

**Criteria-Based Assessment in Kazakhstani Mainstream
Schools: Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences**

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October 2019

Dear Zhuldyz Turganalina

This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: Criteria-based assessment in Kazakhstani mainstream schools: Teachers' perspectives and experiences has been approved.

The changes recommended by the reviewer have been addressed and the proposed study now complies with all of the requirements of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely

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Abstract

Criteria-Based Assessment in Kazakhstani Mainstream Schools: Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences

The focus of this research was on a recent large-scale reform in Kazakhstani secondary education in particular on teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding criteria-based assessment (CBA). Although several studies have been conducted concerning this topic, for most Kazakhstani stakeholders, criteria-based assessment is rather novel and its implementation in mainstream schools has not been sufficiently explored.

The qualitative research with the phenomenological design was carried out to gain insights into the CBA implementation process through teachers' perspectives and experiences, as key players of the reform implementation. The question stated for this research was: What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives on and experiences with criteria-based assessment? Nine teachers from several mainstream schools in central Kazakhstan participated in the interviews,

In accordance with the conceptual framework, changes in assessment system and professional development programs led teachers through the new experiences which changed their perspectives on many aspects of teaching. Most of the current results support the findings of previous studies. However, there are some unexpected findings which could contribute to new knowledge in the field of CBA implementation: 1) teachers perceived summative assessment as more significant than formative assessment; 2) teachers tried to influence students' final grades according to their understanding of fairness in assessment; 3) teachers perceived that one of the benefits of the new assessment system is equity as it allows all the learners (extroverts and introverts) to succeed academically; and 4) teachers perceived that CBA positively affected the teacher-student relationship.

This research can be beneficial to all stakeholders: policymakers, school administrations, teachers, parents, and learners since it can contribute to a better understanding of the reform implementation with its challenges and successes. In addition, it could be helpful to the global community as well since the research could give other countries the ability to avoid similar problems in their own reform efforts.

Keywords: criteria-based assessment, teachers' perspectives and experiences, mainstream school

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандық жалпы білім беретін мектептерде критериалды бағалау:

Мұғалімдердің көзқарасы мен тәжірибесі

Бұл зерттеу жұмысы қазақстандық орта білім берудегі жуырдағы ауқымды реформаларға, атап айтқанда критериалды бағалаудағы (КБ) мұғалімдердің көзқарасы мен тәжірибесіне арналған. Осы тақырып бойынша бірнеше зерттеулер жүргізілсе де, көптеген қазақстандық мүдделі қатысушылар үшін бағалау жаңа болып табылады және оны жалпы білім беретін мектептерде енгізу жеткіліксіз зерттелмеген.

Феноменологиялық дизайнмен сапалы зерттеу КБ енгізу процесі туралы түсінік алу үшін, реформаның негізгі ойыншылары ретінде мұғалімдердің көзқарасы мен тәжірибесі арқылы жүргізілді. Осыған байланысты зерттеу сұрақ қойылды: Критериалды бағалауға қатысты жалпы білім беретін орта мектеп мұғалімдерінің көзқарасы мен тәжірибесі қандай? Сұхбатқа Орталық Қазақстанның бірнеше жалпы білім беретін орта мектептерінен тоғыз мұғалім қатысты.

Тұжырымдамалық шеңбер аясында, бағалау жүйесіндегі және кәсіби даму бағдарламасындағы өзгерістер мұғалімдерді оқытудың көптеген аспектілеріне көзқарасын өзгерткен жаңа тәжірибеге алып келді. Ағымдағы нәтижелердің көпшілігі алдыңғы зерттеулердің қорытындыларын растайды. Алайда, КБ енгізу саласында жаңа білімге өз үлесін қоса алатын кейбір күтпеген қорытындылар бар: 1) мұғалімдер жиынтық бағалауды формативті бағалаумен салыстырғанда аса маңызды деп қабылдады; 2) мұғалімдер бағалаудың әділдігін түсінуіне сәйкес оқушылардың қорытынды бағалауына ықпал етуге тырысты; 3) мұғалімдер бағалаудың жаңа жүйесінің артықшылықтарының бірі – тең құқықтылықты атап өтті, өйткені ол барлық оқушыларға (экстраверт пен интроверттерге) оқуда табысқа жетуге

мүмкіндік береді; 4) мұғалімдер критериалды бағалаудың мұғалім мен оқушының қарым-қатынасына оң әсер еткенін атап өтті.

Бұл зерттеу барлық мүдделі тараптар үшін пайдалы болуы мүмкін: директивалық органдар, мектеп әкімшіліктері, мұғалімдер, ата-аналар мен оқушылар, өйткені ол реформа енгізу процесін, оның проблемалары мен табыстарымен жақсы түсінуге ықпал ете алады. Сонымен қатар, бұл әлемдік қауымдастыққа да пайдалы болуы мүмкін, себебі зерттеу басқа елдерге білім беруді реформалау әрекеттерінде ұқсас проблемаларды болдырмауға мүмкіндік береді.

Тірек сөздер: критериалды бағалау, мұғалімдердің көзқарасы мен тәжірибесі, орта мектеп

Абстракт

Критериальное Оценивание в Казахстанских Общеобразовательных Школах: Видение и Опыт Учителей

Данная исследовательская работа посвящена недавней масштабной реформе в казахстанском среднем образовании, а именно видению и опыту учителей в критериальном оценивании (КО). Хотя по этой теме было проведено несколько исследований, для большинства казахстанских заинтересованных участников оценивание является довольно новым и его внедрение в общеобразовательных школах недостаточно изучено.

Качественное исследование с феноменологическим дизайном было проведено для того, чтобы получить представление о процессе внедрения КО, через видение и опыт учителей, как ключевых игроков реализации реформы. В связи с этим, исследованием был задан вопрос: Каково видение и опыт учителей общеобразовательных средних школ в отношении критериального оценивания? В интервью приняли участие девять учителей из нескольких общеобразовательных средних школ Центрального Казахстана.

В соответствии с концептуальными рамками, изменения в системе оценивания и программы профессионального развития привели учителей к новому опыту, который изменил их взгляды на многие аспекты преподавания. Большинство текущих результатов подтверждают выводы предыдущих исследований. Однако есть некоторые неожиданные выводы, которые могут внести свой вклад в новые знания в области внедрения КО: 1) учителя воспринимали суммативное оценивание как более важное в сравнении с формативным оцениванием; 2) учителя пытались влиять на итоговые оценки учащихся в соответствии с их пониманием справедливости в оценивании; 3) учителя отметили одним из преимуществ новой

системы оценивания равноправие, поскольку оно позволяет всем учащимся (экстравертам и интровертам) преуспевать в учебе; 4) учителя отметили положительное влияние критериального оценивания на отношения учителя и ученика.

Это исследование может быть полезным для всех заинтересованных сторон: директивных органов, школьных администраций, учителей, родителей и учащихся, поскольку оно может способствовать лучшему пониманию процесса внедрения реформы с ее проблемами и успехами. Кроме того, это может быть полезно и мировому сообществу, поскольку исследование может дать другим странам возможность избежать аналогичных проблем в их попытках реформировать образование.

Ключевые слова: критериальное оценивание, видение и опыт учителей, средняя школа

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most important recent events in Kazakhstani education was the introduction of the updated curriculum for secondary education. In 2016, a renewed curriculum was adopted in all Kazakhstani mainstream schools. This was a large-scale reform as modifications addressed curriculum, assessment, and instruction. The reform had five phases of introduction, gradually involving all grades, and by 2020-2021 this process is coming to an end. This means that almost all schoolteachers have now practiced criteria-based assessment (CBA) and can share their experience from the four years of CBA implementation. Thus, the current research seeks to reveal mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards assessment changes and aims to gain insights into teachers' experiences with CBA. To date, only a limited number of studies have been conducted on CBA implementation in the Kazakhstani context, which makes this study significant and timely. The implications of this research can be beneficial to all stakeholders as they shed light on teachers' experiences as direct reform implementers contributing to a better understanding of the CBA implementation processes and issues. Since the study conclusions are based on realities and challenges of the reform in action, the study can be also helpful for future reform efforts both in Kazakhstan and abroad.

The chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of the central phenomena. At the end of the chapter, the outline of the research is provided.

1.1 Background of the study

At present, assessment is considered one of the key aspects in learning, which aims at evaluating learners' understanding of the material and ability to utilize the knowledge (Biggs, 2003; Brown, 2005; Green, 2002; Hornby, 2003). Thus, if used properly, evaluation can affect the process of learning in a positive way and can benefit students'

outcomes (Crooks, 1988; Xavier & Mehta, 2006). Ní Chróinín and Cosgrave (2013) assert that assessment is important, not only for learners but also for teachers, since it helps them to follow students' learning progress, show timely support if necessary, insert actual changes or additions into the lesson plan, and involve students and their parents in the learning process.

Currently, the approach to the evaluation of learning processes has undergone a radical transformation at all levels from local to national (Crooks, 1988). In the past, the priority focus of teaching has been mostly on reproductive knowledge which means memorizing facts (Shamatov, 2012); however, with sustainable technological development, the process of rote learning has become much less useful. Therefore, at present there is a shift in educational priorities towards functional literacy, critical thinking, and creativity which has made changes in educational assessment inevitable. Also, the processes of globalization and digitalization all over the world have set new demands for education and a call for updating pedagogical approaches (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014).

Kazakhstan, being a young independent country with a need to determine its own way of educational development in a period of drastic changes in the economy, policy, and social area, was also influenced by the previously mentioned tendencies (Yakavets, 2014). Additionally, the 5-point grading system used in classroom assessment until 2016 conformed to the purposes of the Soviet period when the main requirement for education was to prepare specialists for definite spheres (Webber, 2000). However, at present when independent Kazakhstan intends to enter the world arena as a competitive country, the education goals have undergone changes as well (Shamshidinova, Ayubayeva & Bridges, 2014). Thus, the traditional assessment system could not satisfy such new goals of education as developing functional literacy, critical thinking, and creativity. Also, according to some research literature (Shamatov, 2012; Shamshidinova et al., 2014;

Winter, Rimini, Soltanbekova, & Tynybayeva, 2014) the five-point grading system was considered as lacking objectivity. For instance, Shamatov (2012), who studied pedagogical approaches used by teachers in Kyrgyzstani schools, claimed that most teachers assessed their students depending on their own criteria, which they sometimes could not explain. This could lead to a misunderstanding between teachers, students, and their parents. Moreover, the system was not actually 5-point since grading as one mark was never used. In an interview study carried out by Winter, et al (2014), one of the principals from a rural secondary school agreed that four grades were not enough to show the real performance of the learning process. For example, teachers were confused with the issue of how to evaluate essays; as a result, they had to award two separate marks, one for the content and one for grammar. Another issue was how to grade students when the knowledge was between the grading points, since there were no such marks as 4.5 or 3.5. This can be exemplified by such a situation where 4 is not enough, yet 5 is too much for defining the level of student's knowledge (Winter et al., 2014, p.136). As a result, teachers had to take responsibility and decide on their own how to grade such students, which led to a degree of subjectivity in the assessment.

In 2008, policymakers introduced a project for educating gifted children, which led to establishing Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) in 2009 (Shamshidinova et al., 2014). The top priority of these institutions was to facilitate the introduction of modern management models in the educational area and the approbation of innovative educational programs with further transferring this practice to mainstream schools (Yakavets, 2014). For about 5 years, there was a period in which the new updated curriculum of Kazakhstan was used in all Nazarbayev Intellectual schools (Yakavets, 2014).

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) started new educational reforms throughout the country which included system modifications in content,

instruction, and assessment (Informational and Analytical Center (IAC), 2017). According to this reform, criteria-based assessment (CBA) substituted for the five-point grading system. Having started alterations in secondary education with a purpose to successfully implement these modifications in mainstream schools, the Kazakhstan government initiated the preparation of mainstream schoolteachers for incorporating these changes. Earlier, in May 2011, policymakers approved new methods of professional development programs (PDP) for Kazakhstani teachers; in this regard, the Center of Excellence (CoE) was established to introduce teachers to new approaches in education (McLaughlin et al., 2016). The priorities of these programs were not only to develop knowledge and skills but also to alter teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes (Turner et al., 2014).

Although, four years have passed since the first introduction of the updated curriculum to mainstream schools, and despite different professional development programs, its implementation in Kazakhstan mainstream schools still raises stakeholders' concerns. The main reasons for this are lack of CBA understanding; loss of students' motivation to study; increased workloads; and inapplicability to mainstream schools since they service "non-gifted" students (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019; Suyundikova, 2019). In this regard, some teachers still do not believe in CBA potential for success (Bondarenko, 2019). However, professional development and everyday practices influence teachers continuously. Taking this into consideration, a new study is needed to address current challenges and issues with CBA implementation.

1.2 Problem statement

CBA is a rather recent phenomenon in Kazakhstani education; therefore, there are not enough studies that have explored teachers' experiences with implementing CBA in the Kazakhstani context. This, as a result, produces a rather serious gap in this field. Moreover, there are still disputes on CBA applicability to mainstream schools, which could be

interpreted as a sign that further research in this field is necessary and might provide insight into the issues of CBA implementation in mainstream schools.

Furthermore, reform implementation is an ongoing process that is influenced by different factors such as implementers' willingness, knowledge, and skills (Fullan, 2006), as well as development programs and daily classroom practices (Guskey, 2002; Richardson, 1997; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Investigating teachers' experience was decided to be beneficial, since this group is inside the process of CBA implementation and can immediately observe the consequences and reveal vital issues that could have appeared. Also, exploring teachers' experiences and perspectives towards CBA on different stages is important for gaining a better understanding of reform implementation periods. Teachers are currently experiencing the final phase of CBA introduction to mainstream schools, which allows them to look at their experiences in retrospect and compare them with their current perspectives and practices. In this regard, only a few studies have presented findings concerning the initial and middle phases of CBA implementation stages (e.g., Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019). Moreover, most of them are focused on the entire updated curriculum and only mention the new assessment as an integral part (e.g., Gimranova, 2018; Suyundikova, 2019). All of them indicated various challenges and issues with CBA.

Therefore, to identify the outcomes of development programs in terms of their intended objectives and investigate the realities of CBA implementation processes in the context of mainstream schools' on the final phase of reform adoption, there is a need to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of Kazakhstani mainstream schoolteachers in relation to CBA in order to gain a better picture of the

reform implementation processes. This study, therefore, focuses on teachers' understanding of the rationale for assessment changes and new evaluation system features and tools, as well as indicates teachers' challenges during CBA implementation and changes in their classroom practices.

1.4 Research question

In order to address this purpose, the following question will guide this research: What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives on and experiences with criteria-based assessment? This overarching research question embraces the following sub-questions:

- 1) What are the mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment?
- 2) What are the benefits and drawbacks of CBA?
- 3) What were the teachers' challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices while implementing CBA?

1.5 Significance of the study

Since criteria-based assessment is still in the process of implementation, there are debates from some of the stakeholders on its applicability in mainstream schools. This can be due to misunderstanding or lack of information on this topic. For instance, according to Malakshinova (2018), the majority of teachers and parents consider that summative assessments for the units and terms cause stress for students and overload schoolteachers with extra work. Investigating teachers' experiences and perspectives towards CBA could be beneficial since teachers actively participate in the process of assessment, have the opportunity to immediately observe the consequences and reveal vital issues in the period of the reform implementation. Shedding light into the insight of teachers' perspectives and

experiences could be useful to find out the blind spots in CBA and provide teachers a chance to have their voices heard.

Thus, this study could inform policymakers and society about the challenges encountered during the CBA implementation and indicate the measures that could be taken to ensure success in classroom assessment. Therefore, this research can be beneficial to all stakeholders: policymakers, school administrations, teachers, parents, and learners and contribute to improving the quality of secondary education and relieve tension in Kazakh society. Moreover, it could also be helpful to the global community, since the research could offer other countries the ability to avoid similar problems in their own reform efforts.

1.6 Operational definitions of the terms

Assessment is the process of evaluating students' performance and current progress during the learning process (Harlen, 2005; Sadler, 2005).

Assessment tools include various tests, activities, tasks, peer and self-assessment, observation, feedback, marking and etc. (Hunter, Mayenga & Gambell, 2006).

Criteria-based assessment is an assessment approach where students are provided with some specific criteria according to which they are going to be assessed (Sadler, 2005).

Formative assessment (FA) is conducted during lessons and considered to be a tool for better understanding students' learning needs (McMillan, 2014). Therefore, it is used to correlate students' learning process to aimed outcomes and can be also referred to as assessment for learning, as learning, or low stake assessment.

Summative assessment (SA) is assessment of students' academic performance that intends to capture the status of knowledge in terms of its compliance to existing standards and requirements (National Research Council, 2001). It is usually marked and conducted after the unit (SAU), the term (SAT), or academic year to assess the level of knowledge

(Dixson & Worrell, 2016, p.157). It can be understood as an assessment of learning or high-stake assessment.

Teachers' perspectives can be used interchangeably with teachers' viewpoints or teachers' attitudes.

1.7 Conclusion and Outline of the Thesis

This master's thesis consists of six chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion. They are followed by references and appendices.

The first chapter was the introductory part of the thesis that presents background information for the study, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. Also, this chapter introduced the research question followed by the significance of the study. Finally, operational definitions of the terms were presented.

The second chapter is a literature review consisting of three sections. The first section provides a conceptual framework to construct the grounds for the research, whereas the second and third sections describe the findings of international and local literature concerning CBA.

The third chapter explains the main features and strategies of the qualitative research design. It includes information about participants, data collection tools, data collection, data analysis procedures, and ethical issues.

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study, categorizing them into themes elicited from the data analysis.

The fifth chapter discusses my findings in connection with the reviewed literature and the conceptual framework.

The last chapter is a conclusion that provides a summary of the thesis and recommendations and implications for stakeholders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore mainstream schoolteacher's perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment (CBA) by answering the following research questions: 1) What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment?; 2) What are the benefits and drawbacks of CBA?; and 3) What were teachers' challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices while implementing CBA?

This chapter first presents a conceptual framework to construct the grounds for the research. It then contains an analysis of international literature to identify what scholars report regarding teachers' experiences with criteria-based, summative, and formative assessments. The final section focuses on criteria-based assessment experiences in the Kazakhstani context.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is based on three main concepts: change, professional development, and assessment. Its aim is to provide better comprehension of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the renewed assessment system in Kazakhstani mainstream schools.

Change. Wilson (2006) claims that new ideas about learning and teaching have always been common in education. In this regard, I want to outline some challenges which are peculiar to educational changes.

Recently, the pace of changes in education has become more accelerated (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2001). Accordingly, due to constant reforms, educators feel a degree of cynicism towards most of them (Wilson, 2006). Secondly, teachers all over the world have heavy workloads. Therefore, according to Hargreaves (2001), scarcity of time in a period of change is one of the most significant issues that prevents teachers from fully harnessing innovations. One significant point concerning educational reforms is that those who are

responsible for changes can lack a distinct understanding of the intended purposes of the changes (Bennet, 2010). In education, teachers' understanding of reform in terms of its rationale, goals, and benefits governs teachers' implementation of the modifications in their classrooms (Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2002; Levin & Fullan, 2008).

All abovementioned issues have an impact on teachers' motivation towards the changes, which is considered one of the important premises for successful system reforms (Fullan, 2006). According to Fullan and Hargreaves (2009), changes are only possible when people who are responsible for implementation have both *will* and *skills*; otherwise, if they are unwilling they can feel resistance towards the reforms, while willingness without skills does not yield the expected results. Thus, teachers' willingness for change and their readiness in terms of knowledge and skills are closely interrelated with their experience during reform implementation. This concept is important to my study since it aims to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences with renewed assessment reform in Kazakhstani secondary schools.

Professional development. In the period of educational reforms, professional development programs (PDP) play the focal role since they can support teachers in the complicated process of reform implementation and help them to overcome challenges (Guskey, 2002; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Professional development encompasses a variety of models and methods including courses, trainings, self-education, discussions, and collaboration.

Starkey et al. (2009) conducted research to evaluate teachers' PD during the final phase of embedding a standard-based assessment system in secondary schools in New Zealand. Teacher surveys of 1119 participants and school case studies revealed that teachers appreciated highly personalized "learning, networking with subject area colleagues, and skilled and sensitive facilitation" (p.188). The scholars claimed that at the

early stage during the adoption phase, PD was mostly related to understanding theoretical foundations. However, the final phase of the reform showed that PD evolved to meet teachers' professional and individual needs. Teachers adopted the modifications and practiced them in their classrooms, which enabled them to take part in discussions and initiatives organized with the aim of identifying their issues and needs. This demonstrates the significance of different approaches in relation to the stage of implementation of the reform: the early stage is good for introducing concepts and principles while the final phase is more appropriate for scrutinizing the details which will help to fulfill the changes (Starkey, et al., 2009).

Villegas-Reimers (2003) claims that teachers are now recognized to be not only the players who should be changed, but also the agents of change. This implies that perspectives towards professional development (PD) have also undergone changes. For example, one of the major alterations is that PDP is now mainly based on constructivism, a theory that explains how people learn. Richardson (1997) states that from a constructivist perspective the process of acquiring knowledge cannot be isolated from actions and that comprehension and actions are inextricably linked simultaneously affecting each other. This means that when teachers are introduced to reforms, they use the gained knowledge in practice and then develop new ideas and concepts. Villegas-Reimers (2003) also supports the significance of practical work, stating that short periods of training are not enough for substantial development. Thus, teachers can be considered active learners and constructors of new ideas as well as efficient contributors to the better understanding of educational processes in the time of change. However, it is vital to understand that these processes are time-consuming, as teachers need time to comprehend new knowledge and gather the necessary experiences (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Assessment. In the past 30 years, there has been a shift from the concept that students are passive participants in the learning process towards constructivism with student-centered learning where learners can build meaning (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). Besides, in the past, the priority of teaching was mostly on “reproductive knowledge” which meant memorizing facts (Shamatov, 2012); however, with sustainable access to the Internet, the process of learning data by heart has become useless. Education has now shifted its priorities towards the development of learners’ creativity and problem-solving skills.

The previously mentioned educational changes brought modifications to assessment practices worldwide, demonstrating that classroom evaluation constitutes the integrated part of the teaching and learning processes (Brown, 2005; Wiliam, 2011). According to Wiliam (2011), if learners possessed the ability to absorb the knowledge provided to them fully and equally, then teachers would only need to consider transferring information and monitoring what they have taught. However, it is impossible to predict what students will learn and what learning objectives they will achieve (Wiliam, 2011). Thus, assessment is needed at every stage of the learning process. For example, when learning begins, it is crucial to identify students’ starting points. Then during the learning process, assessment constitutes a bridge that links teaching and learning and helps teachers to coordinate the learning process. In the final stage, it can be used for accountability purposes as well as for certification and selection (Wiliam, 2011). In addition, assessment encourages learning (Harlen, 2005). For example, Brown (2005) is confident that students will ignore teaching when there is no assessment included in the learning process. Since the impact of inadequate assessment can be far more powerful than any other aspect of teaching, classroom evaluation should be organized so that it can foster students’ learning instead of impeding it (Boud, 1995; Brown, 2005). Therefore, the main principles of

assessment, such as validity, reliability, and fairness are significantly relevant (Gripps, 2011; Puppini, 2007; Rasooli, Zandi & DeLuca, 2019). It is important to utilize valid and reliable assessment tools that can measure the knowledge and skills teachers target for evaluation. Every stakeholder should be confident that assessment demonstrates similar results when conducted repeatedly and with different assessors (Gripps, 2011; Puppini, 2007). Moreover, according to Rasooli et al., (2019), assessment should meet some ethical norms such as equity, equality, consistency, accuracy, bias suppression, and transparency.

Due to these changes, it is not only important to know *what* and *how* we assess, but also realize *why* we need to assess (Brown, 2005). Many countries now practice criteria-based assessment, which has inspired many scholars to investigate this evaluation approach (e.g. Xavier & Mehta, 2006; Selisheva, 2014). Criteria-based assessment replaced norm referenced assessment and standardized testing, which were popular in the middle of 20th century (Pitman & Dudley, 1985; Stiggings, 2001). CBA mainly consists of evaluating students based on specific criteria given to students in advance (Sabdenova et al., 2016; Selisheva, 2014; Xavier & Mehta, 2006). One of the priorities of criteria-based assessment is to stimulate the active participation of students in the learning process, developing conditions that encourage students' self-development and self-education (Sabdenova et al., 2016). Otter (1995) echoes this idea, claiming that clear and public criteria shift the focus from a "tutor-led system with fuzzy objectives and undisclosed criteria to a student-led system" (p.45). Also, CBA transfers the aim of assessment from merely ranking students towards the real educational goal that is student development through appropriate feedback (Carlson, Macdonald, Gorely, Hanrahan & Burgess-Limerick, 2000).

Feedback is assumed to be one of the most important parts of assessment (Black & William, 2005; Crooks, 1988; Sadler, 1989). This is because CBA allows teachers to provide clear and timely feedback based on the objectives given in advance and point out

what should be done to achieve the anticipated goals (Black & William, 2009). For example, Brown (2005) claims that feedback indicates the purposes of the assessment: to develop and improve or to measure students' academic level. He reasons that not only areas for improvement should be included in feedback, but also what was successfully completed. However, he admits that, despite all benefits of appropriate and thorough feedback, it is rather time-consuming.

Thus, assessment should be *for*, *as*, and *of* learning. In most cases assessment *for* and *as* learning is called formative, while assessment *of* learning is referred to as summative. These two types of evaluations have different functions and goals.

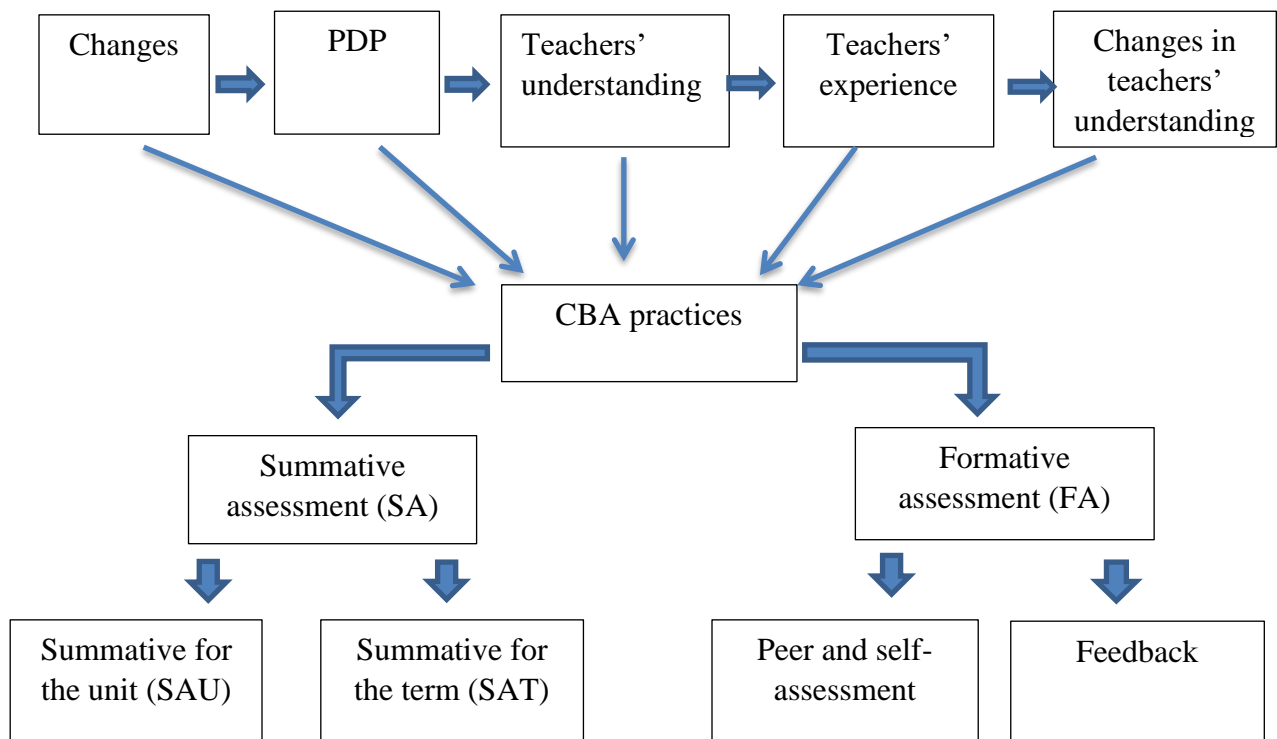
Summative assessment is considered to be the final assessment of previously studied topics and is usually marked and carried out after completion of a specific stage (Taras, 2005). It aims to summarize and capture the status of knowledge (National Research Council, 2001). The results of SA can be used in different ways such as following students' progression, keeping parents informed regarding their children's academic performance, and selecting students for further study (Harlen, 2005).

Formative assessment has another aim, which is to use assessment to recognize learners' needs and gaps and then adjust teaching strategies accordingly (Looney, 2011, p. 7). Wiggins (1998) defines the functions of FA as educating and improving. Similarly, Black and Wiliam (2005), in their extended review of empirical studies, found that FA is a pivotal part of the learning process, and almost the only entirely effective method to raise the standards of teaching and learning. After reviewing approximately 580 articles, they concluded that improvements in FA practices foster learning outcomes and are more helpful for low achievers than other groups of students. This consequently leads to leveling out the range of academic results and improving overall students' achievements. They inferred that daily FA feedback can help to enhance learning for both underachievers and

students with learning disabilities. The main forms of FA can be considered peer and self-assessment (Noonan & Duncan, 2005). Andrade, Du, and Mycek (2010) defined self-assessment as the process in which “students judge the quality of their work, based on evidence and explicit criteria for the purpose of doing better work in the future” (p. 3). These methods are significant, since they are mainly student-centered and participation of the teacher is minimized (Noonan & Duncan, 2005).

Based on the concepts discussed above, the conceptual framework (see figure 1) for this research shows that schoolteachers’ experience with CBA will be studied in terms of their understanding of reform, how it changed after PDP and real-life experience, and how the changes in understanding of CBA affected teachers’ practice in the classrooms.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



2.2 International teachers’ experiences with criteria-based assessment

This section presents the benefits of criteria-based assessment as well as teachers’ experiences with CBA in an international context. The section includes two subsections:

benefits of CBA for teachers and students, and teachers' practices and challenges with CBA.

2.2.1 Benefits of CBA for teachers and students

The reviewed literature revealed that the benefits of CBA are related to its transparency and objectivity (e.g., Green, 2002; Sadler, 2005; Xavier & Mehta, 2006). For example, Sadler's (2005) review highlighted two advantages of CBA: 1) it allows the grading of students while avoiding comparisons with other learners, and 2) the provided criteria enable students to study more consciously and purposefully. This idea of CBA objectivity was also reflected by Green (2002), when he stated that CBA allows teachers to evaluate only the students' progress avoiding any prejudices caused by learners' previous achievements. To investigate the benefits of CBA for students in Australia, Xavier and Mehta (2006) surveyed 158 students from one higher educational institution. Seventy percent of students agreed that rubrics were useful while performing assignments. Moreover, more than 70% of students believed they were able to self-evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in performance and understand how to improve it. As a result, scholars concluded that CBA transparency is beneficial to both teachers and learners facilitating assessment *for* and *of* learning. Another research effort by Selisheva (2014), explored the influence of CBA on learners' personal characteristics. The research included a survey of 25 teachers and 441 students from a Moscow mainstream school. The students' responses showed that most learners who experienced CBA had less anxiety (only 38% of students felt anxiety) in comparison to those who practiced norm-referenced assessment (55%). Approximately 80% of the students considered CBA to be objective, and they had a clear understanding of the reasons why they received lower marks. However, 41% of students felt that they were compared with others. As for the teachers, the majority of them

felt that they were objective while assessing their students, and that learners clearly realized why they earned lower grades.

Thus, CBA is recognized as beneficial both to teachers and learners. However, empirical studies demonstrate minor deviations in the results which make it necessary to explore the factors affecting teachers' assessment practices in terms of objectivity and transparency.

2.2.2 Teachers' practices and challenges with CBA

This subsection describes the practices and challenges of international teachers while implementing CBA. The literature revealed that most of the difficulties experienced were related to proper understanding of CBA and its tools such as providing feedback and conducting peer and self-assessment.

CBA understanding. Appropriate perceptions of assessment are crucial for effective teaching and learning processes (Sato, Wei & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Taras, 2008). Therefore, if teachers lack appropriate knowledge of CBA then it can hamper student learning. Teachers' understanding of CBA revealed in interviews and classroom practices found mixed results in their knowledge of CBA at all grade levels.

A small-scale empirical research study at an English university provided insight into instructors' understanding of assessment in the classroom and its relation to theory (Taras, 2008). Fifty-five lecturers participated in a questionnaire. The results revealed that the majority of lecturers did not have a clear understanding of summative, formative, and self-assessment as well as the link between them. One of the examples given by the researcher was that feedback, which is pivotal in FA, was not mentioned by most of the lecturers as one of the distinguishing characteristics of FA. However, Carlson (2012) in his mixed-method study of 300 university instructors discovered that 85% of them demonstrated good and quite good understanding of CBA purposes. Another study found

that assessment for learning was teachers' first goal while evaluating students; while their second and third purposes were assessment of learning and assessment as learning (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). In contrast to these findings, Rahman (2018), who explored thirty Bangladeshi secondary teachers' assessment practices in six schools, revealed that the majority of teachers did not use assessment for learning. Most assessment practices were limited to oral questions, written tasks, and tests. Moreover, it was found that teachers rarely encouraged students to ask questions in class and mainly evaluated students' lower order thinking skills ignoring higher-order questions. This can suggest that teachers tend to evaluate aspects that are easier to measure, demonstrating a superficial approach to assessment (Stiggings, 2001) or a lack of CBA understanding. Unfortunately, Rahman (2018) did not clearly identify the level of teachers' experiences with CBA in his research. This could be beneficial since earlier Carlson (2012) found a correlation between experience and understanding of assessment criteria. He claimed that teachers who possess two or more years of teaching experience almost completely understand the assessment criteria objectives.

Thus, the literature found that teachers' levels of CBA understanding were contradictory in some cases. This shows the importance of further research on teachers' CBA understanding, as it directly influences classroom assessment practices (Sato, Wei & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Feedback. Feedback should provide suggestions for performance improvement and engage students in the learning process, since the pivotal point of feedback is its ability to stimulate thinking processes (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam, 2004). Despite this, some research has revealed that teachers predominantly provide short evaluative feedback or do not provide it at all (e.g. Acar-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018; Rahman, 2018). For example, Acar-Erdol and Yildizli (2018), who investigated 228 teachers with at least one

year of teaching experience, found that the majority of teachers do not “give sufficient or explanatory feedback” (p. 599). The researchers suggested that it might be challenging for teachers to meet this assessment requirement; another reason could be that teachers do not sufficiently understand the assessment purposes. Another study of Filipino and Indonesian English teachers demonstrated appropriate practice of delivering feedback to their students (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). The most preferable ways to provide feedback in both countries were written comments and conferences while the least popular method was feedback through the use of a teaching diary. However, the results of these studies were mostly connected with the frequency of utilizing feedback tools and lacked information on the quality of teachers’ feedback.

Peer and self-assessment. Noonan and Duncan (2005) investigated schoolteachers’ practices with peer and self-assessment. The survey of teachers from 118 high schools found that most of them consider peer and self-assessment beneficial. The study, for example, revealed that the majority of teachers who participated in the research tend to use some forms of these assessments. However, 27% of the teachers used peer and self-assessment either a little or not at all. Similarly, Rahman (2018) found that while a few secondary schoolteachers practiced peer assessment in their classrooms, all teachers ignored self-assessment. Teachers explained their failure to use these methods by the lack of confidence in students’ honesty or competence to complete such tasks (Noonan & Duncan, 2005). Moreover, a case study in South Africa revealed that some teachers are critical about peer-assessment, perceiving it as “demotivating, dishonest, subjective and unfair, and also as promoting favouritism” (Sethusha, 2012, p. 156). Based on the previously mentioned findings, three areas need further research: teachers’ understanding of peer and self-assessment, the quality of these assessments, and responsibility for developing students’ competence in peer and self-assessment.

To conclude, in this subsection I reviewed studies on CBA implementation conducted in different countries such as Australia, South Africa, England, Russia, Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The literature identifies the advantages of criteria-based assessment and international teachers' experiences with CBA in some secondary schools and universities. The review indicated that although there are many worldwide studies concerning classroom assessment implementation, none of these research studies focused on revealing teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA during a time of accelerated large-scale educational reforms.

2.3 Kazakhstani context

Due to neoteric introduction of CBA to Kazakhstani secondary mainstream schools, there is not much investigation of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding CBA in the Kazakhstani context. Most of the articles found in local periodicals explain the renewed assessment system theoretically (e.g., Golnik, 2018; Zhakienova, 2019). Several articles are devoted to public resistance towards the renewed system of assessment during the first stage of the reform (e.g., Alekenova, 2019; Malakshinova, 2018). Nevertheless, I was able to find some articles and masters' theses which presented research results concerning mainstream schoolteachers' experiences with the reform. However, only two of them were fully dedicated to teachers' experiences with CBA (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019); others were focused on the updated curriculum in general devoting only some parts specifically to CBA (e.g., Gimranova, 2018; Ixanova, 2018). Therefore, there was limited research on Kazakhstan's CBA implementation.

This section presents the study results conducted in Kazakhstani mainstream schools focusing on such aspects as CBA understanding, teachers' perspectives about CBA

benefits and drawbacks, the role of professional development, teachers' challenges with CBA, and changes in teaching practices.

Understanding of criteria-based assessment. CBA was introduced in 2016, so the majority of teachers have experienced CBA in their classrooms from 1 to 4 years. Despite this, there is still a lack of understanding of the reform's purposes and benefits which leads to disbelief among some teachers towards CBA success in Kazakhstan (Bondarenko, 2019). It was found that experienced teachers face more difficulties with CBA acceptance and adaptation than their younger colleagues who have less work experience in the previous 5-point assessment system (Bondarenko, 2019; Gimranova, 2018).

It was also found that mainstream schoolteachers' misunderstandings of CBA resulted in inappropriate assessment practices and, as a consequence, to non-acceptance of CBA on the part of parents (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Gimranova, 2018; Ixanova, 2018). For instance, according to Ixanova (2018), who interviewed five secondary mainstream schoolteachers of fifth and seventh grades in Central Kazakhstan concerning their perceptions towards the renewed curriculum, found that during CBA implementation teachers were not giving written feedback. This meant parents were not able to evaluate their children's progress since they were receiving neither grades nor feedback (Ixanova, 2018). Gimranova (2018), in her qualitative research of implementation of the renewed curriculum in urban and rural mainstream schools, discovered that teachers had limited understanding of FA. She reported that teachers perceived formative evaluation "as a quick assessment taken in a form of short tasks, tests, brief oral interrogation about the past topic, using stickers with 'smiles' (instead of grades) or asking pupils to write feedback about their understanding on stickers" (p.57). At the same time, some studies on the reformed curriculum revealed that the majority of secondary schoolteachers had progressed in their understanding of CBA and its tools (Bondarenko, 2019; Suyundikova, 2019). For example,

having explored 42 teachers on their attitudes towards the implementation of the upgraded curriculum in one Kazakhstani mainstream secondary school, Suyundikova (2019) reported that almost 70% of teachers asserted that they could confidently utilize CBA.

Teachers' perspectives towards CBA benefits and drawbacks. The most important CBA characteristics outlined by mainstream secondary schoolteachers are objectivity and transparency (Ivanova, 2018). For example, some teachers in this study recalled that, in the past, it was sometimes difficult to explain to students and their parents why they received, for instance, a mark "4" instead of "5" (the highest mark). In this regard, CBA allowed students to evaluate their progress and gaps independently as they have the assessment criteria in advance. Additionally, the schoolteachers revealed that the renewed assessment system was beneficial in decreasing the stress of primary grade children. In the past system, teachers found that children were more stressed because of marks while in the new system they perceived feedback as a possibility for improvement (Ivanova, 2018). Also, research found that Kazakhstani teachers' understand that CBA aims at improving learners' knowledge and skills (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019; Suyundikova, 2019). In a qualitative research study, which looked at the influences of CBA on five English language teachers' practices in one secondary mainstream school, three main advantages of CBA were denoted: 1) objectives, criteria and descriptors made assessment more specific and comprehensive; 2) transparency helped to avoid misunderstanding and arguments with students about grades; and 3) students' roles in the class become more active (Bondarenko, 2019).

The CBA drawbacks were mostly connected with high-stakes SA and its inconsistency with Unified National Testing (UNT), a final school test passed by all Kazakhstani students until 2019 (Bondarenko, 2019). With the introduction of CBA, SA became a high-stakes assessment since the final grade for the term was constituted by 2-3

summative assessments for each unit during the term and final summative assessment for the whole term. Teachers felt under stress during SAs, as they thought they were responsible for students' academic results. Moreover, the teachers' stress was aggravated due to a lack of alignment between CBA and UNT, which included only multiple-choice tests. Thus, the concerns were what should be prioritized: the preparation for final school test or practicing CBA.

Teachers challenges. According to Abdrakhmanova (2017), the biggest challenge with CBA was to apply FA in practice. Since most of the knowledge was theoretical and sometimes not applicable, it resulted in disagreement between teachers' practices and teachers' understanding of FA (Abdrakhmanova, 2017). For example, Suyundikova (2019) found that approximately half of the teachers had issues with feedback in terms of its efficiency and the scarcity of time for it during classes.

Also, the majority of teachers' challenges were related to a lack of proper understanding of how to carry out SA, difficulties with its content, and lack of time for completing summative tasks by students (Gimranova, 2018). In the past, teachers used textbooks and did not deal with creating summative tasks. Due to the lack of experience in this field, it was challenging for them to create the SA tasks suitable for the students' levels (Bondarenko, 2019).

Another finding related to the challenges with CBA implementation was the loss of students' motivation to prepare for lessons (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019). Teachers and parents connected this fact to the absence of marks, since they thought marks kept students motivated (Malakshinova, 2018). Similarly, Ixanova (2018) found that, when students realized they would not receive a "2" for bad performance and not get a "5" for an excellent homework effort, most of them stopped doing home tasks. This became a significant issue for the teachers since parents and students did not understand why home

tasks were assigned if they were not marked. Suyundikova (2019) also mentioned this issue, explaining it by the lack of students' understanding of FA. Additionally, she found that some students had issues with academic integrity and were able to obtain answers for SA in advance. Consequently, such attitudes towards homework and SA explicitly illustrate the students' focus on marks rather than gaining knowledge.

The role of professional development. One of the contributors to CBA understanding was professional development. However, Abdrakhmanova (2017), who investigated eight teachers' perceptions towards the renewed assessment at one public school, found that teachers did not have enough courses on CBA. The research revealed that, while experienced teachers attended at least one professional program on CBA, most novice teachers did not have any assessment training. As a result, experienced teachers were more confident while sharing their understanding of FA (Abdrakhmanova, 2017). Moreover, most of the attended courses were mainly short, inconsistent, and theoretical which led to a lack of FA understanding among the majority of teachers (Abdrakhmanova, 2017). In this regard the author implies that it is important during reform implementation to provide sustained PDP (predominantly practical) as well as other kinds of support to teachers since time is needed for them to gain enough knowledge and skills in the reformed assessment system (Abdrakhmanova, 2017).

Changes in teaching practices. Finally, previous research established that introduction of the new assessment approach in Kazakhstani mainstream schools influenced teachers' classroom practices. First, the changes were related to teachers' functions in the classrooms shifting from a central role to a facilitating one as the central role in the educational process was transitioned to the students (Bondarenko, 2019; Suyundikova 2019). Another alteration in teaching was associated with active learning

methods and developing higher-order thinking skills, which started being actively practiced by teachers (Bondarenko, 2019).

This section presented a review of literature on CBA implementation in Kazakhstani context. All of these studies focused on the first three years of the implementation of CBA in Kazakhstan and demonstrated that CBA implementation was an ongoing process revealing changes in teachers' viewpoints and practices during the beginning years of the update curriculum and CBA. This makes further research timely and important, since phased implementation of the new assessment system is coming to an end, providing an opportunity to understand how teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA implementation changed over the course of the phased implementation from 2016 to the present.

2.4 Conclusion

Collectively, these studies revealed that the implementation of criteria-based assessment is a complicated process that requires teachers' readiness for changes, clear comprehension of the new approach and skills with which to implement it. However, the review of the existing research exposed the lack of research specifically focused on teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA during times of national curriculum reform. The scarcity of literature makes it difficult to understand the processes which took place during the reform implementation in terms of teachers' challenges and changes in their viewpoints and teaching practices as well as factors influencing these processes.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the conceptual framework that guided the current study and to review the literature to answer the research question "What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment?". In order to investigate the phenomenon such key concepts as theory of change, professional development, and assessment were described in connection to alterations in

teachers and their practices. The next chapter presents the methodology for the study, including the research design, site selection, sampling, data collection instruments, and procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The chapter provides details concerning the research design and methodology applied in this study to answer the main research question, “What are mainstream schoolteachers’ perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment (CBA)?” The chapter describes and explains the rationale for the chosen research design, research site, sample and sampling procedures, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design and Rationale

This research was driven by the constructivist research paradigm that doubts the existence of unique truth. I agree with the idea that people create reality and it is mostly subjective (Al-Saadi, 2014). In this connection, my goal in this research was to be reliant on respondents’ viewpoints (Cresswell, 2007 p. 20) and explain the CBA implementation in mainstream schools from teachers’ perspectives and experiences. CBA is a new educational policy which was first practiced in Kazakhstani mainstream schools from 2016. This meant that the concept of CBA had been unfamiliar to the majority of stakeholders prior to its introduction in Kazakhstan. According to Creswell (2014), when there is a lack of information regarding the research phenomenon in literature it is important to start the exploration from an in-depth investigation of experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of participants.

To achieve the goal, qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate for investigating the issues and expanding comprehension of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In the current study, teachers’ perspectives and experiences were considered as the central phenomenon of the research. Thus, this method was beneficial to see the situation from the inside and reveal the most significant details through individual interviews.

Within the qualitative research, I chose the phenomenological design, as it aims to describe peoples' experiences (Patton, 2015). My aim was to explain the phenomenon in relation to the new assessment system from different teachers' perspectives. Therefore, it was essential to investigate participants having practical experiences with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). This provided an opportunity to gain a picture of teachers' lived experiences with challenges and issues intrinsic to Kazakhstani mainstream schools during the period of the national implementation of CBA.

3.2 Research Site

The main criterion for schools to be selected as a research site was its status as a mainstream secondary school. This meant excluding Nazarbayev Intellectual schools and pilot schools, which participated in the testing period of CBA. For this reason, several urban mainstream schools in central Kazakhstan were chosen. These schools started implementing CBA from 2016 as all Kazakhstani mainstream schools did. I preferred having interviews outside the schools since it provided more confidentiality and helped to avoid any influence from school administration. However the choice depended on participants, so six research interviews took place inside the schools while the other three interviews were conducted outside at a neutral location.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample for this research consisted of nine teachers from several mainstream schools in Central Kazakhstan. Since this research aimed at investigating teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA in mainstream schools only, the participants were selected by the use of homogeneous, purposive sampling. According to Creswell (2014), this type of sampling means that "the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (p. 208). Thus, only

teachers from mainstream schools and only those who had experienced CBA in their classrooms for more than two years were selected to take part in this research and share viewpoints towards CBA implementation.

To recruit the participants for my research I applied a snowball strategy. Being a teacher in NIS, I knew several teachers in mainstream schools. I made a list of teachers' contacts and invited them to take part in my research or asked to recommend someone who may volunteer for the study. The future participants were informed about the purposes of the study and its benefits for teachers. After the potential participant agreed to participate in the interview, we discussed the date and place of the interview. This strategy was beneficial in terms of confidentiality since school administrations were not involved in the process of sampling which contributed to some extent to participants' openness and sincerity.

The sample size in qualitative method, according to Creswell (2014), can be different (from 1 to 30 or 40 participants). However, each additional participant influences the potential of the researcher to deliver an in-depth picture of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Keeping this in mind and taking into account the research time limits it was decided preliminary to interview ten participants. By the end of the data collection process, due to some circumstances, only nine teachers of different subjects were able to participate in the interview. Table 1 below provides basic demographic information about the research participants.

3.4 Data collection instrument

The research data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. This method allowed gathering in-depth information while communicating directly with the participants and guiding their reactions (Opdenakker, 2006). During the interview process, if there were any misinterpretations or unclear responses, we had an opportunity

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

№	Teacher	Gender	Teaching experience	Experience in CBA	Subject	Grades
1	Aliya	Female	28 years	4 years	Russian and Literature	3,4,7,8
2	Zarina	Female	19 years	4 years	History	5-11
3	Alma	Female	15 years	2 years	Computer science	5-11
4	Kymbat	Female	35 years	4 years	Russian in Kazakh schools	5-11
5	Azhar	Female	2.5 years	2.5 years	English	1-3
6	Aya	Female	6 years	4 years	English	8-10
7	Ardak	Female	2 years	2 years	English	1-2
8	Bakhyt	Female	31 years	4 years	Russian and Literature	4, 7, 11
9	Gulya	Female	29 years	4 years	Russian in Kazakh schools	6-7

to clarify the issues immediately. Moreover, the semi-structured interview provided a possibility to expand on the issues or new ideas teachers raised or mentioned while responding to the questions. Additionally, individual interviews were beneficial to create a certain atmosphere of trust (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The interview questions were designed on the basis of previous studies and further adapted to the current research goals (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019). Respondents were asked open-ended questions about their perspectives and experiences with CBA, the challenges they faced, and changes in their assessment practices. According to Creswell (2007), “broad and general” questions can help participants to “construct the meaning of the situation” (p. 21). This was aligned with the research conceptual framework as such types of questions helped the participants see the big picture of the reforms in mainstream schools as well as realize the influence of educational changes, PDP, and CBA implementation challenges on their viewpoints towards classroom leadership and teaching practices. Therefore, the participants were mostly asked open-ended questions which helped to explore the issue from teachers’ perspectives. For example, “How do you understand the concept of assessment?”, “Why did Kazakhstan

start implementing criteria-based assessment in mainstream schools?”, and “How much would you say your approach to teaching and learning has changed recently?” (see Appendix B for the interview protocol).

3.5 Data collection procedures

Upon getting approval from Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) Research Ethics Committee I started the process of the data collection. First, I contacted the teachers from the list of recommendations and invited them to participate in the research. During the call, I explained the research purposes, possible risks, and benefits for teachers. Then, with the potential participants, I scheduled the date and place of the teachers' convenience. Before each interview, I reiterated the concerns of the research and explained that the research was not going to evaluate teachers' practices and that the only aim of the researcher was to know more about participants' experiences and practices with CBA. As soon as the participants were ready to start, they were provided with a hard copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix A) and clarified the interview procedure, time involvement, risks, benefits, participants' rights, and confidentiality. They were also explained that although they signed the consent form, they could stop the interview at any time or not respond to the question they considered as inappropriate.

The interviews were mostly conducted in Russian since the majority of teachers in mainstream schools did not speak English. The interviews lasted about 40-60 minutes and were recorded in order to be analyzed later. All the participants were informed and consented to the interviews being audiotaped. As most of the participants were unfamiliar to me the first 3-5 minutes were devoted to warming up and some demographic questions. This helped to ease the tension and encourage respondents to be more sincere.

After the first interviews, I had to restate some of the interview questions to make them clearer. This made the following interviews more purposeful and effective. I saved the audio recordings on my computer.

3.6 Data analysis methods

The next stage of the research was the process of transcribing the data and translating it into English (see Appendix C). To facilitate interview transcription I used the website (<https://otranscribe.com/>), which provided the opportunity to regulate the audio speed to make it more comfortable for transcribing. Then the obtained data was coded and the results were categorized into themes. For this purpose I used hand analysis which means reading the transcripts, marking them by hand, and dividing all data into parts (Creswell, 2014). During the inductive process of coding, I labeled and organized the data into the themes (Creswell, 2014). After that, all the findings were analyzed for patterns and inconsistencies. This was helpful to find participants' shared experiences and issues clustering them together (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I tried to commence this work as soon as possible while the details of the interviews were fresh. This helped to mitigate the risks of misinterpreting the information during the data analysis process.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All the participants were provided with a consent form in which they were informed about their rights and assured confidentiality on my part. To maintain complete confidentiality, first of all I did not mention the exact research site the participants came from nor their names in any reports. To ensure this I created pseudonyms, so participants' personal identities were hidden. Also for confidentiality purposes, I started audio recording after the participants introduced themselves and did not use their names during the interview. In addition, the place and time of the interviews were known only by the

interviewer and interviewees. When the interview took place in the school, it was conducted in a separate room where no person could enter. The consent forms were kept confidentially in a locker in my office and all transcriptions, audio, and other information related to participants were saved in the computer protected with a password. Only the researcher had access to the locker and the password. This protected participants from the identification of the real names. At the same time, as I conducted face to face interviews it was impossible to ensure anonymity.

There were no major risks to participants associated with the present study. To avoid minimal psychological risks, such as fear or embarrassment to disclose feelings, ideas, or negative experiences, I assured the participants that the purpose of the research was to know more about teachers' practices but not to evaluate or judge them. They might also fear misinterpretation of the interview answers by a researcher (intentionally or unintentionally). To minimize these risks, the researcher returned at another date to conduct member-checking, so the participants could edit or revise their responses.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter aimed to describe and justify the methods applied to conduct this study on the phenomenon of mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives and experiences in the Kazakhstani context. The next chapter presents the findings of the current study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which aimed to explore mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives and experiences regarding criteria-based assessment (CBA) in central Kazakhstan. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards changes in the assessment?; 2) What are the benefits and drawbacks of CBA?; 3) What were the teachers' challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices while implementing CBA?

In order to take part in the interview, the nine participants were required to have had two or more years of teaching experience (see Table 1). Most of the teachers had been practicing CBA from the first year of its implementation, which means that their experience with CBA constituted up to four years.

In this chapter, I present, categorize, and analyze the findings. Teachers' responses were interpreted according to the conceptual framework illustrated in the literature review chapter. In this connection, my focus was on mainstream schoolteachers' viewpoints and practices with CBA, in particular, the changes in teachers' understanding of the new assessment system and classroom practices. The findings were divided into three main themes:

- 1) Teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment.
- 2) Teacher's perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of CBA.
- 3) Teachers' challenges with CBA and changes in teaching practices.

4.1. Teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment.

I analyzed the data based on the conceptual framework of the current research. Therefore, to gain an in-depth picture of mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives it was crucial to investigate teachers' understanding of the reform's reasons, teachers' attitudes

towards the changes, teachers' role, and role of professional development programs in the process of CBA implementation.

4.1.1. Teachers' perspectives on the rationale for assessment changes.

Revealing teachers' understanding of reasons for assessment changes was necessary since this could directly affect teachers' understanding of CBA and their attitudes towards it. Although a variety of perspectives were expressed by participants, it was noticeable that all teachers thought that educational changes in Kazakhstani secondary education had been inevitable. All the reasons can be categorized into three main arguments: 1) process of the development of Kazakhstan as an independent country, 2) necessity to conform to modern requirements and 3) failure of a five-point grading system to satisfy updated needs.

Two teachers considered educational changes as a natural process for a newly independent country as it tried to find its own way. For example, Gulya asserted: "As we got our independence we should modernize everything. We should introduce innovations". Bakhyt agreed with her when she said: "We shouldn't stay in the same place". Additionally, two teachers believed that changes were the result of the ambitious goals our government had set, such as entering the top 50 countries of the world.

It was also suggested that another reason for assessment alterations could be new educational requirements and standards all over the world. For example, Aliya, a Russian and literature teacher with 28 years of teaching experience, said: "Children are not the same as they were in the 70s or 80s. For instance, they are very developed and say such things you never think about". Four teachers considered this reason from another viewpoint stating that alterations in assessment took place in connection to modern tendencies and innovations in the educational area such as active learning, functional literacy, and critical thinking. However, Azhar, a novice English teacher with 2.5 years'

teaching experience, hypothesized that Kazakhstan tried to replicate the system used in developed countries. She asserted: "I think that our government just follows others... in order [that] our knowledge could correspond and be as theirs". Alma, a computer science teacher with 15 years' experience, concurred with this idea when she said that changes in assessment aimed to teach students to "freely express ideas and opinions as they do it abroad".

Furthermore, three teachers claimed that, in addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the previous assessment system needed changes. For example, Gulya, a Russian teacher, who had more than 29 years of experience, claimed that the five-point grading system had outlived its usefulness and Aya, an English teacher with 6 years' experience referred to traditional assessment as "a relic of the past". Supporting these ideas, Aliya (28 years of teaching experience) stated that with the previous assessment approach "there was no opportunity for children to develop further"; therefore, this was a "collapse" for traditional assessment.

Taken together, these results suggested that the changes in assessment in Kazakhstani secondary education took place due to the nation's attempts to identify its' own way as an independent country and the goal to reach conformity with the world educational standards. Additionally, the previous assessment system needed upgrading to meet new requirements of global tendencies and new generations.

4.1.2. Teachers' attitudes towards changes and their role in the reform.

It was noticeable that teachers' viewpoints to changes in education were mostly interrelated with the period they started teaching. This means that younger teachers had a less stressful period of adaptation. For example, Aya, an English teacher with six years' experience asserted:

I had a positive attitude towards CBA. I did not have any experience with traditional marks, and I did not have a painful transition with changing habits and so on. I started my working experience with CBA and it was absolutely normal for me. It was something new and I liked it.

However, experienced teachers confessed that they had some resistance and “continued to lean toward previous assessment system” for several years (Gulya). This situation predominantly referred to “teachers who worked 20-30 years at school” because “it [transition] was a great stress for them” (Aya). Supporting this, Gulya, a Russian teacher with 29 years of experience said: “Being a person of the Soviet period, it has always been a barrier for me to transit from the old to the new”, meaning that in the past the educational system remained unchanged for many years. At the same time, some experienced teachers positively reacted towards changes from the very beginning, for example, Aliya, who had 28 years’ experience, explained her reaction this way:

I consider myself a flexible person with a positive attitude towards changes in education and assessment. A person should develop. Time does not stop. Today we have a lot of information. Every week we have changed. Today you know something; tomorrow this knowledge is not needed.

Four teachers agreed that transition to CBA required understanding from the implementers, which could be gained only if a teacher had enough willingness to understand and try new methods. Some teachers claimed that most of their colleagues did not have a clear understanding of the renewed assessment, because they “don’t want to understand, don’t want to delve into, and don’t want to mess with their heads” (Zarina). For example, Bakhyt asserted: “If a teacher does not try to understand and implement innovations, there will be no efficacy from the reform”. She also noted that although the majority of teachers had attended different courses and training, there were still teachers

who did not change their teaching approach and conducted lessons as they “did during the last 30 years”.

Aliya stressed the significance of teachers' role claiming that “every teacher has the opportunity to attend the seminars, but it depends on the teachers' desire whether they will gain something from them [seminars]”. She was sure that “every teacher should make efforts”, because “a lot depends on how teachers understand the concept of CBA”. According to her, teachers' understanding of CBA affects “how it will be delivered to students during the lessons”. Four of nine teachers claimed that if teachers had a proper understanding, many issues with CBA could be avoided.

Predominantly, the finding regarding teachers' attitudes demonstrated a positive tendency. Novice teachers accepted CBA since it was their first experience and they did not have to change a lot in their practices, while experienced teachers, though they felt some refusal towards CBA but tried to adapt to the required modifications. Participants highlighted two important factors in the implementation of CBA: teachers' understanding of the new assessment system and their willingness to change. Some respondents assumed that proper understanding of CBA during the first stage of implementation could help to avoid many issues.

4.1.3. Teachers' perspectives on professional development.

All teachers mentioned PDP and collaboration as the main sources of constructing their knowledge about CBA and its development. Teachers admitted that every seminar contributed to reinterpretation and changes in their understanding of CBA. For example, Bakhyt confessed: “Despite I had courses on updated curriculum and was practicing it [CBA], thinking I worked well [in my classroom], I realized that I still have gaps in understanding and that I don't use CBA properly”. Continuing the topic of PDP usefulness, another teacher (Gulya) reflected: “After courses surely I don't transform completely,

some part of me does”. She described the changes after PDP: “First, I changed as a person, second, my attitude to children and my work has changed, and also I tried to change my colleagues because after this course we always have seminars for our teachers”. Zarina added to the above idea: “I became more democratic, and it is not because of the updated curriculum; it is due to the courses I have studied”. However, some teachers argued that mere “courses are not enough” to have a clear understanding of CBA (Bakhyt). Two teachers claimed that the courses were too short and mostly theoretical. In this connection, Kymbat suggested that “instructors should demonstrate CBA in practice by conducting demo lessons”.

Another source to obtain knowledge and develop as a professional was collaborative work at schools. Teachers maintained that sharing ideas, discussions, and reflections were another way to improve their understanding of CBA and teaching practices. For example, Aliya recalled: “The support was from the colleagues, because we discussed every step together, for instance, this went well or this was not effective”. She said that after finishing courses, teachers shared their knowledge with other colleagues at school and provided demo lessons on how to conduct an updated assessment. In addition, teachers pointed to the supportive role of the administration. For example, Zarina said that “from September there were many courses and seminars with teachers from another school (NIS) organized by our vice principal.” Bakhyt mentioned a professional learning community organized by their administration, which included teachers from five schools. Its main purpose was to organize a collaboration platform to discuss ideas and practices. Finally, teachers also admitted the importance of self-education and self-reflection.

It can be concluded that PDP is beneficial not only for developing a clear understanding of CBA and developing skills but also for transformational processes inside teachers which resulted in viewpoint changes towards their classroom leadership, from

autocratic to democratic. However, some teachers stated that practical courses were more fruitful than theoretical programs. Also, teachers' collaboration, administrative support, and self-education can be considered as crucial parts of professional development.

4.2. Teacher's perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of CBA.

In this section findings regarding teacher's perspectives towards benefits and drawbacks of CBA are included in two subsections based on the themes that emerged from the data: teachers' understanding of CBA and teachers' perspectives towards benefits and drawbacks of CBA.

4.2.1. Teachers' understanding of criteria-based assessment

In order to discover teachers' understanding of CBA, responses related to assessment in general as well as teachers' knowledge and practices with CBA were considered. It was important to determine how teachers perceive CBA goals, its difference from the previous assessment system, and what CBA tools they use.

Overall, teachers shared a common viewpoint towards classroom evaluation asserting that assessment is a significant part of the teaching and learning processes which were helpful both for teachers and students. Some teachers considered assessment of students as an evaluation of themselves. Gulya explained: "While being evaluated my students represent for me the knowledge I have given to them". Also teachers pointed the following features of appropriate assessment: 1) transparent (44%); 2) clear and comprehensive (33%); 3) measurable (22%); 4) positive (11%); 5) aimed at student improvement (11%); and 6) objective (11%).

Concerning CBA, the innovations in secondary education assessment were mostly related to dividing evaluation into the formative and summative assessment. All teachers mentioned the absence of daily marks as the biggest difference from the previous

assessment approach. For example, Aya explained her practice: “In CBA we assess students according to specific criteria”. Teachers’ understanding of summative (SA) and FA was that they are closely interrelated. Aliya conveyed that “during FA a student has a chance to work on mistakes and improve knowledge on every lesson and during SA he can demonstrate his knowledge”. The purpose of FA is “not to give marks immediately”, but “to give the chance to move further, find the way to improve knowledge” (Aliya). This can be reached if FA is provided for every lesson via teachers’ comments as well as self or peer-assessment. Some teachers perceived the role of FA “as preparing a child for SA”; therefore, during FA teachers kept it in mind and constructed the formative tasks in accordance with the summative tasks. Teachers claimed that although FA did not influence final marks it helped “to construct knowledge”. In addition, some teachers perceived outcomes of SA as the main part of the learning process. For example, Azhar, who had more than two years of teaching experience, claimed that “the main conclusion of the educational process is final academic outcomes”.

Teachers also used such terms as assessment criteria, moderation, descriptors, reflection, and feedback, which demonstrated their understanding of CBA tools. One of the most important instruments in CBA, according to teachers, was feedback. For example, Bakhyt stated: “If there is no feedback we can’t say that the lesson was efficient. I think that feedback is fundamental in the lesson”. Aliya expressed the same when she said that in “every lesson a student should get a comment on how he should work further”. Teachers thought that the main purpose of feedback was to improve the learning process and develop children. For example, in this regard, Aliya specified that to reach this goal the comments should be more informative. Feedback also helped teachers to differentiate students in terms of “who understood, who did not understand, who needs extra lessons” as

well as allowing them to “plan the following lessons” and made them more productive (Bakhyt).

Overall, teachers distinguish two types of assessment (FA and SA) as a part of CBA. Teachers had a clear understanding that though having different aims, FA and SA are interrelated to each other. However, some teachers considered the outcomes of SA were more important to them as they show the results of their work.

4.2.2. Teachers’ perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of CBA

This subsection is concerned with teachers’ perspectives towards the merits and demerits of the updated assessment. Having analyzed responses I outlined four benefits and two main drawbacks mentioned by interview participants.

First of all, teachers asserted that CBA aims at improving students' knowledge and skills. They thought it helps to identify students' level of knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses. Based on that, it provides teachers a possibility to purposefully work on students' development providing “another opportunity to improve learners’ work” (Zarina). Teachers claimed that CBA shifted the student’s focus from marks towards daily improvement and growth. For example, they compared CBA with the five-point grading system saying that when students daily received marks for a particular task, they were not concerned about developing their knowledge. Students could prepare for the particular lesson one day and get, for example, five (the highest mark) and after that, they might ignore preparation for the following lessons since the mark was the final purpose for them. As for CBA, Aliya explained that “everyday feedback from peers and teachers affects the students' knowledge [in a positive way]” and makes them think of ways to progress. Moreover, the language teachers pointed out that CBA develops four skills writing, reading, listening, and speaking whereas in the past the assessment was more focused on grammar. Continuing the topic of CBA advantages, Zarina said: “CBA raises functional

literacy. It is important since a child should gain knowledge not to gather the marks in the school diary, but in order, this knowledge could be helpful in the future".

The second benefit of CBA is its objectivity and transparency. Teachers said that due to the explicit assessment criteria, CBA allows students to conduct peer and self-assessment and in this way to see their gaps and strengths independently. Moreover, teachers claimed that CBA also benefited parents, since "through the comments, they can know the gaps [in knowledge], the level of their child and how to develop it" (Zarina). Some teachers highlighted that marks in five point-grading systems were not so informative. Additionally, the preliminary score in percentage form which is then transferred into final marks according to the five-point scale was mentioned as an advantage of a new evaluation system. Aya was confident the percentage made final marks different from the grades in old scale assessment. Although students can have the same final grade (for example, "4" or "5"), the percentage "allows students to see their real level", "because a child with 89% has not the same level of knowledge as a child with 95%" (Aya). This means that students even if they had the same marks could see the differences in their knowledge, which led to the teachers' conclusion that CBA was more objective than the five-point grading system.

The next beneficial aspect teachers pointed was that students had more freedom while presenting their ideas and opinions and therefore were less stressed. Teachers noticed that while being formatively assessed students "freely respond during the lessons" (Bakhyt). In this concern, Aliya explained: "No limits because we accept all the answers which means that a student can understand the topic from his point of view". Thus, students are not afraid of making mistakes and they do not have to wait for the teachers' approval. This makes students more independent and contributes to the growth of students' motivation.

The fourth benefit, according to teachers, is that CBA provides equal opportunities both to active and passive students. Teachers noticed that some students can be shy or not public. This meant that although they had knowledge they used to be passive in classroom activities and therefore could not demonstrate explicitly their knowledge and skills.

Considering this point, Aliya shared her observations:

Some children are passive during the lessons, but during the SAU and SAT they can have good outcomes. This can be because they are introverts. They are silent all the time [during the lesson] but they absorb all the material.

Despite all the advantages of CBA, teachers mentioned some flaws in the way it was introduced in mainstream schools. For example, Gulya criticized it when she stated “There should have been a well-organized system. We took this assessment from abroad and suddenly started implementing it in mainstream schools”. She was confident that the transition to the new assessment system should have been gradual. The reason for that was that teachers needed more time because “their mindset is not changed yet” (Kymbat). Gulya supposed that “we need maybe some more 15-20 years to change”, and added sarcastically: “But we want here and now. However, it can't be this way because we need to change the whole system. We lived with it for 70 years and now destroy”.

Moreover, some teachers questioned if CBA “fits our system of education” (Bakhyt). They thought that it was better “to find our own way of CBA: different, similar or adapted”, because “maybe our educational system is completely different” (Gulya). Teachers mentioned inconsistencies in the academic programs which made it difficult to assess students. For example, Kymbat, a Russian teacher in Kazakh medium schools with 35 years’ experience, criticized that “it is impossible to study one sound during 20 minutes” or that “there are tasks to read a sentence, but children don’t know these letters”. Another teacher, Zarina, thought that “starting ancient history from the 5th grade” was

difficult for children (in the past 5th graders had a simple introduction to history). These findings were more connected to curriculum issues; nevertheless, they led to some difficulties with summative assessment as well, since they prevented students from acquiring knowledge properly. This also shows the importance of a well-designed and effective curriculum as it has a direct influence on assessment practices.

To conclude, teachers had a proper understanding of the assessment role in the learning process and its main characteristics. During the years of CBA implementation, teachers outlined several advantages of CBA. They named such benefits of CBA as its focus on improving and developing students' knowledge, objectivity, and transparency. Also, teachers agreed that CBA provides more freedom to learners and is helpful while considering children's diversity allowing everyone to show his/her knowledge and skills. However, teachers agreed that a gradual transition to CBA and its adaptation to Kazakhstani realities would have made assessment more effective.

4.3. Teachers' challenges with CBA and changes in teaching practices.

This section is divided into three subsections based on the themes that emerged in the interviews concerning teachers' practices with CBA: teachers' challenges with CBA during the first years of implementation, teachers' current challenges with CBA, and changes in teaching practices.

4.3.1 Teachers' challenges with CBA in the first years.

Looking back at their past experience with CBA, teachers could see their first steps in the period of reforms from another perspective. Most of them confessed that most of the issues could have been avoided if they had a better understanding of CBA prior to implementation.

Teachers agreed that although they had attended special preparatory courses, there was still a lack of understanding of CBA during the first years. When they started practicing CBA, after theoretical seminars, it was the time they faced their first challenges. First of all, most of them realized that practice differed from the theory. In this regard, Gulya confessed: “I could not understand how to work without marks, just saying “Good job!”. It didn’t look like the assessment to me and it was not effective”. She also added: “We thought that showing a thumb up/down or using smiles was enough [for feedback]”. Some teachers confessed that misunderstanding of CBA led to some “slackness among teachers”. It seemed to them that as there were no marks then there was no “need to require something from students”. This meant that some teachers did not understand the goals of the FA and feedback. Incorrect utilization of these CBA tools, as a result, led to other issues such as low students’ academic performance and frustration because children could not understand what teachers expected from them. Zarina recalled her first experience:

I did not understand that the tasks during the lessons should be connected with SA to show the results. I did not understand that they [everyday activities and tasks] construct knowledge gradually. Sometimes my tasks for FA and SA were completely different like chalk and cheese. We had sad academic results during the first SA.

In addition, during the first three years, teachers had to use ready-made summative tasks from the SMK (systematic methodological complex), a special website created by NIS teachers as a database with teaching materials for mainstream schools. Teachers said that they had everything ready (i.e., course plans, lesson plans, and tasks for SAU and SAT), so they did not have to create summative or formative tasks. This may be led to some confusion and irresponsibility among teachers. For example, Bakhyt remembered: “It was like a formality to us. We gave tasks from SMK and did not pay attention if they were

clear to students”. One additional problem with SMK was that the tasks were difficult for some mainstream school children. In this accordance, Zarina asserted: “We took the tasks from SMK, but they were for NIS level [gifted students]. We did not take it into account [during the first years]”.

Another challenge teachers usually faced at the beginning was a period when students had to transit from a five-point grading system. Predominantly, it took time for students to get used to the new system. Teachers remembered that some children got relaxed and did not prepare for the lessons thinking “there are no marks”. According to Bakhyt, parents resented that their children did not study and worried about the level of knowledge development achieved. For example, Alma remembered how parents said: “Children stopped preparing and opening textbooks. They just change the books for the next day and go to the lessons”. Teachers thought this student reaction could be linked to the new assessment system, since “they [students] were used to getting marks” (Gulya). Therefore, when during the lesson teachers provided only comments such as “Excellent! Good! Good job!” it seemed as if all students had a similar level of knowledge and skills and there was no need to make efforts. Gulya asserted that: “They [students] couldn’t perceive it [what they needed to do to achieve at higher levels]”.

Also, during the first years of CBA implementation, there was pressure from the parents’ side caused by dissatisfaction and misunderstanding of CBA. They got used to the five-point grading system and tried to adjust it to CBA. For example, parents perceived comments like “Good” or “Excellent” as former “5” (the highest mark) and when the child showed bad results during the SA they “used to come and confront the teachers threatening to complain and write somewhere” (Bakhyt). Moreover, some parents perceived “the comments as labels” (Azhar), so they did not realize that children received comments to make improvements. Another reason for the issues was parents’ concern that they could

not monitor their children's progress. Aliya recalled when parents used to say: "I don't know how my child performs on every lesson". In the past, parents were accustomed to the idea that children received marks and through these marks, parents could monitor their academic performance. However, Azhar noticed that today parents pay less attention to the marks and try to support their children if they get a low score for SA which shows that "parents are getting used to it [CBA]".

To conclude, the main challenges teachers faced during the first stage of implementation were 1) lack of understanding of CBA during the first years which led to mistakes in practices; 2) students' attitude to the absence of daily marks during the transition from five-point grading system towards CBA; and 3) pressure from parents.

4.3.2. Teachers' current challenges.

The findings revealed teachers' agreement that CBA could be effective if it was used correctly. Nevertheless, although four years had passed since CBA was introduced in mainstream schools, teachers were still experiencing issues while implementing it. In this connection, teachers outlined several current challenges.

All teachers mentioned that they did not have a clear understanding of CBA particularly FA, feedback, peer and self-assessment. Four teachers asserted that choosing appropriate assessment criteria and ways to evaluate was difficult for them. For example, Aliya shared "if the criteria are too simple for children the results will be the same, but if you want deeper results, the criteria should be appropriate". Another current challenge was feedback. Most teachers agreed that feedback was not an easy task because it was not developed fully and systematized, so it was impossible for them to provide effective feedback on every lesson. Besides, teachers' concern was connected to students' feedback and peer-assessment, because children could be too direct. Therefore, sometimes teachers were "afraid they can have a fight or get offended" (Gulya). Some teachers use peer and

self-assessment rarely because children were not objective or serious enough; moreover, some of them lacked skills to do it properly. One more issue was that children sometimes could not reflect sincerely at the end of the lesson being afraid they might offend a teacher or they perceived every lesson reflection as a daily routine. For example, in this regard Aya said:

But sometimes children give feedback just because a teacher asks it. It can be not true. For example, it is difficult for some children to write what they didn't like [during the lesson]. However, if the feedback is anonymous they can write the truth.

Another challenge with adequate feedback was connected to primary school teachers' understanding of CBA. Teachers had a dilemma when during the term they provided predominantly positive feedback to children as they had been taught during the training, but during the SA some children got low scores. A novice teacher, Azhar, confessed:

I don't want SAU and SAT. Sometimes the final mark can tremendously influence children. When during the learning process everything is good, they are active and do their best, they get good comments. Then when they have SAU and SAT results, sometimes they cry. After this, I don't know how to teach and assess them.

Another serious issue for teachers was fairness in assessment. Teachers claimed that students could cheat during the SA by copying from each other or getting access to SA tasks in advance. The issue was that in the past teachers delivered marks daily for different tasks and at the end of the term calculated the final average mark. But currently, students could do nothing during the terms and in the end, get a high score. In this connection, Alma remembered: "Those who don't study well can get a high score; on the contrary, more able students can get a low score". To make the situation fairer some teachers tried to add points to more able students and lower the scores of less able students. As a result, this

led to arguments with students as well as parents. This is how Azhar described the situation:

They are of course angry and ask for reasons why they have different marks while they have similar works [with those who got higher marks]. I explain to them and their parents that the child doesn't have the same level [as a more able student]. So the problem is that I can't give marks the students usually deserve.

According to teachers, CBA is objective, but the system of SA lets less able students cheat (copying from other students or having answers for SA in advance) and this is what teachers could not accept.

To conclude, teachers' current challenges can be classified into two categories: 1) understanding of some specific features of CBA such as FA, feedback, self and peer-assessment; and 2) objective final marks. Thus, the analysis of current challenges showed that there was progress in teachers' understanding of CBA since teachers narrowed their focus and paid attention to some specified details in the assessment.

4.3.3 Changes in teaching practices.

Participants pointed out that their teaching approach had undergone changes after the educational reforms in secondary education were launched. Changing themselves and their approach is still a huge challenge for most teachers; however, they noted some progress concerning this aspect.

With CBA teachers could not utilize marks as an incentive to study, so the only way to motivate students was to raise their interest. In this connection, most teachers realized they need more engaging lessons and different approaches to engage students. Therefore, more experienced teachers (more than 15 years' experience) stated they had to continuously self-educate in search of something new and interesting. In this regard, Aliya confessed: "The ordinary lessons where you just sit and tell something do not work

anymore”. Bakhyt explained that in the past teachers used only a textbook, but today they use different resources and materials but this takes more time. Another crucial moment was that reflection and lesson analysis had become a very important part of their work. As a result, teachers started “to think over each step before the lesson” and conducted lessons more consciously.

Also, teachers said that these days they should let children work more independently showing the individual approach to every student and considering a child's opinion. For example, Zarina described the changes this way: "With previous assessment, we had authoritarian regime; however, here we need democratic one”. Ardak supported this idea but in different words when she said: “I try to consider the child’s state in order not to let him hate my subject; if he hates the teacher he will hate the lesson as well”. In addition, Bakhyt claimed that due to the absence of marks, "there is no need to shout at the student or tell off”. Thus, teachers’ priority on the lesson became finding an approach to students and allow them to develop by explaining what they should do and how.

Finally, teachers claimed that “communication between teachers, students and parents became better”. By this teachers meant that due to their everyday comments on students’ progress both to children and parents their relationships became closer and more transparent.

Concluding this section, it was obvious that by the fourth year of implementing CBA teachers still faced challenges. However, their challenges were at a different level. During the interviews, they were confident about the aspects of CBA they wanted to improve and realized the pressing necessity to change their teaching. Also, the findings demonstrated that the introduction of CBA to mainstream schools had affected teachers in terms of their attitude to children and their teaching approaches.

4.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present, analyze, and interpret the findings of the current research. The findings were divided into three main themes. Based on my data analysis above, I have interpreted the following conclusions:

- 1) Teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment.

Teachers' understanding of the rationale for changes in assessment can be categorized into three groups: 1) the process of development of Kazakhstan as an independent country, 2) necessity to conform to modern requirements and 3) failure of five-point grading system to satisfy updated needs. It was significant that all teachers considered that educational changes in mainstream schools were inevitable. Young teachers adapted to CBA easier, while more experienced teachers had some resistance towards CBA during the initial years of the implementation. All the teachers pointed towards the significant role of PDP, teacher collaboration, administration support, and self-education in constructing perspectives towards CBA and its practice.

- 2) Teacher's perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of CBA.

Teachers referred to assessment as being beneficial both to teachers and students. There are some requirements that assessment should meet, in particular, it should be transparent, clear, comprehensive, measurable, positive, aimed at student improvement and objective. The participants highlighted providing comments instead of daily marks as the most important change in their assessment practices.

Teachers noted such benefits as the shift in the focus of assessment towards improving students' knowledge and skills since the final purpose of CBA is students' progress. Also, according to teachers CBA has such advantages as objectivity and transparency; equal opportunity for different types of students (introverts and extroverts);

and promotes students' independence. However, teachers are confident that more gradual CBA implementation and its adaptation to Kazakhstani secondary schools would have made CBA more beneficial and systematic.

3) Teachers' challenges with CBA and changes in teaching practices.

Most of the issues during the first four years were caused by the misunderstanding of CBA because teachers had a theoretical comprehension of how CBA worked but lacked practical knowledge and skills. This led to inappropriate CBA practices, which resulted in resistance and frustration among students and parents. Though teachers as well as parents and students were getting used to CBA and changing their perspectives towards CBA there were still some challenges. However, their challenges were different after four years of implementation. Mostly, they were related to the understanding of particular aspects of CBA (FA, feedback, creating criteria, etc.) as well as technical and ethical moments. In addition, CBA affected communication between teachers, students, and their parents allowing these groups to work more closely together.

In the following chapter the findings will be discussed and interpreted in relation to both the reviewed literature and the study's conceptual framework.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study aimed to investigate mainstream schoolteacher's perspectives and experiences regarding criteria-based assessment (CBA) by answering the questions: 1) What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards changes in the assessment?; 2) What are the benefits and drawbacks of CBA?; 3) What were teachers' challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices while implementing CBA? The previous chapter presented the main findings from the teacher interviews. This chapter is aimed at discussing these findings in connection with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The research findings were interpreted through the conceptual framework based on the concepts of change, professional development, and assessment.

5.1 Teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment.

A clear understanding of the educational reform's purposes is critical for teachers since it influences their experiences in times of change as well as the success of the reforms (Bennet, 2011). The data analysis determined that most teachers adequately interpreted the rationales for changes as their main assumptions were in line with previous research conclusions (Shamshidinova et al., 2014; Yakavets, 2014). However, despite all the teachers' claims that changes were inevitable; their feelings towards the new assessment practices were different, especially during the first stage of implementation. Current results share several similarities with Bondarenko's (2019) findings, revealing that younger participants (2-6 years of teaching experience) accepted CBA easier than some teachers with 20-30 years' experience. However, currently, the majority of teachers tried to adapt to the assessment alterations. Eight out of nine participants claimed that they had adapted to or supported the shift to CBA. Only one teacher remained pessimistic about CBA implementation arguing that despite a number of different development programs there was little progress in her colleagues' understanding and practices of CBA. At the

same time, only a few participants demonstrated full and obvious enthusiasm towards Kazakh changes in assessment.

One of the factors influencing teachers' perspectives towards CBA as well as their practices was professional development (PD). Seminars and training helped teachers to construct their knowledge about CBA and improved some assessment skills contributing to the understanding of changes in the assessment as found in past studies (e.g., Guskey, 2002; Starkey, et al, 2009). However, mere theoretical input was not enough to fully comprehend CBA and utilize it correctly in classrooms as observed by Villegas-Reimers (2003). Most teachers highlighted that collaboration, self-education, and practice were also beneficial to develop a better comprehension of new assessment system knowledge and gain skills on CBA (Richardson, 1997). Current findings also echoed Guskey's (2002) results, according to which the early stage of updated assessment adoption was mostly related to developing a theoretical base, while PDP during the following years of the reform implementation was focused on developing teachers' specific professional skills. The identical tendency revealed by current data analysis was that after practicing CBA in their lessons, teachers faced a number of issues. This led to collaborative discussions of CBA's specific aspects and, as a result, to the improvement of CBA understanding and required skills.

Analysis of findings related to teachers' perspectives towards their role in the implementation of this new assessment policy found two important factors that influenced teachers' experience: their understanding of CBA and willingness to change. Most teachers asserted that their understanding of CBA had a great impact on their practices and as a result on students' attitude to CBA and academic performance. A similar conclusion was reached by Leithwood et al. (2002) and Levin and Fullan (2008) when they argued that teachers' understanding of the reform governs how teachers implement the changes in their

classrooms. Moreover, if teachers did not have enough wish to change their practices or were not open to assessment alterations, they could slow down the implementation of the reform "working as they did in the past". This echoes Fullan's (2006) concept that for successful changes people who are responsible for implementation should have the willingness, otherwise they are resistant to changes which influences their professional practices.

5.2 Teacher's perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of CBA.

The current study revealed that almost all teachers felt they lacked a clear understanding of CBA which, according to them, negatively affected their practices. Earlier studies revealed the same correlation between proper understanding, knowledge, and skills and teachers' CBA misapplication (Gimranova, 2018; Ixanova, 2018). This supports Fullan's idea (2007) that scarcity of skills can be an obstacle to anticipated outcomes. Nevertheless, while defining CBA, teachers used such terms as criteria, descriptors, feedback, moderation, reflection as well as were able to distinguish FA and SA, which manifested their understanding of CBA main features. The remarkable finding was that teachers prioritize SA, indicating it as more significant since it reflects the results of their work. A possible explanation for this might be that Kazakhstani schoolteachers' work is evaluated following students' academic outcomes. However, this assumption should be investigated more thoroughly in future research.

5.2.1 Perspectives towards benefits.

Four years of CBA implementation provided teachers with an opportunity to analyze the new assessment policy and outline its benefits and drawbacks. In this regard, teachers identified four main advantages of CBA: improving students' knowledge and skills; objectivity and transparency; more freedom and independence; and equity.

The findings indicated that CBA helps teachers to work on their teaching strategies more specifically since through the explicit assessment criteria they can reveal students' strengths and weaknesses. As a result, it helped teachers to work more purposefully on gaps and also provided students a chance to develop, shifting students' focus from gathering marks to improving knowledge and skills. This is in agreement to the conclusions of Carlson et al (2000), who claim that due to feedback, which is an integral part of CBA, assessment moved from primitive students' ranking towards a bigger educational goal that is the improvement of students' knowledge and skills through appropriate feedback. This finding was also reported by Bondarenko (2019) in her research conducted in one of the Kazakhstani state mainstream schools. There are also similarities between the attitudes expressed by teachers regarding the previous assessment system which did not provide such opportunity since most students and their parents were more concerned about daily marks perceiving them as the final goal. In addition, CBA develops four skills in language (reading, listening, writing, and speaking); while in the past, the focus was more on grammar. Nevertheless, similarly to previous studies, the research found that there were still some students who did not study properly during the term as there were no marks and only at the end of the unit or term they made efforts sometimes resorting to academic misconduct during SA (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Bondarenko, 2019; Suyundikova, 2019).

The second advantage of CBA according to the findings is its objectivity and transparency. Due to explicit and detailed assessment criteria, both students and their parents could indicate learners' strengths and gaps. This stopped the past arguments by parents and students about teachers' subjective grading, which was a common thing in the five-point grading system. This result also has been found earlier by Bondarenko (2019) when she concluded that transparency helps to avoid misunderstanding about grades with

students. These findings completely correlate with previous research. For example, according to Xavier and Mehta (2006), 70% of students agree that with CBA students are able to self-evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in academic performance and understand how to improve it, while later Selisheva's results (2014) found that nearly 80% of the students perceive CBA as objective and claim that they clearly realize why they received lower marks. When comparing my results to those of older studies, it must be pointed out that the previous studies did not mention parents as beneficiaries of a new assessment system, which can be considered a new finding in this area. Also, the current study found that percentage, by which students are graded before the final marks, adds objectivity to assessment as students realize the difference in their knowledge level when they see "5" based on 95% and "5" based on 89%.

The next CBA advantage highlighted by the analysis is closely connected to the previous one. This is because clear and public criteria helped to shift the focus from teacher-centered system towards "a student-led system" (Otter, 1995, p.45). The current findings showed that, due to the absence of fear to make a mistake and get a low mark, students felt less stressed and freely expressed their ideas and opinions while being formatively assessed. Another modification in the assessment such as acceptance of any answer made students free from teachers' approval, which contributed to students' independence, active participation in the learning process and growth of motivation (e.g. Wilson & Peterson, 2006). This finding echoes the earlier research result which states that CBA stimulates learners' active role in the learning process as well as encourages students' orientation towards self-development and self-education (Sabdenova et al., 2016).

One unanticipated finding was that teachers agreed CBA took into account different types of learners' personalities providing equal opportunity to academically succeed both for extroverts and introverts. Not all the students felt equally comfortable to participate

actively in the learning process during the lessons. Some shy and modest children avoided expressing ideas in group or pair activities. Although, these students did not have any problems with learning acquisition in the previous assessment system such learners stayed in the background. However, with the introduction of CBA, during SA at the end of the unit and term which was done individually, all learners (including extroverts and introverts) were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This can mean that the new assessment approach is flexible and ensures equal chances to students taking into consideration their diversity.

5.2.2 Teachers' perspectives towards drawbacks.

The current study found that CBA drawbacks are mainly connected to the reform implementation pace and some curriculum inconsistencies. First, it was challenging for teachers to absorb and expertize all the modifications in a short period. CBA was introduced as a part of the updated curriculum reform that modified curriculum, instructions, and assessment. Moreover, during the four years, it spread throughout all secondary schools and covered all the grades from 1 to 11. Since CBA was radically different from the former five-point grading system, teachers needed a gradual transition to be able to change their mindset eventually. This recurring idea was mentioned by all the experienced teachers; therefore, it can be inferred that such large-scale reforms need more time. In this regard, Villegas-Reimers (2003) stated it is significant to realize that gaining knowledge and developing necessary skills is a time-consuming process for teachers. In addition, teachers also asserted that CBA implementation was not systematized and needed adaptation to Kazakhstani schools in terms of the number of SA and inconsistencies with the curriculum. In contrast to earlier Kazakhstani findings, however, no evidence of teachers' concerns about alignment between CBA practices and UNT (Unified National Testing) was detected (Bondarenko, 2019). Bondarenko (2019) found that mainstream

schoolteachers were anxious about the inconsistency of their daily assessment practices with multiple-choice tasks of school final test (UNT). This can be explained by the fact that in 2019 the UNT was removed from final school exams. Although students still have to pass the UNT after school in order to enter Kazakhstani universities, no teacher mentioned this point during the interview, which shows that final exams affected teachers' classroom assessment practices.

To conclude, the findings regarding the advantages and disadvantages of CBA support the results of previous research. However there are some new findings: CBA transparency benefited parents; CBA provides equal opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills to all children, extroverts and introverts; students' final exams direct teachers' daily assessment practices.

5.3 Challenges with CBA implementation and changes in teaching practices.

Teachers' challenges with CBA. The results of this study revealed teachers' challenges with CBA and their change during four years. During the first stage of implementation most teachers' challenges were connected to the understanding of CBA, students' transition from a five-point grading system to CBA, and parental pressure. However, at present, teachers' challenges with CBA have narrowed down to understanding some specific aspects of CBA and making sure that assessment is fair for all students.

In this study, CBA understanding seemed to be the priority for teachers both in the past and the present. A possible explanation for that could be that teachers realized the influence of understanding CBA on their practices which in turn could have an impact on students' academic achievements (Black & William, 2009; Boud, 1995; Brown, 2005). This also accords with earlier findings, which showed that the biggest challenge for teachers was to apply FA in practice, as the knowledge they gained from the development programs was mostly theoretical (Abdrakhmanova, 2017; Acar-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018;

Gimranova, 2018). The participants found a discrepancy between their knowledge and classroom practices, which brought them to realize they had gaps in CBA understanding. For example, during their first experiences with FA, it was difficult for teachers to comprehend how to teach and assess students without marks. However, previous findings showed that teachers' understanding of CBA had progressed. This result is in accordance with Suyundikova (2019), who surveyed Kazakhstani 42 mainstream schoolteachers in her mixed research, almost 70% of teachers asserted that they can confidently utilize CBA. This study showed that it was not the concept of CBA, FA, or SA that teachers were concerned about at present. In the fourth year of CBA implementation teachers were more challenged with specific details such as making feedback more informative, descriptors clearer and more explicit, peer and self-assessment more effective, etc. The observed development in teachers' concerns could be attributed to everyday classroom practices and PDP. Moreover, self-reflection, collaborative discussions, and continuous analysis of assessment practices might be also beneficial to bridge the majority of the gaps in CBA understanding (Guskey, 2002; Starkey, et al., 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Another finding was related to the students' first reaction towards new assessment practices. Some of the students became relaxed and disregarded homework. This reflects the previous studies that brought out the loss of students' motivation to study lessons after CBA introduction (Bondarenko, 2019; Ixanova, 2018; Malakshinova, 2018; Suyundikova, 2019). The observed decrease in learners' motivation to study can be imputed to lack of CBA understanding among students during the transition period which led to students' misinterpreting the absence of marks as cancellation of assessment and neglecting preparation for lessons. This research result to some extent supports Brown's (2005) concept that assessment encourages learning, and if there is no assessment, students will ignore teaching.

Another issue that teachers mentioned in their interviews was related to parental pressure. However, the findings identified that in the past it was much stronger than at the present time. According to teachers, parents also lack an understanding of CBA (Bondarenko, 2019). Many parents were resistant to CBA mainly because of the absence of marks, as they believed the marks helped to control the children's progress and also kept them motivated (Malakshinova, 2018). In addition, teachers' misunderstanding of CBA did not contribute to adequate CBA practices, which resulted in parents' and students' frustration. For example, according to Ixanova (2018) during the first CBA practices parents were not receiving either grades or feedback and therefore were not able to evaluate their children's progress. This means that parental pressure was closely interconnected to the previous teachers' challenges. Parents being not able to control their children through marks and seeing children's unwillingness to study reacted negatively towards the reform which resulted in arguments with teachers. However, the current research found a decrease in tension between parents and teachers, which can be explained by the awareness-raising work conducted by teachers and administration (Bondarenko, 2019).

One surprising finding was teachers' disagreement with SA marks and their attempts to influence them. In the past teachers were assessing students daily and, therefore, were aware of the students' approximate level of knowledge and skills, and could predict final term marks. With CBA it became unpredictable. Some less able students could ignore studying during the term, demonstrate low FA results, and finally get high scores for SA receiving good term marks. Teachers thought it was unfair, suspecting academic misconduct. This finding reflects the earlier research which found that some learners had issues with academic integrity during SA (Suyundikova, 2019). Therefore, teachers made attempts to affect the final grades by lowering the students' scores otherwise

they felt it could be unfair in relation to hard-working and more able students. This outcome shows that schoolteachers are used to comparing students which is contrary to Green's (2002) argument that CBA allows teachers to evaluate students' current progress avoiding comparisons and prejudices. However, in this case, the inconsistency can be attributed not to CBA, but to teachers' perspectives towards the concept of fairness.

Changes in teachers' classroom practices. According to Richardson (1997), the process of acquiring knowledge and actions are closely interrelated and continuously influence each other. In this connection, the research findings demonstrated that with CBA introduction to mainstream schools almost all the participants indicated alterations in their practices.

An interesting finding was that the assessment reform, through PDP and everyday practices has changed not only teachers' practices but their perspectives towards teachers' leadership. "Becoming more democratic" in the classroom, "taking students' opinions into account", "individual approach", "trying to make lessons more interesting" were recurring points teachers mentioned describing their changes. Another promising finding was the change in teachers' approach to lessons since after lesson reflection and analysis, search for new materials, and self-education became a part of their everyday routine. Along with this, due to CBA transparency and feedback, "communication between teachers, students and parents became better". Teachers found that "there is no need to shout at the student or tell off". It can, therefore, be assumed that the CBA influenced the teacher-student relationship in a positive way. This can be considered as an important and encouraging finding in the understanding of the CBA effects on teachers and their practices.

5.4 Summary

To conclude, this chapter discussed the major findings of the study within the framework of the theory of change, professional development, and assessment. Teachers'

perspectives and experiences regarding new assessment practices were the results of ongoing processes affected continuously by many factors such as openness to changes, PDP, and teaching practices.

Currently, teachers demonstrated a lack of confidence with some CBA tools which raises issues in their classrooms. Also, the pace of the reform introduction and curriculum inconsistencies were other concerns of mainstream schoolteachers in Kazakhstan.

Nevertheless, they recognized the benefits of CBA for students and saw the first promising results. The majority of current findings were aligned with the previous research from both international and local context except for the following results: 1) teachers prioritize SA considering it as an indicator of their work; 2) although CBA is objective, teachers still compare students with each other and with their previous academic outcomes; 3) CBA provides equal opportunities to all learners; and 4) new assessment system has positively influenced teaching practices and relationships with students.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is to present the summary of the research aimed to explore the phenomenon of mainstream school teachers' perspectives and challenges with criteria-based assessment (CBA) in the Kazakhstani context. Specifically, the research aimed at determining teachers' perspectives towards changes in mainstream school assessment, their challenges and how the modifications affected teachers' classroom assessment practices. There are three sections constituting this chapter: section one provides an overview of the current research findings; section two suggests recommendations and implications based on interview data; section three indicates the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research; and section four is a short conclusion.

6.1 Summary of the study findings.

In order to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA, the following overarching research question guided the study: What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment? Additional sub-questions included: 1) What are mainstream schoolteachers' perspectives towards changes in the assessment?; 2) What are the benefits and drawbacks of CBA?; 3) What were the teachers' challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices while implementing CBA?

A phenomenological design was applied to conduct this qualitative research investigating the phenomenon of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding CBA. There were nine participants recruited by homogeneous, purposive sampling. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data analysis indicated three main themes: teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment, teachers' understanding of CBA, and challenges and changes in teachers' assessment practices.

The interviews were analyzed based on the use of the conceptual framework which allowed determining the interconnection between such concepts as the theory of change, professional development, and criteria-based assessment. This means that when modifications in the assessment were introduced, teachers constructed their preliminary attitudes towards CBA and gained their first knowledge and skills from seminars and training. Later, when they returned to their classroom this process continued influencing teachers' perspectives and experiences.

Teachers' perspectives towards changes in assessment. The main findings regarding teachers' perspectives towards the changes were that teachers, first of all, had different attitudes towards these modifications, especially in terms of the initial implementation. Some more experienced teachers were resistant to CBA while teachers with less than six years' experience accepted the reforms more positively. Due to less or no experience with the five-point grading system, most of the less experienced teachers did not have to change much in their teaching practices. Nonetheless, after several years of CBA implementation, the majority of experienced teachers tried to adapt to the assessment alterations as well. Though most of them recognized the benefits of CBA, it was noticeable that only a few teachers were enthusiastic about the new assessment.

The important finding was that professional development (PD) was one of the factors influencing both teachers' perspectives towards CBA and their teaching practices. It was found that seminars and training contributed to constructing teachers' knowledge of CBA and improving assessment skills. However, to be beneficial PDP should be both theoretical and practical. In this regard, teacher collaboration, self-education, and classroom practices were also useful for developing better CBA understanding and required skills through more practical work.

Teachers' understanding of CBA. Another significant finding revealed by this research was identifying two important factors influencing teachers' experience: their understanding of CBA and willingness to change. Unwillingness to change led to ignoring new assessment practices, while the lack of CBA understanding by the majority of the participants resulted in challenges with assessment practices. For example, prioritizing summative assessment (SA) led to low-quality formative assessment in particular uninformative feedback, unclear descriptors, inefficient peer and self-assessment. Additionally, hasty reform implementation as well as curriculum inconsistencies aggravated the situation since this contributed to teachers' misunderstandings and chaos. An important finding here was that currently teachers did not have any concerns about the lack of alignment between CBA and Unified National Testing. This means that students' final exams and teachers' understanding of CBA guided teachers' daily assessment practices.

Nevertheless, the current study revealed four CBA benefits: improving students' knowledge and skills; objectivity and transparency; more freedom and independence for students; and equity. These advantages were mentioned in previous research; however, it was found that CBA transparency benefited not only students but also parents. Also, the fact that the new assessment system provides equal opportunities for students in terms of demonstrating their knowledge and skills was an unexpected result.

Teachers' challenges and changes in teaching practices. Over the course of the four years of implementation, the challenges teachers faced underwent some changes. During the first stage of implementation, most teachers' challenges were related to such aspects as the understanding of the basics of CBA, issues with students' attitudes, and parents' pressure. After four years of implementation, teachers' challenges had narrowed to understanding some specific aspects of CBA (efficient feedback, explicit criteria, and

descriptors) and making assessment fair. The surprising result was teachers' perspectives on assessment fairness. When teachers saw that some less able students received good final marks, they tried to influence grading reasoning that it was unfair in relation to more able and hardworking students. This can be considered as new knowledge in this field which raises an issue of teachers' understanding of fairness in assessment.

The findings related to changes in teachers' practices revealed that CBA influenced teachers' leadership in the classroom, teachers' attitude to students' and teachers' approach to lessons (lesson planning, classroom teaching, after lesson reflection and discussion). The new finding was that alterations in assessment changed teachers' perspectives towards teachers' leadership from autocratic towards democratic. Teachers started to pay attention to students' feelings and thoughts searching for different approaches to each student, which eventually led to a better relationship between teachers and students.

Overall, following the conceptual framework, due to the reforms in the mainstream school assessment system and professional development programs, teachers went through the unique experiences of changing teaching practices and constructing new knowledge and skills. Most of the current results complement the findings of the earlier studies. However, there are some unexpected findings which can contribute to new knowledge in the field of CBA implementation: 1) teachers' prioritize SA as the criterion for the success of their work; 2) teachers' understanding of fairness in assessment; 3) new assessment system was more equitable as it benefited all learners (extroverts and introverts); 4) CBA had a positive effect on teaching practices and teacher-student relationships.

6.2 Implications and recommendations.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that teachers' experiences and challenges during the CBA implementation period should be taken into account in order to avoid issues at the time of future educational reforms. The findings of this research

provided insights about teachers' perspectives and experiences with CBA implementation in the context of Kazakhstani mainstream schools. Taken together, these results suggested that changes in teachers' perspectives and classroom practices are ongoing processes, which are influenced by teachers' attitudes towards the reform, understanding of the new assessment practices, and well-organized professional development. The study results indicated the need for the following implications and recommendations:

Recommendations for the Ministry of education. First, during the CBA implementation more experienced teachers needed special attention due to their resistance towards the reform. Therefore, in periods of reform introduction, there should be a well-planned professional development strategy with the focus not only on developing teachers' knowledge and skills but also the attitude towards the changes. Also, the programs should be both theoretical and practical including new materials, demo lessons, discussions, reflections, and analysis.

Second, a large-scale reform such as the introduction of CBA to all Kazakhstani mainstream schools needs time. Accordingly, it is better to introduce changes to education gradually in order to allow teachers to adjust to modifications and construct a clear understanding of the new methods.

Third, teachers' assessment practices depend not only on their understanding of CBA and necessary skills but also on teachers' perceptions of fairness in assessment. This means there should be some standards to make assessment objective and fair. Seminars and training could be helpful to work out issues with a fair assessment.

Recommendations for school administrations. According to findings, school administrations also played an important role in CBA implementation in terms of support and direction. In times of change, some teachers can be confused; therefore the ability of the school administration to guide teachers in the appropriate direction and create the

necessary atmosphere is critical. Organizing seminars, training, and teacher collaboration as well as identifying topics for discussions can contribute to teachers' confidence in CBA. For example, at the present time actual topics, according to teachers' current challenges, can be formative assessment, peer and self-assessment, feedback, as well as the issue of explicit criteria and descriptors.

Recommendations for teachers. One of the major recommendations for teachers is to be open to new knowledge and collaborative work in the period of reform implementation. More experienced teachers should realize that they work in times of constant change which will continuously affect their teaching practices. Also, teachers should understand the concept of fairness in assessment in order to avoid double standards while evaluating students.

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Considerably more work is needed to determine the patterns and inconsistencies in teachers' experiences with CBA which can be generalized more confidently. The small sample size which is limited to teachers from central Kazakhstan does not allow for generalization of the results and suggests a degree of caution. This study lacks the perspectives and experiences of teachers from other regions. Therefore, future research can include participants from different regions, since, for example, teachers' experiences from urban and rural mainstream schools can differ presenting other viewpoints to the reform. Also it can explore a larger sample of participants including other stakeholders (e.g. students, parents, school administrations). At the same time, in this study I looked back retrospectively over the course for the four year implementation to see the change based on my conceptual framework. This, along with the two previous studies on CBA, provided snapshots of the reform processes. A mixed method longitudinal study of CBA implementation at the national level reform by following schools and surveying nationally

would be more beneficial to see the change as it occurred over time as well as more generalizable.

Another limitation was my outsider position, as I do not belong to teachers from mainstream school and work in Nazarbayev Intellectual School, which first implemented CBA. This fact could influence the attitude towards the research and level of sincerity of my participants. Additionally, although I have attempted to rely only on interviewees' responses and explain the phenomenon of teachers' experiences with CBA from participants' perspectives, my own lenses in filtering the information may have an impact on research conclusions as well.

6.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the current research provided a clearer picture of the CBA implementation processes by shedding light on the lived experiences of Kazakhstani mainstream schoolteachers with a new assessment system. The study answered the research questions revealing some changes in teachers' perspectives towards the reform, the benefits and drawbacks of the updated assessment approach, teachers' challenges with CBA, and changes in teaching practices. The current conclusions are of great significance to me as a researcher since they determine the aspects in this field that are relatively well-explored at the present time and indicate the areas for future studies. Thus, in my future study I am planning to have a larger sample of participants as well as include perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders which will make the research more generalizable.

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Appendix A

TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CRITERIA-BASED ASSESSMENT IN KAZAKHSTANI MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES.

My name is Zhuldyz Turganalina. I am a student at Nazarbayev University, working with my faculty supervisor, Professor Kathy Malone in Graduate School of Education.

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research project which concerns investigation of Kazakhstani teachers' perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment. This is important to note that the researcher is not going to evaluate teachers' practices; the only aim of the researcher is to know more about teachers' experiences with criteria-based assessment. You will be asked to participate in a private 45-60-minute interview with me and asked a series of questions about your perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment. The interview will be scheduled at a place and time of your convenience. Participation in the research is on a voluntary basis, and you can withdraw anytime. If you find some of the questions challenging, you may skip them, and the researcher will continue the interview. With your permission the interview will be audio taped. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. After transcribing, the tape and the transcriptions will be kept in a locker at the office, separate from the consent forms. The interview information will be kept confidential, and the access to the tapes will have only the researcher this will protect from any identification of the real names of participants. Research findings will be included in the final research report and may be used at potential conferences and/or publications, however the interviewees names or working places will never be mentioned. The recordings and transcriptions of the research will be destroyed as soon as the research is finished (by August 2020). Everything discussed will remain confidential and your identity will not be shared. The researcher for confidentiality purposes will assign numbers to the interviewees or use pseudonyms, for example, Teacher 1 or Teacher A.

TIME INVOLVEMENT:

Your participation in the interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

RISKS:

There are no major risks to participants associated with the present study. The minor risks related to revealing the names of participants will be minimized by conducting the interviews outside schools and using pseudonyms that will ensure the anonymity. The participants may also be uncomfortable sharing personal information and worry about confidentiality. In this consent form, I guarantee that the access to recordings and transcriptions will be to the researcher only. After the research is finished, all the recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed. In addition, there may be minimal psychological risks, such as fear or embarrassment to disclose their feelings or ideas, or they may have negative experiences in thinking about previous stories and sharing memories. The researcher will assure the participants that the purpose of the research is to know more about teacher practices, and the researcher is not going to evaluate or judge them. They may also fear misinterpretation of the interview answers by a researcher (intentionally or unintentionally). To minimize these risks, the researcher will return at another date to conduct member-checking, to review the transcripts with participants, so they can edit or revise their responses.

Your rejection to participate will not affect in any way to your relationship with Nazarbayev University or your current employment.

BENEFITS:

First, teachers can benefit from this research by clarifying their comprehension of the CBA which could lead to improving of their classroom practices. In addition, they can have their voices heard and try to let policy makers know about their issues. Second, due to the lack of studies on the implementation of criteria-based assessment in a Kazakhstani context, particularly in mainstream secondary schools, the current study, will greatly contribute to the research/knowledge gap in this field. Finally, educational stakeholders may use the findings and recommendations of this paper for further development of quality education and teacher professional development in Kazakhstan.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:

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

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, (Professor Kathy Malone, kathymalone@nu.edu.kz)

The researcher: Zhuldyz Turganalina zhuldyz.turganalina@nu.edu.kz, +7
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz
Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will

be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant Signature:

Student Researcher Signature:

Date:

Date:

Форма информационного согласия участника

Критериальное оценивание в казахстанских общеобразовательных школах:
Видение и опыт учителей.

Меня зовут Жулдыз Турганалина. Я, студентка Назарбаев Университета, работаю над этим проектом совместно со своим научным руководителем, профессором Высшей школы образования, Кэти Малоун.

ОПИСАНИЕ: Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовании, которое направлено на изучение видения и опыта Казахстанских учителей в критериальном оценивании. Важно отметить целью данного исследования НЕ является оценка преподавательской деятельности, единственная цель — это изучение опыта учителей в плане критериального оценивания. Вам будет предложено участие в интервью, длительность которого составляет примерно 45-60 минут и заданы вопросы на тему вашего видения и опыта в критериальном оценивании. Вы можете выбрать время и место проведения интервью удобное для вас. Участие в исследовании является добровольным, также, в случае если Вы посчитаете некоторые вопросы в интервью сложными или некомфортными, Вы можете не отвечать на них, в таком случае исследователь продолжит интервью дальше. Вы можете отказаться от участия в исследовании и остановить интервью, как только посчитаете нужным. Интервью будет записываться, аудио запись будет использована только для дальнейшего транскрибирования. После транскрибирования, запись и транскрипт будет храниться в закрытой тумбе в офисе, отдельно от форм информационного согласия. Вся информация по результатам исследования конфиденциальная, доступ к ней будет только у самого исследователя, что гарантирует, что никто не сможет идентифицировать настоящие имена участников. Данные исследования будут включены в заключительный тезис исследователя и могут быть использованы в конференциях и публикациях, тем не менее, ни имена участников, ни их место работы не будут упоминаться. Записи и транскрипты будут уничтожены по завершения исследования (Август, 2020). Все что обсуждалось на интервью останется конфиденциальным, и ваша личность не будет раскрыта. Также с целью конфиденциальности, при описании данных исследования участникам будут присвоены псевдонимы или номера, к примеру, Учитель №1 или Учитель А. Полная анонимность будет сохранена, Ваше имя или название места работы не будут раскрыты. В процессе анализа доступ к данным будут иметь только руководитель по проекту и исследователь. С целью подтверждения правильности понимания ваших ответов и для устранения возможных недоразумений или сомнений исследователь предоставит Вам свои записи после их оформления. Записанные интервью будут храниться отдельно от формы информационного согласия, в безопасном месте.

ДЛИТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ИНТЕРВЬЮ: Участие в интервью будет длиться 45-60 минут.

РИСКИ: Больших рисков, связанных с участием в исследовании, нет. Небольшие риски, связанные с раскрытием имен участников, будут минимизированы тем, что интервью будут проходить вне школы и использованием псевдонимов для анонимности. Участники также могут почувствовать неудобство, когда будут делиться личной информацией или беспокоиться об конфиденциальности. В этой информационной форме согласия я гарантирую что доступ к записям и транскриптам будет иметь только исследователь. Как только исследование будет завершено, записи и транскрипты будут уничтожены.

Дополнительно могут быть минимальные психологические риски, такие как страх или смущение раскрыть свои чувства и идеи, или возможных не очень приятных воспоминаний. Исследователь заверяет, что его цель узнать больше об опыте учителя, но не оценивать или осуждать. Также возможным риском может быть неправильное толкование Ваших ответов (намеренно или непреднамеренно). Во избежание этих рисков исследователь вернется в другой день с целью проверки правильного толкования ответов, просмотра транскриптов и возможности редактирования.

Участие или отказ принимать участие в проекте не повлияют на Ваши отношения с Назарбаев Университетом или на Вашу работу.

ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА: Во-первых, учителя имеют возможность развить свое понимание критериального оценивания, что может привести к улучшению преподавательской практики. К тому же, учителя имеют возможность быть услышанными и попытаться донести свои проблемы до политиков. Во-вторых, в следствии недостатка исследований по внедрению критериального оценивания в контексте Казахстана, в частности в общеобразовательных школах, данное исследование может внести свой вклад в исследования данной области. В заключении, все заинтересованные лица могут воспользоваться результатами и рекомендациями этого исследования для дальнейшего развития качества образования и профессионального роста учителей Казахстана.

ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКА: Если Вы прочитали данную форму и решили принять участие в данном исследовании, Вы должны понимать, что Ваше участие является добровольным и что у Вас есть право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без штрафных санкций и без потери какой - либо возможной выгоды для Вас. В качестве альтернативы можно не участвовать в исследовании. Также Вы имеете право не отвечать на какие-либо вопросы. Результаты данного исследования могут быть представлены или опубликованы в научных или профессиональных целях.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ: Вопросы: Если у Вас есть вопросы, замечания или жалобы по поводу данного исследования, процедуры его проведения, рисков и преимуществ, Вы можете связаться с руководителем исследователя, используя следующие данные: Профессор Кэти Малоун _____ или с исследователем Жулдыз Турганалиной _____ +7XXXXXXXXXX. Независимые контакты:

Если Вы не удовлетворены проведением данного исследования, если у Вас возникли какие-либо проблемы, жалобы или вопросы, Вы можете связаться с Комитетом Исследований Высшей Школы Образования Назарбаев Университета по телефону +7 7172 70 93 59 или отправить письмо на электронный адрес:

gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Пожалуйста, подпишите данную форму, если Вы согласны участвовать в исследовании.

- Я внимательно изучил представленную информацию;
- Мне предоставили полную информацию о целях и процедуре исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использованы собранные данные, и что доступ к любой конфиденциальной информации будет иметь только исследователь;
- Я понимаю, что вправе в любой момент отказаться от участия в данном исследовании без объяснения причин;

С полным осознанием всего вышеизложенного я согласен принять участие в исследовании.

Подпись участника:

Дата:

Подпись исследователя:

Дата:

Appendix B

Interview protocol

My name is _____. I am a student at Nazarbayev University, working with my faculty supervisor, _____ in Graduate School of Education.

You are invited to participate in a research project which concerns investigation of Kazakhstani teachers' perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment. This is important to note that the researcher is not going to evaluate your practices; the only aim of the researcher is to know more about your experiences with criteria-based assessment.

You are invited to participate in a private interview and will be asked a series of questions about your perspectives and experiences with criteria-based assessment. If there is a necessity for clarifications, some follow up questions could be asked. In case there is, any ambiguity or obscurity in the answers discovered later, some follow-up interviews could be carried out with some respondents.

Participation in the research is on a voluntary basis, and you can withdraw at any time. If you find some of the questions challenging, you may skip them, and the researcher will continue the interview. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. Therefore, after the research is finished all the recordings will be removed.

For confidentiality purposes, I will assign numbers to the interviewees or use pseudonyms, for example, Teacher 1 or Teacher A.

Your participation in the interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Semi-structured interview with open-ended questions

Questions:

- 1) Could you introduce yourself please? (Name, subject, grades, teaching experience)
- 2) How do you understand the concept of assessment? How do you understand what criteria-based assessment is?
- 3) What is your prior experience in classroom assessment?
 - 3.1) What assessment model did you use before criteria-based assessment?
 - 3.2) Do you think criteria-based assessment differs a lot from traditional 5-scale assessment model? If yes, in what ways?
- 4) In your understanding, why did Kazakhstan start to implement criteria-based assessment?
 - 4.1) What are the goals of criteria-based assessment in your secondary school classroom?
- 5) What are the major challenges you have faced in implementing the criteria-based assessment?

5.1) What is the most difficult aspect of criteria-based assessment in your practice? Why (not)?

5.2) How do you cope with challenges if there are any?

6) What are the main distinguishing features of the criteria-based assessment?

6.1) Do you find it difficult to give feedback that will facilitate learning? Can you explain to me what issues you are facing? What do you feel could be done to help you with these issues?

6.2) What do you think of students' ability to self- and peer-assess?

6.3) Do you apply this kind of assessment in your classroom? Can you describe to me what you do in your classroom and how you use CBA in your daily practice?

7) In your opinion what are the benefits of this type of classroom assessment?

7.1) According to your opinion, what opportunities has the implementation of the criteria-based assessment provided you as a teacher? To your students?

8) What kind of support did you get in order to implement the CBA? Who or what provides this support?

8.1) Did you attend any professional development courses in assessment? Can you tell me about them?

8.2) Do you get support from the school administration and colleagues in implementing the criteria-based assessment? Could you give any examples?

9) What do you think about the effectiveness of criteria-based assessment?

9.1) What do you think should be done to improve current criteria-based assessment practice in your school? What are your suggestions in improving classroom assessment in general?

10) How much would you say your approach to teaching and learning has changed recently?

11) Is there anything else you would want me to know about your experiences in implementing CBA?

Протокол интервью

Меня зовут _____. Я - студентка Назарбаев Университета, работаю с моим научным руководителем, _____ в Высшей Школе Образования.

Вы приглашены участвовать в исследовательском проекте, который касается изучения видения и опыта казахстанских учителей основанный на критериальном оценивании. Важно обратить внимание, что исследователь не собирается оценивать ваши практики, цель исследователя - узнать больше о вашем опыте в критериальном оценивании.

Вам предложено участие в интервью, длительность которого составляет примерно 45-60 минут и вам будут заданы вопросы на тему вашего видения и опыта в критериальном оценивании. В случае необходимости уточнений вам могут быть заданы дополнительные вопросы. В случае двусмысленности или неясностей, обнаруженных позже, возможно потребуются дополнительные интервью с некоторыми участниками.

Участие в исследовании является добровольным, и вы можете отказаться в любое время. Если вы найдете некоторые из вопросов сложными, вы можете пропустить их, и исследователь продолжит интервью. С вашего разрешения интервью будет записано на пленку. Запись предназначена для точной записи информации, которую вы предоставляете, и будет использоваться только для целей транскрипции. Поэтому после завершения исследования все записи будут удалены.

В целях конфиденциальности я буду присваивать номера интервьюируемым или использовать псевдонимы, например, учитель 1 или учитель А.

Ваше участие в собеседовании займет примерно 45-60 минут.

Полу структурированное интервью с открытыми вопросами

Вопросы:

- 1) Представьтесь, пожалуйста? (Имя, предмет, класс, опыт преподавания)
- 2) Как вы понимаете, что значит оценивание? Как вы понимаете, что такое критериальное оценивание?
- 3) Каков ваш предыдущий опыт в оценивании на уроках?
 - 3.1) Какую модель оценивания вы использовали до проведения критериального оценивания?
 - 3.2) Считаете ли вы, что критериальное оценивание сильно отличается от традиционной 5-балльной модели оценивания? Если да, то каким образом?
- 4) В вашем понимании, почему в Казахстане начали внедрять критериальное оценивание?
 - 4.1) Каковы цели критериального оценивания в вашей школе?

5) С какими основными проблемами вы столкнулись при внедрении критериального оценивания?

5.1) Что является самым сложным аспектом критериального оценивания в вашей практике? Почему (почему нет)?

5.2) Как вы справляетесь с проблемами, если они есть?

6) Каковы основные отличительные признаки критериального оценивания?

6.1) Трудно ли вам давать обратную связь для улучшения обучающего процесса? Можете ли вы объяснить мне, с какими проблемами вы столкнулись? Как вы думаете, что можно сделать, чтобы помочь вам с этими проблемами?

6.2) Что вы думаете о способности студентов к самооценке и оцениванию сверстников?

6.3) Применяете ли вы этот вид оценивания на своем уроке? Можете ли вы описать мне, что вы делаете на своем уроке и как вы используете критериальное оценивание в своей повседневной практике?

7) На ваш взгляд, каковы преимущества этого типа оценивания на уроке?

7.1) По вашему мнению, какие возможности предоставило вам как преподавателю внедрение критериального оценивания? А вашим ученикам?

8) Какую поддержку вы получили для внедрения критериального оценивания? Кто или что обеспечивает эту поддержку?

8.1) Посещали ли вы какие-либо курсы повышения квалификации по оцениванию? Вы можете рассказать мне о них?

8.2) Получаете ли вы поддержку от администрации школы и коллег в реализации критериального оценивания? Не могли бы вы привести какие-нибудь примеры?

9) Что вы думаете об эффективности критериального оценивания?

9.1) Что, по вашему мнению, следует сделать для улучшения существующей практики оценивания на основе критериев в вашей школе? Каковы ваши предложения по улучшению оценивания на уроке в целом?

10) Насколько, по вашему мнению, изменился ваш подход к преподаванию и обучению в последнее время?

11) Есть ли что-нибудь еще, что вы хотели бы, чтобы я знала о вашем опыте внедрения критериального оценивания?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol Transcript

Research title: Criteria-based assessment in Kazakhstani mainstream schools: Teachers' perspectives and experiences.

Date: January 15, 2020

Time: 11.00

Interviewee: Participant 6

Position: the English language teacher

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

Interviewee: Good morning. My name is.

Interviewer: This interview aims at investigating your perspectives and experiences with the criteria-based assessment. Tell me, please, what is your teaching experience?

Interviewee: I have 6 years of teaching, four of them at the current school as an English language teacher. I am currently teaching in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades.

Interviewer: How do you understand the concept of assessment? How do you understand what criteria-based assessment is?

Interviewee: Assessment, in general, is necessary in order to see what the current situation of children is. During the assessment, I understand how much the children have understood a particular topic and determine the future working plan.

Interviewer: What is your prior experience in classroom assessment? What assessment model did you use before criteria-based assessment (CBA)? Do you think criteria-based assessment differs a lot from the traditional 5-scale assessment model? If yes, in what ways?

Interviewee: I have been practicing the criteria-based assessment for 6 years. Initially, I started working at a Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS). There I also worked with CBA. This assessment is different from our traditional assessment system. In the traditional system, we estimated children by grades from 1 to 5. Now, we can evaluate children according to certain criteria. It seems to me that CBA helps children very much during lessons. It helps them understand what the teacher wants them to do. When there are certain criteria, the student approximately understands his study direction, where to move and what is required of him, etc. CBA gives more opportunities to evaluate children more objectively than it was with traditional marks. I think a lot of opportunities. For example, if the five-point system was more like a one-way system i.e. the teacher, as a subjective evaluator, could only award the labels to the students. For example, I see you as a C student or I see you as a good student or as an excellent student. As for the criteria-based assessment, there is equal responsibility. It is my viewpoint. This means assessment depends on both a teacher and a student, i.e. the teacher sets the tone, provides the criteria and the student tries to meet them as a result he feels more responsibility, I think. My

attitude to the criteria assessment was positive from the beginning. Maybe because after graduation I got a job in a NIS which means I had no experience with the traditional assessment approach and I did not have such a painful transition. I mean to change some of my assessment habits and so on. I started practicing a new assessment approach from the beginning and for me, it was absolutely normal. Overall, my first experience was positive... something new and I liked it.

Interviewer: In your understanding, why did Kazakhstan start to implement a criteria-based assessment? What are the goals of criteria-based assessment in your secondary school classroom?

Interviewee: It seems to me that CBA has long been used in Europe and America. CBA, I reiterate it, is more objective. I think we tried to take this step in order to somehow update our assessment system and the education system in general because the system that we had was a relic of the Soviet education system. Therefore, I think we somehow, well, the government probably decided to change the entire education system for the better, I think, more making it more objective.

Interviewer: What are the major challenges you have faced in implementing the criteria-based assessment? What is the most difficult aspect of criteria-based assessment in your practice? Why (not)? How do you cope with challenges if there are any?

Interviewee: At school as a student I was estimated via the five-point scale. Therefore initially, I needed to understand what criteria-based assessment was. I am grateful to my colleagues who explained to me it. Then during a month or two, I tried various tools of criteria-based assessment on my lessons. After that, I started to understand how it works, how to create these criteria. The main difficulty was how to determine the criteria that would be most beneficial to students during the lesson. For example, if the criteria are too simple for children then the result will be the same. But if you want some deeper results then the criteria must also be appropriate. It is sometimes difficult to find a suitable criterion to cope with this. Mainly, during the planning or probably after conducting the first class you take into account some shortcomings and by the next lesson, you prepare a more upgraded lesson plan. I have no such big difficulties with formative assessment. As for my colleagues who are novices, they came up and had questions. We explained to them what the criteria-based assessment is. By now, I think they have also already understood ... As for children, I think there are no problems at all because children are like a sponge they absorb everything new quickly and adapt.

Interviewer: What are the main distinguishing features of the criteria-based assessment? Do you find it difficult to give feedback that will facilitate learning? Can you explain to me what issues you are facing? What do you feel could be done to help you with these issues? What do you think of students' ability to self- and peer-assess? Do you apply this kind of assessment in your classroom? Can you describe to me what you do in your classroom and how you use CBA in your daily practice?

Interviewee: CBA consists of formative and summative assessments basically. Formative assessment constructs students' knowledge. Every lesson we set certain criteria. And there is a summative assessment that evaluates all the knowledge that children have received at a certain point. I think that this CBA consists of criteria, lesson objectives, and a scale of

points. The main focus should be on the objectives and how well the criteria correspond to these goals, I mean to achieving these goals. I use peer-assessment and self-assessment in my lessons. I think it is very interesting for children to evaluate themselves or their peers by certain criteria. This works well, especially in some group activities. For example, some groups work and some groups will evaluate. This is super interesting for children. Self-assessment is not bad. The most important thing here is the criteria and evaluation process. If they are well communicated to children, they will conduct assessments effectively. Good criteria are probably those that match the goals of the lesson or the goals of the task. Feedback is very important for both teachers and students. For the teacher in order to understand what points, shortcomings were in the lesson or what the children liked. Also, children can conduct an assessment of the lesson during the feedback, how he showed himself in this lesson, what he did not do enough, and so on. But sometimes it happens that children give feedback just because the teacher asked. Not always this feedback can be truthful. Nevertheless, if it is anonymous they can write the truth. For example, it can be difficult for them to describe what they didn't like in the class because some children don't want to hurt the teacher's feelings. But if it's anonymous they can write the truth. I think it's very important... Feedback to students is also very important in every lesson. It is a formative assessment for children so that they understand where, how well they did, even if it is verbally provided. This is very important for children's further development.

Interviewer: In your opinion what are the benefits of this type of classroom assessment? According to your opinion, what opportunities has the implementation of the criteria-based assessment provided you as a teacher? To your students?

Interviewee: The role of the teacher moves to the background and the student can value himself independently if there are already defined criteria if compare with the traditional system. It allows students to see their mistakes and their strengths. I mean the teacher simply provides criteria and the student can evaluate himself rather than waiting for the teacher's subjective assessment.

Interviewer: What kind of support did you get in order to implement the CBA? Who or what provides this support? Did you attend any professional development courses in the assessment? Can you tell me about them? Do you get support from the school administration and colleagues in implementing the criteria-based assessment? Could you give me any examples?

Interviewee: As for the NIS we had mentorship there. We had colleagues whom you could just approach and ask any questions. There were almost no problems and I quickly got used to this form of assessment. As for the school where I work at the moment, we had certain courses there, for example, the courses on updated content of education. Although I have already completed basic courses in Pavlodar, I was again sent to a course on updated content. It lasted about two months in the summer. We revised all the important aspects again; therefore, it seems that the support was also good. Personally, for me, it was a good time to repeat something that I might have missed. But for three of my colleagues, it was a kind of innovation: how to conduct the test, what forms there are, etc. It was very interesting to them.

Interviewer: What do you think about the effectiveness of criteria-based assessment? What do you think should be done to improve the current criteria-based assessment practice in your school? What are your suggestions for improving classroom assessment in general?

Interviewee: Well, it should be objective. It definitely shouldn't be a five-point scale because it doesn't show the difference between children in any way. I think the 100% we have now is perfect because a child who got 89% in a certain subject is not the same as he does not have the same knowledge as a child who received, for example, 95%. Also, it seems to me that Universities should take this into account while considering the school certificates and accept students not according to final marks but according to a percent scale. How many points did the students get on certain subjects and make some conclusions? Objectivity and perhaps some motivation to do tasks in the classroom. When children have criteria... not just to complete a task but how to do it ...what is expected from you... This is also very important for them to know. This also gives students additional motivation.

Interviewer: How much would you say your approach to teaching and learning has changed recently?

Interviewee: I think teachers started to change a little. In the beginning, there was rejection. Many teachers, who have been working for 20-30 years in school, had huge stress. I know from my parents and relatives who work as teachers. It was a bit stressful and unusual for them... this new system of assessment but I think over time they began getting used to it and as a result their style of teaching and assessment also began to change. For example, if you take my school, some teachers always motivated children or demotivated them in their lessons. They intimidated students by their marks. For example, if you do not do this I'll award you 2 or 3. Now they do not have such a tool. Accordingly, we have to come up with some new instruments. However, there are still such teachers who threaten the students: "If you don't do homework I will lower the points for the summative assessment. In other words, they are still used to motivate children with threats and intimidation. But I think many teachers have reconsidered their approach and they have already started to change their teaching, their views perhaps. For example, I try to make my lessons interesting. If earlier it was possible to just force children because this is an assessment and it will be reflected in the journal, you can't force the kids to do it now. Children can be only motivated by some interesting tasks. If they really need it they will do it... if they understand that it is necessary for them.

The seminars did not change me a lot. I think not so much. For others, it was like chalk and cheese. And for me after NIS it was not. Well, maybe I got something new for myself. I just recorded some activities. But the form of conducting, some theoretical moments for me were not so brand new.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would want me to know about your experiences in implementing CBA?

Interviewee: Well, I would suggest not transferring the percentage into marks. It would be better if Universities had a link with schools. The universities can also have a one hundred point scale for each subject so that when students are accepted to University the percentage could matter. How much percent do the children have in each subject? This is all. On the

whole, everything is good. There is a future for CBA. Even if it changes, the changes will be insignificant. But in general, I think that CBA will remain and I think that we will not go back to the traditional five-point grading system.