cannot control and cannot see the progress of children. Especially children who have just started studying within the new assessment system, who are in their first year of the criteria-based assessment, they really struggle and they feel really stressed because of it. I think when they get used to it, they will like it. It is just.... how to say... they feel nervous because students have only three exams for the term: assessment of every unit and final assessment and these exams became very high-stakes for students. They feel stressed because of this. Especially this is not fair towards students who were working hard the whole term and couldn't get high results at the summative assessment because of..... a headache, for example; while some other students didn't pay so much attention to the lessons and could cheat from somebody and get good results. They know that they cannot rewrite these tests and they can feel extremely stressed because of them.

Interviewer: How has the criteria-based assessment influenced your teaching?

Interviewee: Now I started to implement the formative assessment. I mean, even the the cards with tasks that we usually use at lessons, now I use them differently and assess students differently. There are descriptors and criteria made up for students. So, the tasks that I use for students are more directed to students' learning. Students can complete the tasks according to the descriptors.

Interviewer: How has the criteria-based assessment influenced your professional and personal qualities?

Interviewee: Well... Of course, it has influenced, because this system is brand new for us, we had to study it first... we are still learning. We had to become open to something new, be flexible and always ready to new knowledge. It is also important for a teacher to have the empathy towards not only students, but their parents too. We should have the understanding of their feelings and struggles that they experience due to the introduction of the new assessment system, because this is the most stressful part of the reform for them. We are paying a lot of attention to parents, we try to teach them about new system, how to understand their children's progress, how to work with the electronic registrar "Kundelik" and other aspects of the criteria-based assessment.

Interviewer: What is your understanding and vision of the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: My first association with the criteria-based assessment is feedback, "good", "excellent", because now feedback is the core of the education system. The second association is "praising", because we cannot give students marks like we did before, that is why we use some praising to increase students' motivation and show them what they are good at and what they should work on. Of course, we can use now "Kundelik" and write the feedback in there, but especially first time we usually used words to praise students. With the traditional assessment system, we just provided students with a mark, for example, "5, take your sit". Now we need to be more informative and develop our analytical skills, because we should provide students with the sufficient feedback to make students understand what they did right and what they did wrong. We also have to provide students with such feedback, so that students could understand what they should work on to achieve higher results.

Interviewer: Do students have their personal understanding that they should work on something, be prepared every lesson? Do they have their personal responsibility about own learning?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say so, not so much. More responsible students, who previously used to have "5"s and "4"s at lessons, understand the importance of their learning. When they are absent at lessons, they come to me and ask to explain the topic, provide them with the information that they have missed, spend extra time to catch up with the program. But those students, who didn't use to be care about lessons and their marks (in times of the traditional system implementation), they are even more relaxed now, because they know that if they are not ready, they will not have the bad mark anyway.

Interviewer: What are the criteria-based assessment's strong sides?

Interviewee: Hmmmm..... I even don't know.... I need to think..... Hmmmm...I think, that the strong side of new assessment system is that we can see the final results of what students have learned for every unit and term. I think that this aspect of teaching and learning process has improved, because now both teachers and students can see the big picture of their knowledge expansion and development. Hm.... what else we can say is strong about this system.... That every lesson we can.... You see.... Students became more eager to come to school, because they don't have the pressure of everyday formal assessment and even if they are not ready due to some reasons, they will not get a bad mark.

Interviewer: so, you mean that students don't have a fear of lessons and school?

Interviewee: Yes, because it is not like with the traditional system. In past times, when students came home, mother always told "show me the register with your marks for today's lessons" and students felt stress, because they could have some bad marks. Moreover, they were just marks with no comment. Parents could know whether their child worked well or not, but they didn't know in particular WHAT was good or bad or whether a child got bad mark for behavior. Now, when we started to use the criteria-based assessment, we are writing the comment of what exactly students are successful about and what they should work on. That is why, in my opinion, students now are more willing to go to school and participate a t lesson, they are less afraid to be mistaken.

Interviewer: What challenges do you personally face due to the criteria-based assessment implementation?

Interviewee: First time, it was difficult for me to make the formative assessment every lesson. It was pretty challenging to meet all the requirements of new system such as making up the criteria and descriptors for every task. I am still learning and discovering something new about the assessment. There are no problems about summative assessment, but everyday formative assessment is still a challenge. It is a huge responsibility for me to provide students with the formative assessment in such a way so it will motivate them and improve their learning.

Interviewer: How has the criteria-based assessment influenced your teaching? What has been changed in your teaching practice?

Interviewee: Hm..... for example, the ways in which i try to assess students have been changed. Now I try to use not only written or verbal form of assessment, I also try to use smiles, pictures, some visual formative assessment and more interesting ways of assessment. But i cannot say that change in my assessment methods was a real struggle for me. Of course, I try to adapt formative assessment and feedback to the students, and, I think, the criteria-based assessment played a huge role in it, because now without correct

descriptors, formative assessment and feedback we cannot expand students' knowledge and improve their skills.

Interviewer: So, as far as I understood, you didn't have some professional problems with the implementation of new assessment system regarding methods. Did you have to make any changes regarding your personal characteristics or qualities, because of the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: Personal characteristics.... I think I had to become more concentrated, because now, as I have already mentioned, we have to study more new information about new books, new assessment, how to make up descriptors and criteria correctly, how to provide students with the efficient feedback, how to keep students motivated and other different aspects. It was also difficult to realize that I have to study again: some things I have to learn from basics, other things I need to improve. So, it is morally difficult to study and work at the same time, but what makes it even more difficult is the importance of how well I understand new assessment system. My understanding of new system is crucial in students learning and directly influences their achievement. That is why I have to be stress-resistant and self-disciplined. Time management should also be improved, because the pace and content of work has changed. Well..... I think that teachers should become lifelong learners, because we need to catch up with the modern education trends and adapt to changes quicker.

Interviewer: Does the criteria-based system motivate you to develop as a person and improve your teaching skills?

Interviewee: I cannot say that it motivates me very much, but I can already see my personal and professional growth.

Interviewer: In what particular aspects can you see your growth?

Interviewee: I mean.... I can see changes in the way I learn. I can handle loads of information easier, analytical skills improved, choosing the most relevant and appropriate information for lessons.

Interviewer: Regarding the preparation for lessons, what changes have you made in your lesson planning?

Interviewee: I can say that changes are huge, because lessons' plans have been totally changed. The sample of lesson plans has changed, thus, it makes us think through the lesson in more details. If before we had to include only objectives of the lesson and the used materials, now the lesson plan is totally different, it is directed not at lesson, it is directed at students.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Interviewee: I mean that now the stages of the lesson planning make teachers think about the expected outcomes of the lesson. Now, while planning, teachers have to think about what students should be able to know and do at the end of the lesson. It can significantly improve the quality of education, if a lesson is well-planned. One more aspect that I find particularly useful in my teaching is that now all the teachers have the set of objectives that their students should achieve, so the teaching became more organised and directed. Before, with the traditional assessment system, every teacher made up objectives for the lesson themselves. Now, the standardized set of objectives directs the process of teaching and guides planning.

Interviewer: Do you do the reflection on your teaching practice in order to improve your teaching process?

Interviewee: I do the reflection on my teaching before i begin planning the next lesson. I try to keep the best practices from previous lesson and adapt lessons to students' interests and needs. For example, some students are not motivated to study English or they feel bored, so I try to find some new interesting ways and use them.

Interviewer: Do you plan lessons independently or in collaboration with colleagues?

Interviewee: Well... More frequently, I plan lessons independently, but sometimes I can address to more experienced teachers who can help me with planning.

Interviewer: Do you have a mentor?

Interviewee: Now I don't have a mentor, because mentors are assigned to teachers with the experience of no more than three years, but I work more than 3 years, so I don't have a mentor anymore.

Interviewer: How would you comment on the work of a mentor? Do you find it effective or not?

Interviewee: The role of a mentor is very crucial for teachers who started their first year as a teacher. A mentor helped me with planning, with methods to use at lessons. I was also attending mentor's lessons to adopt her best teaching practices and then a mentor visited my lessons, commented it and gave me recommendations. Yes, with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, we all are in the same conditions, experience of teaching with traditional system is not so significant as it was before. Still, we can and we try to learn some secrets of more experienced teachers' teaching and their methods. We still have a lot of things to learn from our more experienced colleagues.

Interviewer: What about the cooperation and collaboration among English language teachers in terms of the criteria-based assessment implementation? How would you describe it?

Interviewee: With the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, the cooperation became crucial for the efficient work of teachers, because, even though we cannot plan lessons together, we plan summative assessment (SA) at the end of every unit and term. We gather, discuss what we have studied with students and plan SA together. With the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, we started to have more discussions, exchange our ideas and try to overcome challenges collaboratively. New assessment system has also become beneficial in terms of significance of new-coming teachers, who have just graduated from a university, for colleagues. I mean, when teachers study at universities for their bachelor degree, they study how to teach according to the latest trends of education system and when they come to schools to work, they are full of new creative ideas and new methods. In the times of the traditional assessment system, they could barely share their creative ideas with more experienced teachers and were not taken seriously. Now, with the introduction of the criteria-based assessment, their knowledge is extremely important, because they can share with other teachers with what they have learnt at universities, for example, some new techniques or ways to teach grammar, vocabulary, etc and contribute to the improvement of the teaching process.

Interviewer: So...

Interviewee: I mean that nowadays more experienced teachers can also learn something from fresh teachers.

Interviewer: What you are saying sound really so amazing. The picture of the ideal collaboration.

Interviewee: Yes. This is really happening among our colleagues. We gather, discuss and cooperate with each other.

Interviewer: So, do you mean that the introduction of the criteria-based assessment has united teachers of your department?

Interviewee: Yes, it definitely has.

Interviewer: Were some workshops, seminars or other courses conducted before the criteria-based assessment was introduced?

Interviewee: Yes, I attended the courses of the updated content of education in "Orleu". It was the course of one-month long, where we have been taught how to implement the updated content of education including the criteria-based assessment.

Interviewer: Was it the preparation for teaching using the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: It was in general about the updated content of education. We were mostly working in groups, discussing planning, writing plans and so on.

Interviewer: Was the attention paid to particularly criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: Yes, of course, the criteria-based assessment was paid attention: we were making up descriptors and so on. But I attended these courses 3 years ago, before I had some practice of teaching with the criteria-based assessment.

Interviewer: Do you have enough courses/seminars/workshops of professional development regarding the criteria-based assessment.

Interviewee: No, not enough. It is.... It's like.... I mean every year we obtain new knowledge while teaching, new practices, new questions appear about how to do planning, assessment and other aspects of teaching and learning. I think many teachers would love to share their knowledge. I would like to have answers to my questions. That is why we need more seminars and other events for experience exchange. I think the best option would be to create the seminar where every teacher can come and share their opinions, problems, challenges or some hints on how to implement the criteria-based assessment. I think it would be so great to conduct such events.

Interviewer: So, you think that now there are not enough experience exchange among teachers.?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Who would you like to exchange the experience with? Teachers of your school or other schools, maybe some support of special PD centers, etc?

Interviewee: You know, we already exchange experience with the colleagues from my school on a daily basis, we can discuss something, help each other when we have some challenges, etc. I would like to have more opportunities of experience exchange with colleagues from other schools. I mean in particular obtain some new knowledge about

teaching. It can be done among the teachers of our city's schools, because we don't see each other as often as we would love to.

Interviewer: Do you think that the English language teachers of your school have the same vision of how to implement the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: Hmmmm... I think... I cannot say that we have SAME vision for 100%, but we agree on the major points about the criteria-based assessment.

Interviewer: So, you mean that you don't have some huge discrepancies in teachers' vision of the criteria-based assessment implementation?

Interviewee: Yes, maybe some minor details or not so crucial moments. At the moment, I cannot remember any problems regarding the vision of how the criteria-based assessment should be implemented.

Interviewer: What major challenges can you name about the criteria-based assessment implementation?

Interviewee: Honestly, I cannot remember any moments or aspects of the criteria-based assessment that would be a huge problem for me. The only thing that I'm struggling with is the everyday formative assessment of every student. Other aspects seem pretty clear.

Interviewer: What is the role of your school's administration in terms of the criteria-based assessment? Do they provide you with help and support?

Interviewee: Well... There is a teacher in our schools who was assigned to be the curator on the updated content of education. She gathers teachers from time to time to discuss some aspects of the updated content of education. For example, last time we discussed the criteria-based assessment: how to create correctly descriptors, criteria, summative assessment, etc. She is also a deputy in our school and her additional responsibility is to help teachers with the new system's implementation.

Interviewer: What are the other kinds of support do you get from the school's administration?

Interviewee: They also send teachers to professional development courses. There are many teachers in our school and they try to make teachers one by one attend these courses. There many different courses that are suggested to us.

Interviewer: After teachers complete courses, do they share their experience with the colleagues at school?

Interviewee: Yes. For example, last time, one teacher lately attended the courses where they were introduced new book, its content, etc. So, when she came back, she shared what she has learnt with us.

Interviewer: Talking about the exchange of information and experience, does it happen in a more formal or informal way? Could you describe how it is organised.

Interviewee: We do it in an informal way. Mostly, it happens when we have some free time between the lessons, we gather, quickly discuss it and that's all.

Interviewer: What other kind of support would you like to have from stakeholders?

Interviewee: I think, we have enough support in terms of different seminars, courses and so on. I don't even know what else can be done to help teachers to implement the criteria-based assessment...

Interviewer: How has the teaching and learning environment changed after the introduction of the criteria-based assessment?

Interviewee: I cannot see some sharp changes in my teaching. The changes that I'm trying to make are mostly connected with making students motivated to study the subject. Because they lost some control and motivation about learning due to the absence of marks.

Interviewer: What do you think it, the absence of some sharp changes, is connected with?

Interviewee: I consider that it is connected with my teaching experience. I didn't spend so many years of teaching using the traditional system. I adapted to new system very quickly.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your answers.