

**Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in  
Kazakhstan: perceptions of NIS teachers**

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## NUGSE RESEARCH APPROVAL DECISION LETTER

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- To grant approval for this study
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Sincerely,

NUGSE Research Committee

November 16, 2016

To my family, for your endless support and faith in me.  
This accomplishment wouldn't have been possible without you.

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### **Abstract**

Kazakhstan is presently experiencing significant reforms in secondary education trying on best practices and experiences borrowed from abroad. Important figures at this stage are Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) created to implement new approaches to teaching, learning and managing the school. They serve as a platform for altering the whole system and bringing Kazakhstan to a new higher level of development. In this context, teachers are exposed to dramatic changes in requirements for being a competent professional, which implies they need to revisit their personal and professional views and practices to meet new standards. The problem is that the major focus is given to the reforms themselves while the voices of those who actually enact them in practice are usually ignored. This study aimed at exploring the complex phenomenon of teacher identity in its relation to the present school reforms from the perspective of the main stakeholders, teachers. The qualitative interview-based approach was employed in this study to reveal how different aspects of the reforms influence teacher professionalism. The purposeful sampling method was used to select ten NIS teachers according to the following criteria: age, years of experience and area of specialization. The rationale for maximal variation sampling was to identify if the perceptions of participants differ across the given categories. The findings of the study provided an insight on NIS teachers' perceptions of their professional identity on four dimensions: personal, social, professional and emotional. The results also showed how teaching-related and administrative aspects of school reforms affect various constructs of teacher identity. The study concluded by suggesting some recommendations for policy makers and school administration on how to enhance the process of improving the school system considering teachers' opinions.

**Keywords:** *teacher identity, professionalism, school reforms, NIS*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

With the launch of the governmental project “Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools” (NIS) in 2008 Kazakhstani secondary education started to undergo considerable changes in many strategic directions including curriculum, student educational programs, teacher professional development, multilingual education, new assessment system, informatisation and school leadership development (Bridges, 2014). All those changes had a noticeable effect on the learning and teaching processes at NIS. As a consequence, teachers, as the main figures in the educational arena, had to reconsider their teaching practices, attitudes and beliefs.

Among numerous factors influencing learning environments, the effectiveness of the instructional process, and ultimately, students’ success are teachers, their professional expertise, attitudes and commitment to what they do. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005) refers to ‘teacher quality’ as the most significant school factor having a direct impact on student achievement (as cited in Silova, 2009, p.367). In this context, it is vital that teachers have a clear vision of themselves as professionals in order to meet current educational demands. However, it is rather challenging to identify the criteria for a high-quality teacher in the face of ever changing expectations and standards.

As Whitty (2008) claims, the meaning of professionalism is different at different times and in different places. In the teaching profession it is impossible to acquire knowledge and skills only once over a whole lifetime, taking into account how fast the world is changing. Teachers should constantly update their professional capacity and the important factor in this process is self-understanding of what exactly they need to change, how and why. This study aims to provide an insight into how NIS teacher perceptions of their professional identity evolve during their work in the system of NIS. Particular attention is

given to the influence of current ‘radical’ reforms in secondary education on these perceptions since teachers are presently trying on multiple new responsibilities not directly related to their conventional task – to teach students. This, in turn, leads to the conflict between ‘democratic’ and ‘managerial’ types of professionalism (Preston, 1996 as cited in Sachs, 2001).

This chapter is devoted to the overview of the study background, problem statement and the purpose of the current research, as well as to the identification of the research questions and design. The significance of the study and the paper structure are also presented at the end of this chapter.

## **1.2. Background of the Study**

The historical background of the development of teacher professionalism discussed in this paper contributes to major understanding of what constituted the notion of teacher identity during certain periods of time. As Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall & Cribb (2009) state, professional identity is a multidimensional concept which can be viewed from different perspectives, such as “professional identity as job description and activity, as knowledge and expertise, as motivation and aspiration, as the personal in the professional, and as group membership and affinity” (p.38). It is, therefore, difficult to give a single definition of what teacher identity is. Moreover, it is not static but evolves under certain internal and external circumstances (Gewirtz et al., 2009; Cunningham, 2008).

According to Silova (2009), the collapse of the Soviet Union was marked by what she calls ‘teacher crisis’ in the Caucasus and Central Asia characterized by low salaries, diminished social status and lack of teacher authority. These factors negatively influenced the whole essence of teacher professionalism turning teachers into passive executors of educational reforms (Furlong, 2005 as cited in Silova, 2009, p.369). In the context of never-

ending reforms teachers faced the problem of ‘deskilling’ or ‘deprofessionalisation’ (Apple, 1995 as cited in Silova, 2009, p.369) which inevitably resulted in changing their inner perception of themselves as educators.

More recent dissemination of neo-liberal approaches in education across the world, with the emphasis on managerialism, high level of accountability and leadership development (Hall & McGinity, 2015), affected to some extent the Kazakhstani education system, as well. The introduction of the NIS network is an example of the shift which put teachers in front of a new challenge to identify their role in it. Along with the common responsibility of school teachers to deliver lessons, some completely new roles appeared in the new context. These innovations of secondary education affect teachers’ work and lives, and, as a consequence, their professional identities. Moreover, the whole philosophy of teaching is presently changing significantly from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one, from drilling to problem-based learning, from making students memorize things to helping them construct and apply knowledge in practice, from being a deliverer of knowledge to becoming a facilitator of the learning processes (Shamshidinova, Ayubayeva, & Bridges, 2014). All of the aforementioned initiatives resulted in intensification of teacher work and the level of internal and external accountability higher than ever before.

Taking into consideration the background of educational reforms influencing the formation or deformation of teacher professionalism, the next section sets the research problem addressed in this study.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

Research conducted in Kazakhstan in the area of teacher experience with identity change is scarce. The reason for this might be the fact that the importance of teacher self-concept is underestimated in Kazakhstan since the main focus is given to the reforms

themselves and what goals the government sets while the voices of those who actually implement them in practice are usually ignored.

However, the analysis of literature sources shows that there is a strong link between the way teachers perceive themselves as professionals and the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes. For example, Davey (2013) claims that “what schoolteachers think, what they value, the pedagogies they believe in, who they are as personalities, and how they relate to learners and to one another as a professional community matters insofar as these affect student outcomes” (p.4). He points out that the problem arising in this respect is whether all the aforementioned are taken into account when reforms are implemented, whether teachers’ voices are heard by policy-makers (p.5).

Fimyar and Kurakbayev (2016) claim that the recent reformist initiatives in Kazakhstan including the creation of Nazarbayev University and NIS schools can be defined as ‘radical’ and ‘rapid’ changes (p.87). In such a tense educational climate teachers may feel confused about “their capacity to carry out the responsibilities associated with their new performativity identities” (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005 as cited in Davey, 2013, p.17). Moreover, there is lack of understanding of the extent to which teachers experience identity change.

The following section informs about the purpose of the study devoted to the exploration of teacher identity in Kazakhstan. It is followed by the section where the research questions are set to meet this purpose.

#### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this qualitative study is to explore in-depth the influence of internal and external factors connected with the present school reforms on NIS teacher

perceptions of their professional selves. More specifically, this study aims to reveal teachers' understanding of selves as professionals in the classroom and on a larger scale. Additionally, its purpose is to analyze how Kazakhstani school reforms affect their identity, as well as reveal what challenges in re-conceptualizing their professional identity they experience. Finally, the study is designed to investigate how external factors, such as accountability, influence teacher professionalism, self-esteem and motivation.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

In this study the following general and specific questions were addressed:

How do current school reforms affect NIS teacher self-perceptions as professionals?

- How do NIS teachers define their professional identity?
- How does the teaching-related aspect of the reforms in Kazakhstan influence teacher identity?
- How does the administrative aspect of the reforms influence teacher identity?

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

### **1.6. Definition of the Central Phenomenon**

The central phenomenon of the study is teacher professional identity, a notion difficult to define due to its complex and shifting nature. Mead (1934) attributes it to the inner perceptions of individuals of who they are and what their role is, from the psychological perspective on the identity (as cited in Davey, 2013). Wenger (1998) views it from the socio-cultural perspective which takes into consideration a strong connection between identity and practice highlighting the importance of community membership in the process of identity

formation (as cited in Davey, 2013). Rodgers and Scott (2008) state that multiple forces, including personal, socio-cultural, political and historical, influence the development of professional identity which evolves over time through interactions with others. They also argue that professional identity is emotional comprising “both how one sees oneself and what one values in oneself as a professional” (as cited in Davey, 2013, p. 32).

### **1.7. Design of the Study**

In order to investigate NIS teacher perspectives on how their professional identity is currently changing, qualitative research approach was employed. Since the aim of the qualitative study is to explore in-depth the central phenomenon from the participants’ point of view (Creswell, 2012), this approach ideally suits the nature of the study which had as its goal to investigate teacher perceptions of what it means to be a teacher and how they perceive themselves as professionals within the ongoing educational changes at school level.

More precisely, this study used a qualitative interview design which “is a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences” (Rabionet, 2011, p. 563). It means that the only method of data collection for this study was interviewing. It enabled me to gather rich personal data from the participants who felt safe and confident to share their practical experience and thoughts on sensitive topics related to their professional identity during face-to-face interviews.

In order to find the answers to the research questions, two interviews were conducted with ten NIS teachers. The purposeful sampling method was used to choose the participants of the study. Teachers of English, Biology, Mathematics, Physics, History, Russian and Global Perspectives, across different age groups took part in the interviews. The rationale for choosing NIS as the research site is that NIS schools are places where ‘radical’ reforms in secondary education are being actively implemented to be further disseminated in

mainstream schools (Bridges, 2014). This fact put teachers, who came there from regular schools, under tense conditions of work. Their reflections on how these reforms affect their professionalism are therefore crucial for understanding if Kazakhstan is on the right way to change.

As already mentioned, interviewing was chosen as a method of data collection providing both interviewer and interviewee with the opportunity to discuss their perceptions and attitudes to situations in life from their own perspective (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.349). Thus, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were designed to fully understand the notion of teacher identity and its evolution from the personal stories of NIS teachers. Data analysis was realized through coding, thematic analysis and interpretation.

### **1.8. Significance of the Study**

As this study aims to explore the changes of teacher professionalism in the context of 'radical' reforms in secondary education in Kazakhstan, it will be beneficial for policy-makers to discover teacher perspectives on what role they play in these changes. It is crucial since they have direct influence on the implementation of educational reforms, and little is going to change unless teachers perceive themselves a part of that change.

The situation may even degenerate if teachers demonstrate resistance to change, or if they change under the pressure from 'the top'. In the latter case, this would not bring the desirable result since teaching is not a mechanical process which can be 'ordered' by someone. As Davey (2013, p.19) argues, "it has powerful emotional and value-laden components" which deal with teachers' motivation, self-esteem and a sense of commitment. If teachers' own perspectives on the reforms do not conform to those of the policy-makers, this will negatively affect teachers' feeling of autonomy and self-efficacy (MacBeath, 2012).

If policy-makers start to take into consideration teacher attitudes and concerns when making decisions, it may also be beneficial for teachers whose voices will be heard. This can help them feel empowered which, in turn, might positively affect their self-esteem, motivation and, ultimately, learner success. The research findings may also be useful for school administrators to know how teachers identify their professionalism and what challenges they face in pursuit of being effective. Do they really want to change their professional identity or is it a demand of the time? Is there any resistance?

Finally, the study can contribute to filling the literature gap in regards to the evolution of teacher professionalism in Kazakhstan. There are some topic-related resources covering Post-Soviet countries generally but hardly any describing perceptions of Kazakhstani school teachers in this respect. The study, thus, might be useful for researchers interested in the phenomenon of teacher identity in Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia.

### **1.9. Outline of the Study**

This study consists of six chapters. It starts with the Introduction which provides an overview of the given research, including the background of the issue followed by the statement of the problem, purpose and research questions. It also highlights the significance of the study and provides preliminary information on the research design.

The second chapter is devoted to the literature review which includes critical analysis of what constituted the notion of teacher identity at different times and in different contexts, what internal and external factors influence the evolution of teacher professionalism, and what challenges teachers encounter in redefining their professional selves.

The next chapter (Methodology) describes the design of the study along with the rationale for choosing the methodological approach, setting and target population for

conducting the given research. Additionally, there is information about the instruments employed for gathering the data, as well as procedures of data collection and data analysis. This section also includes possible limitations and delimitations of the study.

Findings of the study are presented in the fourth section, which is followed by the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the study results in regards to the research questions and literature review. The final section (Conclusions and Recommendations) summarizes the main findings of the study drawing conclusions in relation to the overarching research question: How do current school reforms affect NIS teacher perceptions of themselves as professionals? This chapter also provides ideas on implication of the study results.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided information on the background of the problem under study, as well as its significance to the field of secondary education in Kazakhstan and future research on the evolution of teacher identity. The purpose of the study was to explore how NIS teachers perceive themselves as professionals under conditions of drastic changes in classroom practices and neo-liberal trends in education. The following overarching and sub-questions were set in order to achieve this purpose:

How do current school reforms affect NIS teacher self-perceptions as professionals?

- How do NIS teachers define their professional identity?
- How does the teaching-related aspect of the reforms in Kazakhstan influence teacher identity?
- How does the administrative aspect of the reforms influence teacher identity?

The major part of the literature studied relates to the issue of teacher professionalism and identity in European countries, Australia and Kyrgyzstan, with those related to Kazakhstan being very scarce. The literature review starts with an attempt to explain what teacher professionalism and identity is, including some historical background on what professionalism in general meant earlier and what it means now. The next part gives an overview of school reforms currently taking place in Kazakhstan with the emphasis on changing teaching practices in NIS schools being a starting point in triggering the changes. Finally, external factors influencing teacher identity are explored. More precisely, the recent neo-liberal trends in education characterized by excessive accountability and performance-based teaching are investigated in their relation to shaping teacher professionalism. This is

followed by the discussion of two opposing discourses of teacher professionalism, democratic and managerial, and the emerging types of teacher identity.

The analysis of the literature, therefore, serves as a theoretical basis for conducting research on the evolution of teacher identity in Kazakhstan in an era of accountability and changing teaching practices.

## **2.2. What Constitutes Teacher Professionalism and Teacher Identity?**

In order to understand how teacher identities change over time and by what factors they are influenced, it is necessary to first identify what constitutes the notion of teacher identity and teacher professionalism. This section of the literature review gives a brief outline of what it means to be a teacher from the perspective of different scholars.

### **2.2.1. What it means to be a professional**

To start with, there is not a universal definition of teacher professionalism since it is not static but has a shifting nature affected by various internal and external factors (Cunningham, 2008; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). It is also worth mentioning that for a long time teaching was considered to be a quasi- or semi-profession as it did not have all necessary attributes, such as “shared technical culture, a strong service ethic and self-regulated, collegial control”, to possess the status of a profession like medicine or law (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p.5). According to Hargreaves and Goodson, compulsory characteristics of ‘classical professionalism’ are, thus, “self-regulation, autonomy in practice and an ethos of a shared commitment to continually developing knowledge and practice” (as cited in Wilkins, 2011, p.390).

Along with the classical interpretation of professionalism, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) also analyze flexible, practical, extended and complex discourses of professionalism.

Flexible professionalism highlights the importance of creating teacher communities for developing the culture of collaboration in which teachers share their professional knowledge and practical experiences with each other (p.10). At the core of the practical professionalism is the notion of ‘reflective practice’ introduced by Donald Schon (1983), which implies the use of teacher personal knowledge obtained during one’s teaching experience in making judgments, drawing conclusions and changing practices (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p.12).

The last form of professionalism deserves more attention to be paid to it, since it deals with the increasingly complex nature of the teaching profession resulting in intensification and complexity of work. Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) argue that numerous responsibilities to which teachers are presently exposed, such as collective planning, mentoring, self- and peer-assessment, outcome assessment, participation in school organization events and others, do not necessarily lead to improvement of teaching practices. On the contrary, these school reforms being superficial in nature can lead to ‘teacher exploitation and burnout’ (pp.18-19). The authors, thus, oppose the term of ‘deprofessionalization’ associated with teacher overload and ambiguity of work, to that of ‘reprofessionalization’, that is ‘stimulating dialog and decision-making about teaching among colleagues’ (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p.18).

### **2.2.2. Attempts to define ‘teacher identity’**

Regarding the term ‘identity’, Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt (2000) talk about it as “a poorly defined concept” which makes it difficult to explore. While conducting research, Davey (2013) created a methodological framework for exploring the professional identity of teachers, which helps develop understanding of what the components of teacher identity are. These include professional identity as knowledge and expertise (qualifications, experience

and skills), professional identity as job description and activity (roles and responsibilities), professional identity as group membership (community relationships), professional identity as the personal in the professional (personal qualities, values and self-image), and professional identity as motivation and aspiration (hopes and expectations, professional development) (Davey, 2013, p.38).

Similarly, Geert Kelchtermans (1993) claims that the professional self includes five interconnected parts: self-image, self-esteem, job-motivation, task perception, and future perspective (as cited in Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). Along with these, autonomy and power are viewed by many researchers as integral parts of teacher identity. “Teachers who experience more autonomy feel more satisfied in their work and are more motivated and feel more competent” (Bogler & Somech, 2002; Weiss, 1999 as cited in MacBeath, 2012, p. 9) which means they can influence the way teachers perceive themselves as professionals.

### **2.2.3. Identity and emotions**

The variety of teacher identity dimensions listed in the previous section is believed to be also connected with the emotional aspect of teacher selves. According to Flores and Day (2006), there is a strong link between identity and emotions. The latter can be positive like “care, job satisfaction and joy, pride, excitement and pleasure in students’ progress and achievements” (Sutton, 2000) or negative like vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996); “professional uncertainty, confusion, inadequacy, anxiety” (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996); “frustration, anger exacerbated by tiredness, stress and students’ misbehavior; anxiety because of the complexity of the job; guilt, sadness, blame and shame at not being able to achieve ideals or targets imposed by others” (as cited in Flores & Day, 2006, p. 221). Particularly, teacher guilt is meticulously described by Hargreaves (1995) who argues that it

can have both constructive and detrimental implications for the development of teachers' professional selves. These depend on what type of guilt is experienced by teachers. Laing distinguishes between true guilt, which refers to one's inner responsibility before himself or herself being a part of the moral choice, and false guilt caused by inability to meet expectations of others (as cited in Hargreaves, 1995, p.144).

Some scholars discuss another concept related to the emotional aspect of teacher professional identity – professional agency. Danielewicz (2001) defines it as “the ability to signal to others how they wish to be seen” (as cited in Kempe & Reed, 2014, p.58). Vahasantanen (2014) argues that professional agency includes the ability of teachers to act independently in making decisions about their own practice. Moreover, it implies their active participation in educational changes being those “whose actions and opinions matter” (Vahasantanen, 2014, p. 2). The author also states that along with positive effects on the process of the reform implementation, professional agency can hinder this process via teachers' criticism and resistance. For this reason, professional identity, agency and educational change are closely interrelated (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Day et al., 2006).

The explanation of agency suggested by Bangs and Frost (2012), arguably the most explicit one, describes it as a “human capacity to make a difference not only to our own lives but also to the world around us” (p.4). This is an attribute that all teachers must have; otherwise their work inevitably turns into a routine, a mechanical action devoid of high goals to improve the environment. The authors also claim that agency is closely connected with self-efficacy defined as a belief in one's own ability to succeed, which turns out to be an important predetermining factor not only of teacher effectiveness but of student success as well (p. 3).

Looking at the multiple dimensions of professionalism and identity mentioned above, it is clear that teacher identity is a complex phenomenon which comprises personal and social, professional and emotional aspects and evolves during the occupational life under certain internal and external circumstances. There is also an inevitable connection between professional and personal identities due to the fact that “teaching demands significant personal investment” (Day et al., 2006, p. 603).

Table 1.

*Teacher Identity dimensions*

<b>Personal</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Emotional</b>
Personal qualities	Community membership	Knowledge and expertise	Job motivation and aspiration
Values	Shared commitment	Roles	Agency
Beliefs	Collaborative culture	Autonomy and power	Commitment
Self-image		Reflective practice	Self-esteem
Self-regulation		Multiple responsibilities	Self-efficacy
Self-reflection			Guilt
Future perspective			Stress
Task perception			

### 2.3. Reforms and Teacher Identity

As Day (2002) claims, despite the fact that modern educational reforms differ across countries, there are five characteristics that are applicable to all of them. Firstly, the rationale for introducing reforms is the desire of the government to become more competitive economically through altering learning conditions and raising achievement standards. Secondly, “they address implicit worries of governments concerning a perceived fragmentation of personal and social values in society”. Thirdly, they lead to destabilization making teachers revisit their practices and beliefs. They also “result in an increased work load for teachers” and, finally, they usually neglect “teachers’ identities – arguably central to motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness” (p.679). Though the latter might not seem vital when it comes to profound changes for the country’s good, it

eventually can hinder the whole process of changing the system since “teachers, their well-being, their professionalism and their professional development are critical in any discussion as to how to improve educational performance” (Bangs & Frost, 2012, p. 1).

Teleshaliyev (2013) in his article “Leave Me Alone—Simply Let Me Teach” highlights the destructive effects of reforms on teachers’ work and self-perception. The main effect is deprofessionalization, which will be further discussed in this chapter. Using the case of Kyrgyzstan, he demonstrates how teachers’ creativity and commitment can be destroyed by bureaucratic accountability measures employed in pursuit of raising standards. It is also worthwhile noting that, according to the findings of the research, teachers’ involvement in the reform is minimal and rather more symbolic than realistic. This fact results in teachers feeling disempowered.

However, despite the negative influence of reforms on teacher identities, there are still ways for them to demonstrate their professionalism. In Kyrgyzstan, teachers started to evaluate the imposed policy and adjust it in accordance with their values and student needs (Teleshaliyev, 2013, p. 64). This last finding proves that moral purpose serves a powerful basis for developing teacher self-efficacy and resilience (Teleshaliyev, 2014) which, in turn, help teachers tackle the challenges of the ever-changing educational context.

#### **2.4. Neo-Liberal Trends in Education: De-Skilling or Re-Skilling?**

As mentioned before, teacher identity is closely connected with educational change and is continually reshaped within certain historical contexts (Goodson & Norrie, 2005 as cited in Tang, 2011, p. 364). Neo-liberalism, recently emerged in the time of economic globalization, is characterized by privatisation, marketisation, performativity and the “enterprising individual” (Apple, 2001 as cited in Tang, 2011, p.364). It is therefore associated with new managerial trends, such as efficiency and productivity goals with the

focus on competition (Gewirtz et al., 2009, p. 5). As Gewirtz et al. (2009) claim, these changes do not appear in the same form in all countries in relation to the sphere of education. However, some common features can be identified as the following (all cited in Anderson & Cohen, 2015, pp.2-3): 1) an audit or accountability and work intensification (Strathern, 2000; Ball, 2001); 2) a narrow “what works” conception of teaching that diminishes professional autonomy (Biesta, 2007); 3) the commodification and commercialization of teaching through a new education industry (Burch, 2009); 4) new forms of governance, regulation and self-regulation (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Rose, 1993; Scott, 2011); and 5) a proletarianization of teaching in which conception becomes divorced from execution (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake, & McNally, 2014; Lawn & Ozga, 1987).

Since educational quality becomes a pre-condition of economic growth, teachers are supposed “to be demonstrably more accountable, efficient and effective in producing quality learning” (Smyth, 1995 as cited in Day & Smethem, 2009, p. 142). Furthermore, this should be ‘demonstrated’ through measurable results or the so-called ‘performance indicators’, ‘performance data’, ‘targets’, ‘benchmarking’, etc. (Ball, 2003 as cited in Day & Smethem, 2009, p. 142). As a consequence of all mentioned requirements, teacher work is becoming more and more overloaded and intensified. According to Hall (2004), an unavoidable outcome of the intensification of teacher work is the fact that teachers start to give preference to the activities which are rewarded at the expense of their primary mission – to teach. In the case of Kazakhstan, the latter would also be neglected in favour of punitive activities. This, in turn, will result in the deterioration of the teacher-student relationship, since “the more distant teachers become from their students, the more depersonalized their teaching is” (Robertson, 1996 as cited in Hall, 2004, p. 9).

The ‘accountability era’ as a part of neo-liberal reforms in education makes teacher voices more and more ignored, diminishing their role and depriving them of autonomy and

professional agency. “We are required to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do rather than doing it.” (Ball, 2008, p. 56). Neo-liberalism is thus presented not only by reforms but by the changes in teacher self-perceptions as professionals, in their beliefs and values (Peck, 2010 as cited in Anderson & Cohen, 2015, p. 6).

Due to the fact that the nature of teacher professionalism itself is altering under neo-liberal reforms, two terms related to teacher identity evolution are emerging within the given educational environment. Apple (1995) argues that diminishing teacher autonomy and power leads to the process of ‘deskilling’ and ‘deprofessionalisation’ (as cited in Silova, 2009) which makes teachers doubt their own competence and capacity to influence the current educational situation. “Deskilling is a term used to describe what happens to people when they no longer feel in control of their own work” (MacBeath, 2012, p.26). Deskilling appears in “forcing teachers to teach to the test, limiting opportunities to innovate and enforcing punitive accountability” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004 as cited in Teleshaliyev, 2013, p.53).

According to Littler (2009) there are four processes associated with teacher deskilling:

- Where the individual loses the right to be involved in designing and planning what will happen – a divorce of planning and doing
- Work itself becomes fragmented
- The redistribution of tasks removes some of the most satisfying aspects of the job
- The re-organisation of the workplace changes from an individual ‘craft’ base to a more ‘Taylorised’ form of operation (as cited in MacBeath, 2012, p.28).

However, the reforms enthusiasts would substitute the phenomenon of ‘deskilling’ to that of ‘reskilling’ which implies shifting teacher professionalism to the form which will

satisfy the newly emerged standards and needs (Whitty, 2000, p.282). Gur (2014) uses the term “upskilling” to describe this process as a necessary attribute “to develop new skills including flexibility and adaptability to changing working conditions” (p.889). Nonetheless, any of these interpretations assume that teachers’ practices, roles, attitudes and beliefs will be reconsidered and, as a consequence, teacher identity transformed.

## **2.5. Identity Crisis: Democratic vs. Managerial Professionalism**

In the changing educational contexts discussed above two controversial discourses of teacher professionalism – democratic and managerial – are of sufficient significance to be studied. These discourses are explicitly presented in the article of Judyth Sachs (2001) where she, firstly, examines the nature and outcomes of the two professionalism dimensions, and, secondly, identifies the types of teacher identity emerging from the two discourses.

According to the author, democratic professionalism is premised on the principal of respect, reciprocity and collaboration between teachers and the community of students, parents and other members whose common goal is to improve practices and the system on the whole. It does not cultivate an absolute authority of the teacher as a professional to make decisions but fosters participation of all educational stakeholders in school development (Sachs, 2001). Bean and Apple argue that the ideas of equality, inclusion, open-mindedness, critical reflection and self-analysis, cooperative work towards the common success and belief in all members’ capacity are crucial conditions for democratic schools to operate and develop an activist identity of a teacher (as cited in Sachs, 2001). “Democratic professionalism is emerging from the profession itself” (Sachs, 2001, p.149) as it focuses on improving skills and practices for ‘the common good’ rather than individual.

Conversely, managerial professionalism is characterized by individualism, competitiveness and a high level of accountability. Teacher efficiency and effectiveness are

externally defined by the standardized criteria which impose new roles and responsibilities on them not only as educators but also as managers “contributing to the school’s formal accountability processes” (Brennan, 1996 as cited in Sachs, 2001, p.152). This discourse comes to the forefront under the conditions of decentralization and marketization policies emphasizing efficient management as the key and universal factor of success both for the private and public sectors (Sachs, 2001).

The aforementioned discourses of professionalism give rise to two opposing types of teacher identity. An entrepreneurial identity arises from the managerial professionalism and presents the ability to be effective and accountable for numerous administrative responsibilities, while activist identity focuses on critical reflection and analysis, cultivating collaborative environments and creating communities of practice (Sachs, 2001). The activist identity is premised on the “principles of equity and social justice” (Sachs, 2001, p. 157).

Some authors provide other terms to describe ‘democratic’ and ‘managerial’ types of professionalism. Evetts (2009), for example, distinguishes between organizational and occupational professionalisms. The first type, also defined by the author as professionalism ‘from above’ is characterized by “hierarchical structures of responsibility and decision-making. It involves the increased standardization of work procedures and practices and managerialist controls” (Evetts, 2009, p. 23). Occupational (i.e. democratic) professionalism, on the contrary, employs collegial authority and teacher autonomy and involves trust as the basis of professional relationships (Evetts, 2009, p. 23).

Talking about activist teacher professionalism, Giddens (1994) highlights two interrelated notions of ‘active trust’ and ‘generative politics’ which are crucial for developing and sustaining the democratic school type (Sachs, 2000). He argues that active trust generates solidarity, reciprocity and positive emotional communication between different members of

the educational enterprise. This can be achieved with the development of generative politics which encourages decisions to be made by those who have immediate interest in the outcomes rather than “from the top” (Giddens, 1994 as cited in Sachs, 2000).

## **2.6. Kazakhstani Context: NIS as Agents of Radical Change**

Similar to the situation in Australia, whose government expressed an urgent need for schools and teachers to radically change (Robertson, 1996, p.32), Kazakhstan has recently stated a need for the country to implement significant and fast-paced reforms in secondary education in order to develop the ‘human capital’ for enhancing economic competitiveness (Nazarbayev, 2006 as cited in Shamshidinova et al., 2014). For this purpose, the project ‘Twenty Intellectual Schools for gifted and talented children’ was launched in 2008 under the name ‘Orken’ (Shamshidinova et al., 2014). It later received the status of the Autonomous Education Organisation Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (AEO NIS).

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2010), NIS “are to become the experimental sites for the development, introduction and testing of educational programmes” combining “the best traditions of Kazakhstan education and international best pedagogic practice” (as cited in Shamshidinova et al., 2014, p. 75). In order to meet this goal, NIS teachers should undergo special training courses enhancing their knowledge and skills on a regular basis. Moreover, they are expected to reconsider the philosophy of teaching itself with the main focus on the shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach.

The key difference of NIS from the mainstream schools is their ‘full autonomy and academic freedom’, more specifically “in the design and adoption of educational programs, forms and methods of educational activities, directions for research” (Law of the RK No.394-IV, 2011 as cited in Shamshidinova et al., 2014, p. 74). However, what does this autonomy

mean for those who are to enact the reforms locally? Do teachers possess any kind or degree of autonomy in the given educational context? How do the imperatives to change affect teacher identities?

The book of D. Bridges (ed.) *Educational Reform and Internationalisation: The Case of School Reform in Kazakhstan* “is arguably the first publication on education reforms in Kazakhstan based on thorough, empirical studies” (Shamatov, 2015, p.369) and probably the only one which focuses on the implementation of current innovations taking place in NIS schools. However, it does not provide sufficient information to answer the questions above. According to Shamatov (2015), it also lacks a critical view on the initiatives in their relation to neoliberal forces which might have an important effect on the outcomes of the reforms.

Although some authors of the book mention the problems connected with new reforms, such as teacher overload (for instance, McLaughlin, McLellan, Fordham, Chandler-Grevatt, & Daubney, 2014, p. 250), they do it briefly and do not go further by explaining the causes of this issue and how it may affect teacher autonomy, motivation and self-efficacy. It seems that in pursuit of quick radical changes there is no time to reflect on teacher perceptions and concerns regarding these changes and their influence on teacher professional identities.

## **2.7. Summary**

This chapter provided the critical analysis of the literature resources related to the issues of teacher professionalism and identity as well as factors influencing its formation or deformation. Having reviewed the literature on this topic, it can be concluded that there is not a fixed definition of teacher professionalism or identity due to its altering nature and instability of external influencing factors. Nevertheless, it is clear that teacher identity refers to how teachers view themselves as professionals from different angles such as the personal,

social, professional, and emotional. It is also obvious that educational reforms have a significant impact on the evolution of teacher identity. Depending on their purpose, they contribute to the development of different types of professionalism such as democratic or managerial.

Based on the analysis of the literature, a conceptual framework (Appendix G) was developed to guide the design of the study. One source is closely related to the content of learning and teaching methods. The other one deals with some external factors such as accountability, intensification of work, or decision-making processes. Both of them affect teacher professionalism. In the suggested conceptual framework, the first source has more influence on social and professional sides of identity making teachers revisit their views and change their practices, whereas the second source has major influence on the personal and emotional dimensions of teacher identity. As a consequence, teaching-related reforms lead to reskilling of teachers, i.e. let them acquire new skills and help them adapt to the changes. On the contrary, administrative or external factors of the reforms lead to the process of deskilling teachers, i.e. deprive them of autonomy and diminish the sense of agency focusing more on accountability and demonstrable effectiveness.

Two conflicting types of teacher professionalism suggested by Sachs (2001), democratic and managerial, are associated in the framework with the processes of reskilling and deskilling respectively, with the former focusing on improving skills and practices for ‘the common good’ and the latter focusing on increasing standards and the school formal efficiency. Activist and entrepreneurial identities, emerging from these types of professionalism, are therefore the two main forms of teacher identity in the framework.

This conceptual framework will be further used in the paper to investigate the nature and evolution of teacher identity in Kazakhstan. It will serve as a basis for understanding how

different aspects of the current educational changes in the country affect this process and how teachers perceive their role in these reforms. It will ultimately contribute to revealing if Kazakhstani teachers experience any of the aforementioned forms of teacher professionalism in the context of radical changes.

The analysis of the literature thus provides an opportunity to identify key aspects of the complex phenomenon of teacher identity evolution, to reveal the research gaps and outline the directions for future study. Despite the fact that professional identity has recently become an area of interest for many researchers (e.g. Bullough, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Knowles, 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, & Boak, 1996 as cited in Beijaard et al., 2003, p. 107), it is neglected in its relation to Kazakhstan, even though it is more than relevant now, at the time of significant changes in Kazakhstani secondary education.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter covered the main literature sources related to the issue of teacher identity evolution in the era of school reforms and accountability. The “Methodology” chapter aims to identify and explain the research design chosen for the given study. It also describes the sampling techniques and instruments employed in order to answer the main research question: How do current school reforms affect NIS teacher self-perceptions as professionals? These sections are followed by the description of data analysis process and consideration of ethical issues connected with the current study. Finally, its limitations and delimitations are discussed at the end of this chapter.

### **3.2. Research Design**

This section will inform about the research design used in the study and explain the reason for this choice. Considering the nature of the research questions, a qualitative approach to conducting the study was employed. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative inquiry is used to explore in-depth a central phenomenon of the study from the participants’ perspective (p.16). Scott and Usher (2011) claim that “qualitative researchers examine the meanings that social actors give to their activities” (p. 97), this is exactly what the present study aimed to research. The literature reviewed also proves that this method is best suited to exploring the given issue, taking into account the importance of personal attitudes and opinions of the participants.

To be more specific, the study employs a qualitative interview design which is an ideal “tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences” (Rabionet, 2011, p. 563). Turner (2010) distinguishes between three different categories of this design, namely “(a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach, and (c) standardized open-ended interview” (p.754). The second, general interview

guide approach, fit the purpose of the given study as it is more structured than the first one but still flexible and “allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewee” (McNamara, 2009 as cited in Turner, p.755). It implies that a researcher may prepare interview questions but change them or ‘guide’ the manner of conducting the interview in the field so that to obtain the desirable information from the respondents. At the same time, general interview guide approach gives opportunity to create informal and comfortable environment during the conversation (Turner, 2010, p.755) which appeared to be very helpful in building trustworthy relationships between the interviewer and participants of this study and find answers necessary for investigating the central phenomenon.

### **3.3. The Central Phenomenon of the Study**

Creswell (2012) defines the central phenomenon as “the key concept, idea, or process studied in qualitative research” (p.16). In this study it is represented by the concept of teacher identity and the process of its evolution in the era of drastic changes in Kazakhstani education system. Understanding the central phenomenon can provide an insight on the role of teachers in the process of the reforms implementation, as well as look at these reforms from the insider’s point of view.

### **3.4. Data Collection Methods**

This section provides information on the method of data collection, as well as justifies its usage in relation to the research questions stated in this study. A qualitative interview was employed as a method for collecting the data needed to address these research questions. An interview as a single method employed in this study was effective to explore the phenomenon of teacher identity, since identity refers to the inner perceptions of teachers which cannot be easily observed or understood from the survey results. Only through listening to personal stories of participants during the interview, the researcher can hear the voices and make conclusions. As Cohen et al. (2007 p. 349) argues, interviews give an opportunity for both

interviewers and interviewees share their own perceptions of the environment they live and work in. Moreover, many researchers used interviews as a research method to explore teacher identity. McLellan, Winter, Fimyar, and Fordham (2014) provide the example of Woolhouse and Cochrane's study who used interviews to examine how new Physics and Chemistry teachers undergo the development of a subject-specific teacher identity.

### **3.5. Participants of the Study**

The sampling procedures are described in this section. As Cohen et al. (2007) argue, the quality of a research depends not only on the correct choice of methods and instruments for conducting a study, but also on what sampling strategy is employed (p.100). For the current study, the purposeful sampling was used in order to “to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p.169).

More specifically, one of the NIS schools was selected as the site of the research since the educational changes discussed in the previous chapter are currently being implemented in these schools. Exploring that site thus enabled to understand the process of teacher identity evolution within the newly created environment. Additionally, convenience sampling approach was used as NIS is my own place of employment, so I could get access to the site without hindrance.

The specific strategy of purposeful sampling used in the study was maximal variation, which is typically used “to present multiple perspectives of individuals to represent the complexity of” the issue (Creswell, 2012, p. 207). The criteria I used for sampling the participants of the study are the following: age, years of experience and area of specialization. Teachers' education background (locally educated and abroad) was also taken into consideration.

The rationale for selecting participants of different age is that elderly teachers, for example, have a big experience of work in a ‘Soviet’ school which, according to Fimyar and

Kurakbayev (2016), still has a significant influence on teachers' practices. It was interesting to know how teachers of the 'old' school see themselves in the present work conditions. Younger teachers (over 30) have experience of work in mainstream schools which also differs much from NIS system, and this might have some impact on their perceptions of themselves as professionals due to the radical transition from a conventional style of teaching to an innovative experimental one. Finally, novice teachers who do not possess any previous teaching experience before coming to NIS, can contribute to understanding how a new generation of Kazakhstani teachers see themselves in the current educational setting. Additionally, Bolashak students, having returned from abroad to work in NIS, might have a different vision on professionalism based on the knowledge and skills acquired there.

The participants of the study were teachers of different school disciplines which was supposed to be important since, although there are common values and vision for the whole school community, each department has its own characteristics. Moreover, the attitude of students to different disciplines is not the same. This could also have some effect on how teachers see themselves as professionals.

Totally, ten participants were chosen for conducting the study: three experienced teachers aged over fifty, four teachers aged over thirty and three young teachers, including those who studied abroad. It was beneficial to examine the views of various teachers to understand the given phenomenon deeply.

### **3.6. Data Collection Instruments**

To collect data, two interviews with 10 teachers were held. The reason for doing it in two parts was that there were too many interview questions needed to be answered to achieve the aim of the study. Sticking to the original plan, it would have been time-consuming for the participants. Moreover, these two interviews had different purposes: the first part focused

more on teachers' general perceptions of their professional identity, whereas the second emphasized the influence of reforms on the evolution of teacher identity.

Interview protocols were employed as an instrument of data collection and were designed in two languages: English and Russian. They helped to see the stages of the interview and the questions, as well as served as a means of taking notes while conducting the interview. They were pilot tested on my colleagues who are also my group mates at Nazarbayev University before the actual interviews took place. This was done to make sure the questions and the procedure in general were designed in a comprehensible and appropriate manner.

Two types of questions were used: those to provide demographic information such as participants' age, work experience, subject they teach, previous place of work; and those related to their professional experience, including changes in their teaching practices, attitudes and concerns about this transition. The interview questions were constructed in alignment with the categories emerged from the literature review. Additionally, some probing questions were used to facilitate the conversation in a desirable direction. Ultimately, open-ended interview questions allowed me to receive information helpful to understand the central phenomenon of the study.

### **3.7. Data Collection Procedures**

The procedure of data collection started with gaining access to the site and participants of the study. According to Creswell (2012, p.210), in order to conduct a study a researcher should obtain permission from the institutional review board, so the first step was to have the GSE Ethical Review Committee approval in place. As the research site was NIS Taraz and I interviewed teachers inside the school walls, I also obtained permission from the principal of the school informing him in a face to face conversation of the purpose of the study, as well as discussed with him its significance and possible benefits and risks. I also

used a letter of support from my supervisor as a backup tool for getting the principal's permission to conduct the interviews.

The reason for doing it inside the school was that NIS teachers' workload is so large that many of them have to stay at work long and have little opportunity to spend an extra hour or more on giving an interview somewhere outside the working place. Moreover, NIS teachers are not allowed to leave work during the day for lunch, for example, without a special permission. Conducting interviews in the school was therefore the most convenient way for both the participants and me, even though there were some issues associated with that at the stage of data collection. For instance, some teachers felt tense when answering sensitive questions related to autonomy and disempowerment they experienced at work. For this reason, I selected the participants from the teachers who I believe trust me as a researcher and a colleague to get reliable information from them.

The next step was to obtain permission from teachers to be interviewed. I met each of the selected participants in person to explain to them the aim and importance of the study, how the interviews were going to be conducted and how the data would be analyzed, stored and reported. They were also informed about the possible benefits and risks of the study. Having obtained the permission from ten teachers, I created a schedule of meetings which was convenient for both sides and did not interfere with job responsibilities.

Two interviews with each of the participants were planned to be conducted. So, the Consent form was sent to the participants prior to the first interview. All interviews were held within the research site (NIS) mostly in the own private rooms of the participants where nobody could interrupt us. The interviews started in the end of January and lasted till the end of February. At the beginning of the meeting each of the participants was informed again about the purpose of the study. The interviewer also explained that all information provided by the interviewees is confidential and that they were free to stop the interview at any time

they wished as well as had the right not to answer some questions if they were not willing to. They were also asked for permission to use an audiotape recorder while taking an interview. After the consent forms were signed, an hour long interviews were conducted in two languages: Russian and English (according to the participants' preference).

During the interviews I used the interview protocol to remind myself of the questions and to take notes. During the whole process of data collection, I stayed impartial and respectful to all the participants, but at the same time was trying to create trusting relationship with them. I encouraged participants to give more detailed responses providing clarifications and sub-questions for deeper understanding when necessary. At the end of the interview I thanked the respondents for participating in the given research. We also confirmed the date of the second interview. After the first round of interview with all participants was conducted, the second part of data collection procedure started (second interview with the same participants) and it followed the principles of the first interview procedure.

### **3.8. Data Analysis Methods**

The process of data analysis occurred simultaneously with the process of data collection due to the qualitative nature of the study (Creswell, 2012). According to Cohen et al. (2007), "there is no one single or correct way to analyze and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose" (p. 461). The purpose of this analysis was to reveal how teachers define their professional identity and what challenges (if there are any) they face in the tough conditions of constant and rapid changes.

Firstly, all the recorded interviews were transcribed and read for getting a general idea of the responses which were either in English or in Russian. The responses were organized by the age of participants and the subject they teach. The next stage was coding the data going from the specific features to the broader themes about the central phenomenon in order to generate a larger, consolidated picture (Tesch, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2012). Since the

majority of the interviews were held in Russian, it was time consuming and insensible to translate the whole responses into the English language. Therefore, I used the authentic version of interviews to code the data and only translated the parts related to any of the emerged themes in their regard to the literature review analysis.

Finally, the results of the study were analyzed and interpreted in conformity to the research questions. They were also compared with the findings of other studies on this topic. The presentation and discussion of the results were based on the conceptual framework derived from the literature analysis.

### **3.9. Ethical Issues**

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical norms and principles of Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. A letter of support was provided by the supervisor to be delivered to the site in order to obtain permission from the NIS principal to conduct the research within the school. The selection of participants was performed on a voluntary basis. Before the research project started, the participants had been informed about the purpose and procedure of the study as well as the right to reject participation at any time of the research process. The introductory letter and participant consent form were provided beforehand via email.

The interviewees were aware of the potential benefits and risks associated with the study. The main benefit for teachers was the opportunity to express their opinions and attitudes towards current school reforms in Kazakhstan and influence of the latter on their professional identity. Through telling stories of their teaching practices in the new educational context, their voices could be heard. Another benefit of this study was that during the interviews teachers self-reflected on what they presently do, how they act in comparison with their previous practices, what challenges they face and what role they play in their

classrooms and, generally, in school. That reflection could be helpful in identifying their strengths, weaknesses and struggles, and outlining the trajectory of teachers' future work.

Regarding the risks, there were potential risks associated with some sensitive interview questions like "Have you ever felt disempowered inside and/or outside the classroom?" which could possibly have a negative effect on teachers' professional lives, such as problems with administration of the school. However, I ensured the participants of confidentiality of information they were going to provide and explained that nobody except me and my supervisor would have access to it. All the materials were stored in my private computer protected by a password. The tape recorded interviews were destroyed after being transcribed. Moreover, the participants had the right not to answer particular interview questions and quit the project whenever they felt uncomfortable to continue.

Although anonymity couldn't be provided due to the specific nature of the research design (qualitative interview design), the interviews were conducted in places where nobody could hear the participants. However, the fact that they could be seen by their colleagues might have negatively influenced honesty and completeness of their responses to sensitive questions. To protect the respondents' identity at the subsequent stages, their real names were replaced by participant codes.

Another minor risk related to the interference with the busy teachers' schedule, since the interviews were conducted during their work time. To minimize this risk, interviews were taken at the time mostly convenient for the participants.

As the interviews with the teachers were tape recorded, the permission to do that was obtained before the interview began. Despite the fact that all teachers gave their consent to be recorded, it was noticeable that some of them felt uncomfortable or even tense to answer the interview questions related to their relationship with colleagues and administration members. To reassure participants, I reminded them about the confidentiality of the given information.

### 3.10. Limitations and Delimitations

There were some limitations in the current study. First of all, being a representative of teachers who now are exposed to recently adopted school reforms and whose professional identity is being challenged by these reforms, I might have been biased in interpretation of the results, which might be problematic even though it is not prohibited in the qualitative research design (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, the participants of the research are my colleagues which again might have resulted in the subjective interpretation of the data collected. For example, since we work in the same conditions, I may have assumed that they experienced the same challenges connected with their professionalism as myself. They, in turn, might be biased too, saying what I expected them to say.

The second limitation was that teachers were hesitant to answer some of the sensitive questions which dealt with the issues of autonomy and democracy, especially knowing that the principal was aware of the research taken place at school. As a consequence, the responses of the participants might not have been open enough.

Another limitation of the research was the choice of the site. As it was mentioned earlier in this paper, NIS differs greatly from the majority of regular schools in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the findings obtained from the study cannot be transferred to all Kazakhstani secondary school teachers. To eliminate this constrain, future studies of mainstream teachers' perspectives on teacher identity concept are essential.

The fourth limitation related to the sampling strategy. Despite the fact that purposeful maximal variation sampling enabled to investigate the problem from many different perspectives, the number of participants did not allow to do it properly. For instance, teachers of different subjects were chosen to be interviewed; however, there was one or two representatives only from each category. This means that the results of the study are not necessarily applicable to other teachers of these subjects. One of the solutions might be to

conduct other studies employing a quantitative or a mixed research method using a bigger number of participants.

Finally, the topic itself appeared to be too broad for getting profound information which will contribute to understanding the influence of reforms on particular aspects of teacher identity. It would be beneficial to study various constructs of this complex phenomenon separately in order to reveal its evolution in the context of the school reforms.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents findings of the study aimed at exploring teacher identity in the context of current school reforms in Kazakhstan from the perspective of NIS teachers. The purpose of the study was to investigate how different factors of the school reforms affect NIS teachers' perceptions of their professional selves, including professional and emotional aspects. A qualitative interview-based research design was employed in this study to answer the following research question: How do current school reforms affect NIS teachers' perceptions of themselves as professionals?

Ten NIS teachers who represented different age groups and areas of specialization were interviewed. The collected data was transcribed and analyzed by hand using codes which helped to organize the received information into specific themes and sub-themes in relation to one of the research sub-questions. During the interpretive analysis, the conceptual framework of the literature review was used.

The chapter is structured in the following way. First, the participants' characteristics are presented. Next, the findings of the study are grouped into three parts pertaining to the research sub-questions. The first part is aligned with sub-question 1 and contributes to understanding how NIS teachers define their professional identity from different angles. The second part provides the answer to sub-question 2 illustrating how the new philosophy of teaching affects teacher professionalism. Finally, the third part refers to sub-question 3, which reveals the influence of the administrative aspect of the reforms on teacher professionalism.

### **4.2. Characteristics of Participants**

A total of ten NIS teachers were interviewed for this study. The age range of the participants varied from 22 to 61, which helped to answer the research questions from

different perspectives. The interviewees also varied according to their area of specialization. Since the teacher of Kazakh who was initially going to be interviewed could not take part in the study, another English teacher was interviewed. Additional information about previous work or study experience was also taken into consideration.

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

Table 2

*General information about the participants*

<b>Participant code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Work experience (years)</b>	<b>Area of specialization</b>	<b>Previous work place</b>	<b>Additional information</b>
Participant 1	22	1.5	English	-	Studied 2 semesters abroad (USA, Czech Republic)
Participant 2	61	30	Mathematics	Mainstream school	
Participant 3	36	More than 10	ICT	Taraz State Pedagogical Institute	
Participant 4	51	14	Chemistry	Mainstream school in a village	
Participant 5	30	4	Physics	Turkish lyceum	
Participant 6	52	About 30	World History	School-gymnasium	
Participant 7	40	19	Russian and Literature	School-gymnasium	
Participant 8	38	20	Biology	Boarding school for gifted children	
Participant 9	26	4.5	English/ Global Perspectives	Private language center	Bolashak post-graduate student (UK)
Participant 10	30	9	English	Kazakh National University (Al-Farabi)	

Taking into account general results of the study, such variability on the criteria of variation did not fully prove its appropriateness to the purpose of the research. To be more

specific, characteristics related to the area of specialization and previous employment appeared to have no significant value since the responses of participants across these criteria did not differ much and therefore did not contribute to the overall understanding of the issue under study.

### **4.3. Results Pertaining to RQ1: How do NIS Teachers Define Their Professional Identity?**

In order to answer sub-question 1, teachers were asked to ponder how they see themselves as professionals. Consistent with the literature, the questions were designed to reveal NIS teachers' identity on four dimensions: personal, social, professional and emotional. Therefore, the data collected as a result of the interviews was analyzed and grouped based on the following categories:

- Personal aspect of teacher identity
- Social aspect of teacher identity
- Professional aspect of teacher identity
- Emotional aspect of teacher identity

#### **4.3.1. Personal aspect of teacher identity**

According to the literature, this aspect of teacher identity deals with the personal qualities, values and beliefs of teachers, as well as their self-image and future perspective. To understand the perceptions of NIS teachers in this respect, they were asked what it means to them to be a teacher and what quality is the most important for being a teacher with the capital 'T'. Having analyzed the responses of the given participants, key themes were identified. They are as follows: (1) teacher responsibility and honesty, (2) teacher knowledge and competence, (3) teacher commitment.

#### ***Teacher responsibility and honesty***

Half of the respondents reported that, in their eyes, being a teacher means to be responsible for students, their future education and even life. Four out of ten participants also named honesty as the most important quality a teacher must possess. Interestingly, this idea was expressed mostly by female teachers:

For me, being a teacher means to be responsible for the students I teach because I'm in charge of not only my job but also people and their lives, their behaviour and may be even future. And second, since I decided to be their friend, I need to be honest and open towards children. (Participant 6)

Honesty is very important. We do not have the right to lie to children, their parents and our colleagues. Only openness and honesty will allow us achieve our own professional growth and good results of our students. (Participant 8)

### ***Teacher knowledge and competence***

Interestingly, most of the respondents do not consider knowledge as the most crucial aspect of teacher professionalism. However, three participants claimed that you cannot be a good teacher without theoretical and practical expertise, since teachers' major mission is to give knowledge. For example, the Participant 2 noted:

First of all, a teacher must know his subject at the appropriate level. He should be able to answer any questions dealing with his area of specialization. Only doing so, he can arouse interest in his students; he will be able to engage students into this field.

### ***Teacher commitment***

Another surprising finding was to hear from a beginning teacher that commitment is important. This is unexpected because it contradicts prior studies which indicate that few students nowadays are committed to teaching when they enter teacher training institutions. However, this finding should be taken with caution since only one junior-level participant indicated that commitment is an important aspect of identity.

The most critical for a teaching profession is dedication... I think it's more important than knowledge cause if you're dedicated, you'll be eager to learn something and move forward and it'll make you grow professionally (Participant 1)

Summing up the aforementioned personal views of participants on the teaching profession, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents consider human traits such as

honesty and responsibility to be more important in the teaching profession than being knowledgeable in the sphere, since the profession itself is associated with humanism and is based on human relationships.

#### **4.3.2. Social aspect of teacher identity**

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, to be a teacher-professional at the present time cannot be viewed separately from the community in which they work and from the society by which they are surrounded outside the classroom. Thus, to understand how NIS teachers view themselves from the social perspective, questions regarding their relations with different representatives of the school community were asked. They also reflected on the present social status of teachers in Kazakhstan. In this regard, several themes emerged from the collected data: (1) relations with students, (2) relations with parents, (3) relations with colleagues, and (4) the attitude of society.

##### ***Relations with students***

Since all participants, except for two novice teachers, had work experience in mainstream schools which had retained a lot from the ‘old’ system of learning and teaching, they had a tendency to compare the present student-teacher relations with those at their previous work place. Most of them stated that these relationships have become more formal and impersonal, which, in their opinion, has both positive and negative sides. This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3.

##### ***Positive and negative aspects of NIS student-teacher relations***

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Teacher focus on knowledge	Decreased student respect towards teachers
Students’ autonomy	Loss of humane relations between teachers and students

On the one hand, some teachers think that having stopped the practice of being a cohort master (*'klassniy rukovoditel'*) relieved them from the responsibility of nurturing students. This allowed them to focus on delivering knowledge and skills rather than discipline. Participant 9 noted:

Now my responsibility before students is to give a good lesson, I don't need to care about what they do after my lesson, what they eat, how they behave or whatever. This is the job of curators. And this is right; a teacher should focus on teaching.

Several teachers also reported that with relations being more formal students learn to be more independent. They do not rely on teachers only but on their own skills and experience. According to them, this has certain benefits for teachers, for example, students can clearly understand why they do this or that, and they are interested in their own success. This idea is evident in the following comment:

Relations with students, in comparison with the previous work experiences, can be described as increased students' interest in their own results, which means they are becoming more responsible for their own learning. (Participant 6)

Other teachers, on the contrary, are dissatisfied by the attitude of students towards teachers saying that it has become less respectful. Moreover, if earlier teachers possessed authority in front of the learners, nowadays they can be accused of everything that goes wrong. As a result, students often abuse their newly-acquired rights and autonomy, which leads to diminished respect towards teachers. This was vividly expressed by Participant 3:

It's easier to work here, since students are different, they are motivated and know what they need. On the other hand, there are students who don't know your name not to mention of greeting you. Do we deserve that?

Another interesting finding was that two respondents were concerned about the loss of that invisible connection between students and teachers that makes these relations living and breathing (humane) rather than mechanical. According to them, this fact will negatively affect the future of not only education but the lives of the entire next generation. As one of them noted:

I miss that system because my relationships with learners were closer, much closer. I knew each student very well, even students from other grades. Those relations were warmer and more personal. Here, they are more official, we are becoming 'lesson deliverers' rather than teachers. If we continue like that, we will lose the generation. (Participant 6)

### ***Relations with parents***

All the interviewee responses regarding this question were short as they stated there are no real relations per se. The responsibility for connection with parents is on the curators' shoulders only. Parents tend to contact teachers in extreme cases only, usually when their children do not succeed. Thus, all ten respondents believe the NIS system of parental involvement does not work well at this stage. Along with that, some teachers are happy with the current situation while others are concerned about it. As Participant 9 said, "I don't work with students' parents, curators do it. I think it's correct. They don't annoy us, teachers".

Another respondent noted:

The work with parents is not organized well here, moreover, it's incorrect. At my previous work place we worked as 'teacher-parent-student'. All three were involved. Presently, you don't even know what your students' parents look like.

***Relations with colleagues.*** NIS has created conditions for close teacher cooperation and cultivates a collaborative culture among the school community. This is proved by the responses of all participants. However, only half of them reported that these conditions are used appropriately by all their colleagues, which often leads to misunderstandings and unwillingness to work as a team. The received information can, therefore, be divided into two opposing sub-themes: (1) collaborative and supportive relations and (2) lack of collaboration.

Almost all teachers, except for one, claimed that they feel an integral part of the school community and are happy to work with their colleagues sharing ideas and experience, be it planning or team-teaching. Surprisingly, young novice teachers reported they feel absolutely comfortable working with much older and experienced colleagues and are always supported when needed. One of them stated:

I feel really comfortable among colleagues because all my colleagues try to support me, I can go and ask any question to them and they usually are ready to help. That is why I prefer working in a team. (Participant 1)

On the other hand, despite all participants realizing the benefits of team work, some of them still prefer working on their own due to the fact that their colleagues do not want to collaborate. Some of the respondents who mentioned this are young teachers who think their voices are not counted by older colleagues, whereas the latter believe that a new generation of teachers is too ambitious to listen to more experienced colleagues. The following comment demonstrates this opinion:

I rarely share my opinion with others, because young teachers don't want to listen. Nowadays, the youth doesn't listen to anyone. Why should I talk to people who don't need my advice? (Participant 5)

### *Attitude of society*

Not only does the school community play a vital role in defining teacher identity, so do external factors such as the attitude of society. Nine out of ten interviewees agree that the social status of teachers in Kazakhstan is at a low level, at least lower than it should be. First of all, it relates to the financial aspect. Although all the respondents consider their salary more or less worthy, the average salary of Kazakhstani teachers is not at a level appropriate to the importance of the various roles that teachers carry out. Secondly, it is connected with low prestige and, therefore, lack of respect for the teaching profession. As one of the respondents noted, “teachers are treated as service staff because the role of the teacher, his status is downplayed in Kazakhstan. This refers both to the financial aspect and moral values as well” (Participant 7). Another respondent said he even wants to quit teaching because of this (Participant 5).

An unexpected response was given by a participant who was the only one to say that the status and prestige of teaching profession has recently grown. According to him, “many school graduates choose ICT when entering university knowing that they will become

teachers. They realize that being a teacher means stability and security” (Participant 3). The area of specialization of this teacher might have influenced his conclusions about the status of teaching profession since the interest of enrollees in pursuing a certain profession varies across different specialties.

To summarize the teachers’ views on the social aspect of their professionalism, the general findings were as follows. Almost all participants agree that the student-teacher relationships are now more formal and impersonal in comparison with previous practices. Some teachers consider these changes to be positive, whereas others think they negatively affect students’ attitude towards teachers. As for relations with parents, all participants reported there is no regular connection between them and teachers. There are two views among respondents regarding relations with colleagues. While the majority of them said they felt the part of a community, only some of them believe they have effective collaborative relations with colleagues. The remaining participants often find it difficult to work as a team due to lack of support and understanding on behalf of team members. Finally, almost all participants define the current social status of teachers as low in terms of payment and attitude of society towards teaching profession.

#### **4.3.3. Professional aspect of teacher identity**

According to the conceptual framework mentioned in the literature section of the paper, the professional aspect of teacher identity includes teacher knowledge and expertise, teacher roles, the level of autonomy and power, and multiple responsibilities teachers are exposed to. As a result of the analysis of the respondents’ answers regarding this question, the following themes can be derived: (1) teacher role in the classroom and (2) teacher role at school level.

##### ***Teacher role in the classroom***

Most respondents reported that they see themselves as guides or facilitators in the classroom who just direct students to get knowledge and acquire skills independently rather than provide ready knowledge. One of the teachers defined his role in the classroom as follows:

I'd say my role in the classroom is a guide, I don't really control them, I just try to show them the best way to get somewhere, correct them when necessary but I can't say I'm an active leader in the classroom. (Participant 1)

Only one teacher claimed that he does not consider himself a teacher for students, giving preference to the notion of a 'friend' with whom they can feel comfortable in any situation. As he said during the interview, "I try to become a friend of students, that's why they are open with me. They are not afraid to say what they are concerned about" (Participant 5).

### *Teacher role at the school level*

Although many interviewees feel a part of the school community and try to actively cooperate with all its members, almost none of them stated that they play a significant role at school level being just a small unit in a big mechanism. This is supported by the following words: "At a larger scale, being a teacher, I'm just a tiny part of the community, but we need to grow professionally to start playing any kind of role" (Participant 9).

More experienced teachers define their role as mentors for younger colleagues. As one of them noted, "at my age it is time to be a mentor and I think I fulfill this role pretty well helping my younger colleagues" (Participant 2). Many teachers also mentioned they have other responsibilities at school besides teaching, such as coordinator of work with gifted children or coordinator of assessment. Some participants are authors of different programs and text-books. Nevertheless, they are not ready to say definitely what place they occupy and what role they play outside the classroom. "I know I have a certain role, but what exactly it is or how well I do it, I cannot judge it" (Participant 6).

It can be, therefore, concluded that the professional aspect of teacher identity is defined by the role teachers play and responsibilities they fulfill in their schools. NIS teachers tend to see themselves as guides for students in the learning process who direct them and help them acquire knowledge and skills independently. As for their role in school community, teachers think they are responsible for many other things except teaching; however they cannot define how significant their role is at school level.

#### **4.3.4. Emotional aspect of teacher identity**

Consistent with the literature, the interviewed teachers admitted that the emotional aspect is vital in the teaching profession, as it deals with job satisfaction and motivation, commitment and agency, self-esteem and self-efficacy, feelings of guilt and stress. The information given by the respondents in this respect can be classified according to the following themes: (1) job satisfaction and (2) motivation level. Some other components will be further discussed in the chapter in the context of reforms.

##### ***Job satisfaction***

All participants, except for one, reported that they are generally satisfied with their current job. However, there are some factors which do not allow them to feel completely satisfied with what they do inside and outside the classroom. The following emerging sub-themes will explain these factors: (1) sources of job satisfaction, (2) reasons for job dissatisfaction.

The most popular answer to the question about sources of job satisfaction was working with students. Many participants agreed that they feel they are doing the right thing in life when they have an opportunity to work with learners rather than doing administrative work. Other factors positively affecting job satisfaction are salary, opportunities for professional development and respect of community members. Participant 6 noted:

The primary source of satisfaction comes from the work with learners. It is also important when you see that you are valued by the school administration, the principal

and your colleagues. And also, it depends on the attitude of the society, whether it respects you as a professional or not. Salary is not the least important factor, either.

All participants also reported that they cannot be fully satisfied by their job due to the excessive paper work they are required to do, often at the expense of their primary responsibility to teach students and plan lessons. The level of dissatisfaction in this regard is not that high, if speaking generally. Nevertheless, it significantly affects the teachers' emotional state. This idea is clearly stated by Participant 8: "I am not satisfied by endless paper work and wrong distribution of my work time by administration. Sometimes, this 10% of dissatisfaction absorbs all the positive things of the remaining 90%".

### ***Motivation level***

Another component of the emotional aspect of teacher identity, motivation level, proved to be closely connected with the previous one as the vast majority of respondents stated that excessive paper work negatively influences their motivation level. Furthermore, this influence has grown over the years as the paper work is constantly increasing. As Participant 7 noted, "I had a really high motivation level in the first year of working here, I enjoyed everything. But the more we work, the more we understand there are so many useless things we do". Despite this fact, NIS teachers appeared to have a high or above average motivation level. The reasons for this are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

### *The reasons for the high level of teacher motivation*

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Opportunities for professional growth	7 respondents
Financial interest	4 respondents
New challenges	3 respondents

As can be seen in Table 4, the majority of respondents indicated opportunities for professional growth as the most crucial factor positively influencing job motivation. The work conditions created by the NIS system allow teachers to develop their professional competence in different spheres on a regular basis. As Participant 10 reported:

I can say that I am highly motivated because I have discovered different aspects of teaching and learning process as a result of various seminars, master classes and courses provided by our school. These aspects encourage me to work and develop as a professional.

The second factor increasing teachers' motivation to work is financial interest. Since NIS teachers consider their salary as above average for this region of Kazakhstan and higher than that of mainstream teachers, this aspect also has a major impact on the motivation level. This fact is revealed in the response by Participant 8: "I've got a very high level of motivation. First of all, this is financial interest and my family's dependence on me. Second, I love working with children and plan lessons. But foremost is the material aspect, only then moral".

Regarding the third reason for being highly-motivated, some teachers mentioned that working at NIS is interesting but challenging due to the large workload and multiple new responsibilities. These are connected with the requirements of a new system to being a competent teacher. However, it is exactly these difficulties which motivate them to develop and work harder. For example, Participant 4 stated:

My level of motivation is high due to the requirements of the system and my students. Now I have started to teach 11<sup>th</sup> grades in English, and this fact bothers me a lot since my language knowledge is not that high. And this motivates me to learn English to satisfy my students' needs.

To summarize the findings related to the emotional state of NIS teachers, it can be stated that almost all of them are generally satisfied with their job, and the main source of job satisfaction is working with students. The factor that diminishes the level of job satisfaction is paper work. Talking about job motivation, the majority of respondents feel highly-motivated

working in NIS mostly because of the opportunities for professional development provided by the school. Among other reasons are financial interest and new challenges associated with the introduction of a new system of education.

To conclude all findings contributing to understanding teachers' perceptions of their identity from personal, social, professional and emotional perspectives, the following results can be emphasized. Regarding personal values, teacher responsibility and honesty, teacher knowledge and competence and teacher commitment were reported to be the most critical components of a teaching profession. Viewing themselves as social members, the respondents identified positive and negative aspects of their relationships with students (students' autonomy but lack of respect), their parents (lack of communication), colleagues (for some teachers, support, for others, lack of collaboration) and society as a whole (diminished social status). Concerning the roles teachers play in their classrooms and school, the majority of teachers stated they behave as guides during the lessons, whereas at the school level their role is not that significant. Speaking about the emotional dimension of teacher identity, it appeared that almost all teachers feel generally satisfied and highly motivated by their job, even though there are factors diminishing both job satisfaction and motivation.

#### **4.4. Results Pertaining to RQ2: How does the Teaching-Related Aspect of Reforms in Kazakhstan Influence Teacher Identity?**

In order to answer sub-question 2, it is first of all worthwhile to define what refers to the teaching-related aspect of the reforms. This aspect deals with changes having direct connection with teaching practices such as goal-oriented learning, learner-centered approach, criteria-based assessment, trilingual policy, use of technology in the classroom. It also has to do with changes in school culture (for instance, building collaboration) since it will ultimately affect students' learning.

The findings of the study regarding this question can be classified into two categories: (1) the influence of reforms on the professional aspect of teacher identity and (2) the influence of reforms on the emotional aspect.

#### **4.4.1. The influence of reforms on the professional aspect of teacher identity**

The main finding was that nine respondents out of ten believe teaching-related reforms positively affected their professionalism and competence as a teacher. In this regard, specific themes emerged during the data analysis: (1) the influence of reforms on teaching views and practices, (2) the influence of reforms on teacher autonomy, and (3) the challenges of transition.

##### *The influence of reforms on teaching views and practices*

As all respondents stated, working at NIS dramatically changed the way they teach, plan, behave as professionals and even their personal views on teaching and learning. The major shift is that teachers stopped viewing the teaching process as merely delivering knowledge from themselves to students, and started to teach them how to get this knowledge independently. As Participant 7 noted,

Previously, I thought that our main goal is to give students knowledge directly, by explaining and demonstrating. The fact that the students stay passive was acceptable for me. Nowadays, I am looking at it from different perspective. It is not enough to share your knowledge directly; you need to let students acquire skills they will use in real life.

With the introduction of school reforms not only have the views of teachers changed, so have their teaching practices as well, which is evidenced from the responses of all participants. As they reported, their lessons have become higher quality in comparison with their previous experiences in other schools as they started to employ such methods and techniques as “active learning, collaborative learning, differentiation, cross-curricular links, responding to learners’ needs, learning conversations, using e-learning, etc.” (Participant 10).

Seven out of ten respondents also reported they had reconsidered their role in the classroom from being an authoritarian teacher to becoming a facilitator of the learning process. This finding is closely connected with the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach. As Participant 6 noted:

In the old system of education I was more a cohort master rather than a teacher. Here this level is much higher. My role in the classroom has changed. If earlier I was 'a queen', I was authoritarian, now I am learning to use the method when teacher directs students rather than tells them what to do.

### *The influence of reforms on teacher autonomy*

Having analyzed the answers of the respondents to questions about teacher autonomy, it was revealed that teachers feel confused in this regard, since there are conflicting types of autonomy: autonomy in and outside the classroom. The majority of participants reported that they feel more or less free to choose teaching methods and resources for their lessons, although there are certain limitations set by the standardized curriculum and lesson structure. As one respondent said, "Concerning my lesson, I think I feel completely independent" (Participant 4). However, some of the interviewees mentioned that there is a certain pressure from above in relation to the assessment of students. Participant 1 reported:

Regarding assessment of students, there is some external pressure because when you have less able students and they have bad marks, then you get punished for them having bad marks. This is no good because then you just give good marks because you don't want to be punished.

Talking about autonomy at the school level, the greatest portion of respondents agreed they do not possess any kind of autonomy since all decisions are made without their involvement and many of them are not clear to teachers. According to Participant 8, "I don't feel independent at all. I depend on everything outside the classroom, from planning to distribution of my work time. Each of my steps is dependent on some external factors".

### *Challenges of transition*

Although many participants stated that teaching-related reforms positively affected their professionalism, they all admitted that the transition from an old to a new system was quite challenging and even painful for some of them. These challenges can be divided into two sub-themes: (1) personal resistance to change, and (2) interference of the local context.

Four respondents out of ten reported that their personal beliefs and attitudes towards education were so strong that it was extremely difficult for them to start implementing new approaches. As Participant 4 noted, “the most difficult thing was to break that personal persistent belief that all we did before was right”.

While all respondents stated that they find the general idea of school reform reasonable and effective, many of them mentioned that it cannot fully employ its potential due to the local mentality of people. This caused numerous obstacles in the process of transition to a new system, especially in the first years of operations of NIS. Participant 5 provided the following example:

At my previous job there was no competition, we had support. Things are different here. I was shocked in the beginning. Many teachers do not understand what collaboration is, many don't want to share their experience, and many are not ready to listen to other opinions.”

Overall, the influence of teaching-related reforms on the professional aspect of teacher identity has been mostly positive. More specifically, teaching views and beliefs have changed considerably as teachers stopped giving ‘ready’ knowledge and started to develop skills in their students. As a result, teaching practices has also shifted from authoritarian teacher-centered to learner-centered approach. Regarding teacher autonomy, two opposing opinions emerged during the data analysis. On the one hand, teachers feel independent in their classrooms whereas at school level they don't possess any sense of autonomy, rather they feel they must simply follow the decisions of others. Among the challenges teachers encountered

when they were introduced to the new system were their personal resistance to change and interference of the local context.

#### **4.4.2. The influence of teaching-related reforms on the emotional aspect of teacher identity**

The emotional aspect of teacher identity was also affected by the new system which is evident in the responses of eight participants. The results were classified as follows: (1) influence of reforms on teacher self-esteem, and (2) influence of reforms on teacher motivation.

##### ***The influence of teaching-related reforms on teacher self-esteem***

The first finding was that all respondents defined their self-esteem as low at the beginning of their employment in NIS system. This idea was particularly emphasized by the experienced teachers who felt very confident in their previous job and had to start from the very beginning, learning again together with much younger colleagues or novice teachers. However, as time passed, teachers started to feel more confident and the level of their self-esteem grew significantly due to the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and experiences. Moreover, their self-esteem continues to grow as long as the system provides opportunities for professional growth. Participant 6 expressed this idea in the following words: “I have become more professional. I actually learned again, but now in practice. My self-esteem has definitely increased. If I go to work in a mainstream school, I’ll be a god there.”

##### ***The influence of teaching-related reforms on teacher motivation***

The second component of the emotional aspect of teacher identity, job motivation, appeared to be very high in its relation to reforms which allowed teachers to grow professionally. This level has remained stable from the beginning of their work in NIS up to the present.

To sum up, the teaching-related aspect of school reforms has had a mostly positive effect on both professional and emotional dimensions of teacher identity. The majority of teachers stated they had considerably improved their practices, although the transition to a new system was challenging. The major difficulties were personal resistance to change and interference of the local mentality. This aspect of the reforms also positively affected the emotional state of teachers, particularly, the level of teacher self-esteem and motivation.

#### **4.5. Results Pertaining to Sub-Question 3: How does the Administrative Aspect of the Reforms Influence Teacher Identity?**

To answer sub-question 3, the respondents were asked to reflect on the influence of reforms on their professional identity from a different angle. To be more precise, they talked about how the formal accountability and intensification of work affect their identity. The majority of teachers also reported that the way school administration organizes the work has a tremendous effect on their emotional state. Thus, the following themes were identified: (1) the influence of formal accountability on teacher identity, (2) the influence of work intensification on teacher identity and (3) the influence of school leadership styles on teacher identity.

##### **4.5.1. The influence of formal accountability on teacher identity**

Despite the fact all teachers reported that formal accountability takes too much of their work time and is mostly repetitive, not all of them stated that it negatively affects their professionalism. Therefore, the findings can be classified as having both negative and positive influences.

##### ***Negative influence of formal accountability on teacher identity***

Eight out of ten respondents consider formal accountability useless and disruptive to their more important responsibilities such as planning and teaching. Moreover, it leaves no space for creativity and development. Teachers also pondered on the reasons of the

bureaucracy that the main reason for formal accountability is because of inconsistency in the overall accountability system. As Participant 6 noted, “the reports are often repetitive, just in a different form. It happens because we don’t have consistency in NIS and the country, in general”. This factor negatively affects the motivation level and job satisfaction.

#### *Positive influence of formal accountability on teacher identity*

Surprisingly, some teachers agreed that formal accountability has not only negative but positive sides, as well. As one respondent said, “It’s a great skill to learn, writing reports and trying to analyze the things going on” (Participant 1). Another positive effect is that it helps to get organized and see the ‘picture of the work you do’ (Participant 6). And, finally, as Participant 2 reported, “reports mobilize my work when I see my own results and results of my colleagues”.

#### **4.5.2. The influence of work intensification on teacher identity**

As all experienced teachers reported, working at NIS is much more intense than it was in a regular school. First of all, it is connected with the load of information going through teachers every day. One of the respondents said, “We receive so much information a day that we physically cannot digest or analyze it” (Participant 2). Secondly, intensification deals with new responsibilities teachers have to combine with teaching and planning. Although the majority of participants agree that these responsibilities are important for their work in general and they voluntarily do extra work associated with that, they feel more and more exhausted and stressed. This, in turn, negatively influences the quality of the lessons and students’ results. Regarding its influence on teachers’ private lives, almost all respondents stated there is no balance between work and family, since work takes most of their time even after the working hours. The following comment demonstrates this fact:

I spend most of my time on doing my job; as a result, it is impossible to combine it with private life. In the evening, I do planning, search for resources, develop some projects, and fill in the reports... I can spend maximum one hour with my family. (Participant 8)

### **4.5.3. The influence of school leadership styles on teacher identity**

In discussing other external aspects of a new system, many of the participants mentioned outdated leadership styles as one of the main factors negatively influencing teacher professionalism. Although the school culture promotes collaboration and support, this does not work at the administration level. According to the respondents, people holding leading positions at school still follow the top-down authoritarian leadership style.

My view on the work of administration before and after I got my Master's degree in leadership is like the ground and the sky. I thought they worked ideally. When I learnt about different leadership roles, my views changed. What they do is top-down instructional leadership. (Participant 9)

This fact negatively affects the emotional aspect of teacher identity such as self-esteem and job motivation. As one respondent noted, "We love our job but we often feel like in prison here. We need to ask for the vice-principal's permission to have lunch out. There is too much control and too little trust between them and us" (Participant 5). Another participant gave the following comment:

It's always a different feeling. On the one hand, you feel important when you share your ideas, conduct seminars, help teachers from pilot schools. On the other hand, when administration shouts at you and blames you unjustifiably in everything that goes wrong at school, and doesn't give you a chance to say your opinion... you really feel miserable. No desire to do anything, no motivation. (Participant 10)

To summarize, the administrative aspect of the reforms, such as formal accountability, intensification of work and inappropriate leadership styles appeared to have a mostly negative influence on teacher identity. This refers more to the emotional aspect of teacher professionalism, including teacher self-esteem and job motivation.

## **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter aimed at presenting the findings of the study revealed in the process of interview data analysis. The first part introduced NIS teachers' perceptions of their professional identity from four perspectives: personal, social, professional and emotional. The second part was devoted to the analysis of how teaching-related school reforms influence

teacher identity. The changes in two aspects of teacher identity, professional and emotional, were described in the context of these reforms. The third part presented the results on how teacher identity was influenced by the administrative aspect of school reforms. The given findings will be further discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings obtained from the study which was focused on the exploration of teacher identity through the perceptions of NIS teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the interpretive explanation of major findings considering different meanings and perspectives. The findings will be discussed in their relation to the literature and the research questions.

The chapter consists of three main parts. First, teachers' own definition of their professional selves is considered. This is followed by the discussion of how teacher identity evolves under the influence of the teaching-related aspect of current school reforms in Kazakhstan. Finally, the effect of the administrative aspect of these reforms on teacher professionalism is discussed.

### **5.2. Teacher Perceptions of Their Professional Identity**

As it was mentioned earlier in the literature part of the thesis, it is extremely difficult to give a certain definition to the notion of professional identity. Considering various views of scholars on this complex phenomenon (Bogler & Somech, 2002; Davey, 2013; Day et.al., 2006; Flores and Day, 2006 as cited in MacBeath, 2012; Hargreaves, 1995; Vahasantanen, 2014; Weiss, 1999), a conceptual framework of teacher identity was created. Consistent with this framework, NIS teachers tried to explain how they see themselves as professionals and what it means to them to be a teacher.

#### ***Personal dimension***

The first finding is that the majority of respondents view responsibility and honesty as the most crucial qualities for a teaching profession, whereas knowledge and expertise were

mentioned by a smaller number of participants. This result aligns with the statement of Day et al. (2006) that “teaching demands significant personal investment” (p.603) and therefore cannot be merely viewed as doing what one knows well. It is also partially consistent with the findings of Sahin and Adiguzel (2014) who studied the qualities of an effective teacher from the teachers’ perspective and found out that teacher personal traits were rated higher than professional skills. However, the qualities identified by American teachers as the most important differed from those mentioned by the participants of the given study. Among them were love for teaching, respect towards students and communication skills (Sahin & Adiguzel, 2014, p.643).

### *Social dimension*

Another finding is that teachers have started to feel as an integral part of school community since they started working at NIS. This idea supports the views of Wenger (1998) who claims that community membership plays a vital role in shaping teacher identity. More specifically, it was revealed that the majority of respondents find their relationships with colleagues supportive and collaborative. This was also mentioned by two novice teachers, which is a bit surprising due to the existence of the so-called ‘dedovschina’ (domineering attitude of experienced teachers towards young colleagues) in many schools of the Post-Soviet countries. This finding does not support the idea of young teachers’ socialization problems mentioned by Shamatov (2005) such as lack of support or even resentful attitude of the senior colleagues towards newcomers. However, it would be incorrect to conclude that all novice teachers of NIS feel the same because these two respondents are representatives of the English department which has a stronger connection with international staff than other departments. This fact might have a certain effect, since the idea of collaboration was brought from abroad, and international teachers can help build this climate among the local staff. Moreover, these two participants have international experience themselves studying in

Europe and the US, which probably makes them more open to such innovations and help them adapt better to new conditions.

Regarding relations with students, the study shows that NIS teachers consider their relationship with learners to be more formal and impersonal in comparison with their previous work experience. This fact, in their opinion, has both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, students have become more independent and teachers do not need to care about them outside the classroom but focus on teaching. On the other hand, teachers lost their authority in front of students, and the latter have become less respectful towards teachers, as a result. Two respondents also sentimentally noted that there is no more 'warm' close relationship between them and students, which make the teaching profession a living and breathing process rather than mechanical. This finding is not supported by any of the literature reviewed, since the common difficulty between teachers and students mentioned by different authors (Flores & Day, 2006; Shamatov, 2011; Teleshaliyev, 2013;) is learners' misbehavior which is not a case of NIS schools. However, this idea proves the significance of the emotional factors for teaching profession emphasized by Flores and Day (2006).

The attitude of the society towards teaching profession was discussed in the study of Shamatov (2011) and in the article by Silova (2009) who highlighted the low status of teachers in the Post-Soviet era. Despite the fact that sufficient time has passed since dissolution of the Soviet Union and considerable changes are being presently implemented in secondary school education of Kazakhstan, the comments of interviewees in this respect reveal that the social status of teaching profession is still not at the appropriate level both in terms of payment and respect towards teaching, in general. Respondents admit that the financial aspect is not an issue for most NIS teachers of their region but it remains the problem for the education system of Kazakhstan as a whole. Surprisingly, one respondent claims that the status of teaching profession has increased, and young people are becoming

more interested in entering pedagogical institutions. As this was the comment of an ICT teacher, it might be true, since decision to pursue the teaching profession varies across different specialization areas.

### *Professional dimension*

Analyzing teacher identity from the professional point of view, the majority of teachers define their role in the classroom as a guide directing and facilitating the learning process rather than the one who delivers knowledge. This can be explained by the fact that teachers have reconsidered their teaching views and practices which, in turn, influenced their behavior and teaching styles. The study also shows that NIS teachers fulfill numerous responsibilities and play different roles beyond their classroom duties. Nevertheless, most of them are not ready to say that their contribution to school improvement is significant, preferring to be a small part of a large mechanism. This fact can be explained either by mentality of local people or the influence of administration on teacher self-esteem. The latter will be further discussed in this chapter in the context of reforms.

Referring back to different types of teacher professionalism described by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), it can be concluded that NIS teachers' identity can be associated with the complex discourse of professionalism characterized by the complexity of roles and variety of responsibilities which can destructively affect teaching practices and lead to teacher burnout. In the case of Kazakhstan, the influence of work intensification as a part of school reforms on teacher identity will be discussed later in this chapter.

### *Emotional dimension*

The last, emotional, dimension of teacher identity proved to be critical for being a teacher according to the participants' responses. As most of them stated, this aspect of teacher

professionalism can have both constructive and destructive effects on other aspects of teaching. This finding aligns with the ideas of Flores and Day (2006) who claim that teacher identity and emotions are closely interrelated.

The major findings in this regard are connected with the reported level of job satisfaction and motivation to teach. These two components, along with occupational commitment and self-efficacy, are the main “indicators of teachers’ sense of their professional identity” according to Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink and Hofman (2012, p. 117). Although most of NIS teachers reported they are generally satisfied with their job, it was interesting to reveal the sources of job satisfaction as well as those of dissatisfaction. As the results show, teaching, or working with students, is the major source of job satisfaction for NIS teachers. This result cannot be juxtaposed with other studies on teacher job satisfaction since the majority of them focus on the relations between job satisfaction and other constructs of teacher identity, such as self-efficacy, commitment, relationship satisfaction (Canrinus et.al, 2012), school culture and self-efficacy (Buyukgoze-Kavas, Duffy, Guneri, & Autin, 2014; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; You, Kim & Lim, 2017) rather than on the sources of job satisfaction itself.

Salary was reported to be another factor contributing to teacher job satisfaction as well as one of the reasons of high motivation level. This finding can be explained by the fact that low payment was one of the causes of the so-called crisis of teaching profession during the Post-Soviet era (Silova, 2009). This fact is also reflected in the works of Shamatov (2013) and Teleshaliyev (2013) who discussed tough conditions teachers of Central Asia were exposed to after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In comparison with those times, salary and working conditions offered by NIS appeared to be much more attractive even for teachers who had everything at their previous jobs (qualifications, experience, and respect). Taking

into account that salaries of NIS teachers are higher than that of mainstream school teachers in the city where the research was conducted, this result was not an unexpected one at all.

The finding that opportunities for professional growth were identified as the foremost reason of high motivation level by the majority of the participants was also an expected result. It is consistent with the fact that government provides funding for NIS teachers to undergo various trainings including those conducted abroad, while mainstream school teachers have to develop professionally at their own expense.

Another interesting finding related to teacher motivation was that its level was not stable throughout the time of work in NIS, more specifically, it was decreasing over the time due to intensification of work and bureaucracy. This finding is in line with the discussion of Day (2002) on the negative influence of reforms characterized by work intensification and increased accountability on the emotional aspect of teacher professional identity.

### **5.3. The Influence of Teaching-Related Reforms on Teacher Identity**

#### **5.3.1. The influence of teaching-related reforms on the professional aspect of teacher identity**

The major research finding related to transformation of teacher identity under the influence of teaching-related reforms shows that almost all participants of the study consider this influence as mostly positive for their professional competences. Firstly, the majority of teachers reported they had considerably changed their teaching views and practices since their employment at NIS. This fact proves the theory of instability of teacher identity which tends to shift in different conditions (Cunningham, 2008; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996) and the idea that reshaping of professionalism is closely connected with the educational change (Goodson & Norrie, 2005 as cited in Tang, 2011, p. 364). Teachers

stopped viewing themselves as the main figures in the classroom but shifted the focus of learning onto students and their needs. They also realized the necessity to teach students to be independent learners rather than provide them with theoretical knowledge for memorizing. As a result of these changes, teachers stated they had considerably improved the quality of their teaching.

However, the process of shifting views and practices was not an easy one, as the participants stated. At first, they experienced what Bennis (1963) called ‘mimicry’, which means they were trying to implement changes in their classrooms without conscious understanding why they needed to implement them and what results they expected. Only now, having worked for almost 4 years under the new system, teachers have entered the stage of ‘epistemological transfer’, i.e. understanding why they need this change (Bennis, 1963, p. 134). Another finding which deals with challenges participants faced is that their inner personal belief that the previous approach was best, interfered the process of adaptation to the new teaching paradigm. This finding aligns with the results of the study conducted by Fimyar and Kurakbayev (2016) who explored the influence of Soviet education on the current educational changes and teachers’ beliefs. They concluded that “Kazakhstani teachers still experience difficulties in departing from the strong embrace of the knowledge-based curriculum” (Fimyar & Kurakbayev, 2016, p.94).

Additionally to changing views and classroom practices, the interviewed teachers reported they had also reconsidered their roles as community members. As it was mentioned earlier, the largest proportion of them started to view themselves as a part of a big team rather than individual workers realizing all the benefits of the team work. Nevertheless, the interference of the local context turned out to be another hindrance in developing a truly collaborative culture at school, since many teachers reported unwillingness of their colleagues to share ideas, resources and experience, or vice versa accept others’ ideas. This

was mostly reported by young teachers and can be explained by the fact that their more experienced colleagues have not yet got used to the ideas of sharing and collaboration which came from foreign cultures. Moreover, it was stated that many teachers do not perceive these ideas correctly, believing that collaboration means shifting own responsibilities on others or just imposing own ideas on colleagues. It can be therefore concluded that many innovations currently taking place in NIS are distorted due to the local mentality of people. This finding aligns with the idea of Masemann (2003) who claims there is a strong connection between culture and education.

The next finding related to transformation of teachers as professionals is that they presently feel confused in terms of autonomy which is a crucial component of teacher professionalism. On the one hand, they are not restricted by teaching methods and resources as it was during the Soviet period, which means they are now more independent in their classrooms. At the same time, there is an invisible pressure from administration when it comes to assessment of students. The fact that teachers have a kind of punishment for low achievement rates is probably connected with the wrong perceptions of a student-centered approach which, if expressed roughly, means ‘students are always right, teachers are always to blame’ in the Kazakhstani setting. This idea again refers to the influence of cultural context on educational change.

Furthermore, teachers do not feel they possess any kind of autonomy or power beyond their classroom practices being those who merely implement decisions of administrators. The result that teachers gave contradicting answers about autonomy in teaching and autonomy at school level aligns with the finding of a small-scale study in England where “the teachers viewed autonomy predominantly at the micro-level of individual interactions with pupils, the detail of lesson planning and with particular approaches to curriculum delivery” whereas the management culture of the school drives them into certain frames depriving them freedom at

macro-level (Wilkins, 2011, p.401). This finding also echoes the results of the study on professionalism of Kyrgyzstan's teachers which showed that their voices were not taken into account during the decision-making processes and led to teacher disempowerment and deskilling (Teleshaliyev, 2013).

### **5.3.2. The influence of teaching-related reforms on the emotional aspect of teacher identity**

Findings of the study related to the impact of the teaching related aspect of reforms on teachers' emotional state reveal that teachers' level of self-esteem and motivation has increased in comparison with their previous work experiences. However, it was not the same at the beginning of their work under the new system. While all teachers reported a high level of motivation when they left their previous jobs and came to work at NIS, not all of them could say the same about their self-esteem. It was interesting to find that those were experienced teachers who felt less confident at the beginning. This can be explained by the fact that although all teachers had to encounter a completely new system of education, they were exactly teachers with a large work experience who were emotionally challenged to start learning again. Taking into consideration that most of them were recognized professionals in the field before, it was hard for them to find themselves at the same level with young teachers.

This finding did not find reflection in other research studies since teacher self-esteem is not discussed in its relation to the specific aspect of school reforms. However, if combined with another emotional construct of teacher identity, motivation, it is congruent with the results of the study conducted in Israel, which concluded that the recently implemented reform positively affected teacher motivation and their general perception of teaching profession due to the improved quality of teaching, opportunities for professional

development and better working conditions (Taub, 2015). These findings allow assuming that the level of self-esteem of teachers in Israel has increased correspondingly.

#### **5.4. The Influence of the Administrative Aspect of Reforms on Teacher Identity**

##### **5.4.1. The influence of formal accountability**

Supporting the existing literature on educational change, the results of the given study demonstrate the importance of the administrative aspect of reforms in shaping teacher identity. This aspect includes accountability system, school management and organization of teachers' work. The first finding in this respect refers to the impact of accountability measures on teachers' professional lives. As the majority of respondents state, filling out the reports takes too much of their work and even personal time which negatively affects the quality of planning and teaching. Moreover, it has disruptive effect on teacher motivation and job satisfaction as they feel they are doing useless things instead of their primary responsibilities. This result is consistent with the findings of the research conducted in Kyrgyzstan, which vividly demonstrated the negative influence of managerial trends in education on teacher professionalism (Teleshaliyev, 2013).

Although teaching profession has always been associated with bureaucracy, the level of accountability in NIS system appeared to be higher than ever before, according to the participants. This can be connected with the big pressure laid upon educators to enhance economic competitiveness of the country (Nazarbayev, 2006 as cited in Shamshidinova et al., 2014). As a result, teachers have to be accountable for each step to prove they are really enacting the plan of the government. This situation is similar to the case of England some time ago, when teachers had "to be demonstrably more accountable, efficient and effective in producing quality learning" (Smyth, 1995 as cited in Day & Smethem, 2009, p. 142).

Financial aspect is not the least one as well, since considerable amount of the state budget is

allocated for maintenance of NIS schools. This fact imposes additional pressure on schools to justify the government's expenditures.

From the participants' own point of view, the reason for such a great number of reports is non-alignment of different subdivisions of NIS system since each of them try to demonstrate the work of their department but fail to create a common goal and plan together with other subdivisions. This explanation did not find support in other research studies but it can probably reflect the idea of Masemann (2003) about the interrelation of local context and educational reforms. The interference of local mentality might explain the fact that different units of one system work separately, each for their own good.

Despite the general dissatisfaction of teachers by the existing accountability system, some participants found it beneficial for their development as professionals, since preparing reports helps them get organized and see the progress of their work. This finding aligns with the one conducted in England, which showed that a new generation of teachers accept record-keeping or bureaucracy as something inevitable in a teaching profession, and even see the advantages as it allows them to "keep track of where they need to be at the end of the year" (Wilkins, 2011, p.401). Similarly to the concerns of this researcher, it is rather questionable whether teachers of NIS can use accountability for real/ practical professional development or that 'on the paper'.

#### **5.4.2. Intensification of work**

Consistent with the literature, the increased level of accountability leads to the overload and intensification of teachers' work. This conclusion found its reflection in the findings of this research, as all participants reported that their current work at NIS takes almost all their time, including that after the working hours, leaving no opportunity for spending time with families or having hobbies. Work overload is also connected with extra

responsibilities teachers have to combine with teaching to correspond to the requirements of the system. Although teachers accept intensification of work as a necessity for development and their own choice, the consequence can be rather destructive for the learning process, as teachers are becoming more stressed. Similar finding was described by De Simone, Cicotto and Lampis (2016) who studied occupational stress, job satisfaction and physical health of Italian teachers and concluded that they are presently subjected to stress due to educational changes associated with “increasing work demands” (p. 73).

#### **5.4.3. School leadership matters**

The results of the study show that relations between teachers and school administrators turned out to have significant impact on teachers’ emotional state. As all the participants reported, leadership styles currently employed by the school management staff negatively affect their self-esteem and motivation. It means that there is a certain link between how school is managed and teachers’ professionalism. This finding is consistent with the previous studies on leadership, although the majority of them focus on the connection of leadership style and students’ outcome or school success in general (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou and Kington, 2011; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Nevertheless, it is logical to assume that if the right leadership style positively affects students’ performance, it influences teachers in the same way since teachers are those who directly contribute to students’ success. Furthermore, other studies support the idea of a strong link between the school management and job satisfaction and motivation level of teachers (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016; Eyal & Roth, 2010; Olcum & Titrek, 2015). However, these studies describe the constructive effect of transformational or distributed leadership on all aspects of learning, whereas the given study of Kazakhstani teachers deals with the opposite correlation.

The fact that administrators still use the instructional top-down approach in managing the school confirms once more a strong influence of the Soviet legacy on education described by Fimyar and Kurakbayev (2016). This situation makes teachers feel puzzled about how they should behave since, on the one hand, the culture of NIS system as a whole encourages teachers to be activists and leaders but school administration, on the other hand, tends to suppress any kind of teachers' interference in decision-making. Moreover, they use tough authoritarian methods to diminish teachers' self-esteem in order to control and experience power over them, which is the evidence of lack or absence of social trust in the school community.

Reflecting on the discourses of teacher professionalism in relation to Kazakhstan, it can be concluded that with the introduction of new educational policies, NIS teachers are currently experiencing challenges in adaptation to new standards and responsibilities which require them to look at their professional selves from a different perspective. The major hindrance in this process is ambiguity of the concept of teacher professionalism defined by government bodies whose core goal is to get closer to the world standards. Being a teacher in a school of a new formation, they feel frustrated in the attempt to correspond to all the requirements needed to be an effective teacher.

On the one hand, NIS school values are intended to develop the activist identity emphasizing the vital role of collaborative culture, mutual respect and social justice. This approach demands great contribution of teachers' personal selves into development of students' skills and improvement of the school environment. On the other hand, there are so many things teachers are accountable for, that their foremost mission goes to the background due to the fear of being ineffective in terms of formal accountability. As participants stated, teacher professionalism is often judged by the ability of submitting numerous reports in a timely manner even at the expense of quality teaching. Under these conditions teachers have

to move between "entrepreneurial" and "activist" identities trying to meet individual and corporate goals. The problem occurs when teachers fail to succeed in any of them.

It is therefore evident that the government is currently trying to work in the direction of the democratic professionalism, however, the choice of methods to implement changes does not always conform to the idea per se. For instance, the concepts of shared leadership and collaboration are actively cultivated today; nevertheless all serious decisions are still made and imposed by 'the top' regardless their appropriateness to certain community groups or individuals' needs. We endeavor to come to the democratic professionalism using managerial methods. This discrepancy gives rise to confusion and ambiguity among teachers as well as diminishes their motivation and causes resistance to change. It is quite challenging to be a real 'activist' when your time is spent more on collecting the 'evidence' of your work rather than the work itself or when you are punished for giving students bad marks. Moreover, along with numerous benefits of student-centered learning, there are some drawbacks related to teachers' perception of themselves as professionals. Feeling that the whole system is now intended to satisfy their needs, many students tend to perceive teachers as a *tool* for achieving personal goals. It might seem sentimental but teachers and students are now losing that *human* relationship when the latter treat teachers as parents. This fact might also become an obstacle for teachers in developing a sense of agency.

### **5.5. Summary**

This chapter discussed the most significant findings of the study pertaining to the research questions and in relation to the literature reviewed. Firstly, comparing Kazakhstani teachers' perceptions of their professionalism with that of teachers from other studies and analyzing different types of teacher professionalism suggested by literature, it was concluded that NIS teachers' identity refers to the complex discourse of professionalism. It is

characterized by the variety and complexity of new roles in the classroom and beyond.

Similar to the previous studies, it was revealed that emotional aspect of teacher identity plays a crucial role in teachers' perceptions.

Secondly, transformation of teacher identity under the influence of teaching-related reforms was discussed. Regarding the influence on the professional aspect of professionalism, the findings of the study supported the previous research results which showed that teaching views and beliefs alter considerably due to the changes in education system. However, consistent with the literature, it was also found that such factors as personal resistance to change and local culture hinder the process of teacher professionalism evolution. The finding related to the influence of teaching related reforms on the emotional aspect of teacher identity can be referred to the unexpected one since there is little evidence in the literature about a certain link between these concepts.

Finally, the administrative aspect of reforms was discussed in regards to its influence on teacher identity. Similar to findings of other studies, it was revealed that formal accountability and intensification of work destructively affect teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. Leadership styles also appeared to be of great significance for teachers' emotional state, especially for their self-esteem and motivation to pursue the teaching profession. The chapter winds up with the researcher's personal reflections over the obtained results of the study.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter presented explanation and interpretation of the research findings considering meanings from different perspectives. This chapter will draw conclusions from the main findings, suggest recommendations for various stakeholders, and discuss implications for further research. The study aimed at exploring the influence of NIS school reforms on the evolution of teacher identity. To achieve this purpose and answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were addressed: (1) How do NIS teachers define their professional identity? (2) How does the teaching-related aspect of the reforms in Kazakhstan influence teacher identity? (3) How does the administrative aspect of the reforms influence teacher identity?

The chapter consists of two main sections. The first section summarizes findings pertaining to the research questions and presents conclusions drawn from these findings. The second part is devoted to recommendations which align with the findings and conclusions. Implications for further research will be also discussed in this section.

### **6.2. Revisiting Research Questions**

**6.2.1. How do NIS teachers define their professional identity?** First of all, the study has revealed that teachers' personal values significantly influenced their perceptions of a true teacher, highlighting the importance of such moral values as responsibility and honesty which were mentioned by a larger number of participants than knowledge and expertise. It can be therefore concluded that NIS teachers consider personal traits to be more critical in teaching than professional. Secondly, the study showed that teachers did not view themselves as a separate unit but as a part of the school community, however it was also revealed that their relationships with different members of that community are rather ambiguous having

both positive and negative aspects in comparison with their previous job experiences.

Thirdly, teachers have completely reconsidered their roles in the classroom shifting from being an authoritarian instructor to a democratic facilitator of the learning process. This fact leads to a conclusion that teacher identity is not stable but shaped by educational context.

Finally, the majority of NIS teachers seems to be highly motivated and satisfied with their job. The main reasons for the high level of teacher motivation are (1) opportunities for professional growth, (2) financial interest, and (3) new challenges. Nevertheless, the level of these two constructs of the emotional dimension tends to decline over the years. To conclude, the professional identity of NIS teachers is currently being reshaped and cannot be defined clearly due to the constantly changing environment.

**6.2.2. How does the teaching-related aspect of the reforms in Kazakhstan influence teacher identity?** As the results of the study showed, the aspects of school reforms which have a direct connection with learning and teaching constructively influence teacher identity both professionally and emotionally in most cases. This includes new teaching methods and approaches as well as ongoing professional development which make teachers feel more knowledgeable and confident in their own competence. At the same time, the fact that all teachers have to learn again and their previous teaching experience is not taken into consideration make older teachers feel undervalued. Another conclusion is that despite all teachers claimed they feel independent in their classrooms, teacher autonomy continues to be at a low level when it comes to decision making processes. Finally, many respondents stated that the process of transition to a new education system was extremely challenging. The most common obstacle among experienced teachers was personal resistance to change, while interference of the local mentality was mentioned by both young and older teachers. To conclude, although the teaching-related aspect of the reforms has had mostly positive effect

on teacher professionalism, there are still factors hindering the process of moving to a higher level of school education.

**6.2.3. How does the administrative aspect of the reforms influence teacher identity?** The results of the study also identified the influence of external factors related to school reforms on teacher identity evolution. Thus, the following determining aspects emerged during the data analysis: (1) formal accountability, (2) work intensification, and (3) school leadership styles. Concerning the first one, the research suggests that formal accountability has mostly destructive effect on teachers' professional and personal lives, deteriorating the quality of the lessons and depriving teachers' time for recreation. However, there is the second opinion which is in favour of keeping records and preparing reports, as this can help teachers control their own progress and stay organized. The question arising here is "Does it really help teachers develop professionally or simply collect evidences of being effective?"

A similar conclusion can be made regarding the intensification of work which proved to contribute to teacher stress. The latter, in teachers' opinion, negatively affects the quality of teaching and students' success. It was also found that top-down authoritarian leadership style still prevails in the school under consideration. This fact has a detrimental effect on teacher self-esteem, motivation and job satisfaction making some of them think of quitting the place or even the teaching profession. Thus, it can be concluded that the administrative aspect of reforms negatively influence NIS teachers' identity.

**6.2.4. Main question: How do current school reforms affect NIS teacher self-perceptions as professionals?** Summing up all findings of the study, it is clear that the answer to the central research question is rather uncertain due to the complexity of teacher identity phenomenon itself and a great number of factors connected with the present school reforms of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, it can be stated that teachers are currently exposed to

both reskilling and deskilling processes discussed earlier. On the one hand, introduction of a new system makes teachers move forward enhancing their professional competence and thus feel more confident and professional. On the other hand, all these initiatives are imposed by the top, and although teachers can see drawbacks and inconsistencies of the new system, their voices are still unheard. As a consequence, it is quite challenging for teachers to identify their role in the process of educational changes.

Despite the fact that the purpose of the research was not fully addressed, the results of the given study will be beneficial to the research on teacher identity and school reforms in Kazakhstan, since they provided an insight into how teachers work in the newly emerging educational environment and how the reforms work in practice. Moreover, the study might attract attention of other researchers to the importance of teacher self-concept and trigger them explore this phenomenon deeper in the context of Kazakhstan. I also believe that Kazakhstani case will contribute to the overall discourse on the issue as it will help understand the process of transition from one system to another from the insiders' perspective. Thus, using the example of Kazakhstan, other countries might avoid the flaws revealed in this process.

### **6.3. Recommendations**

This section presents some recommendations based on conclusions drawn from this study which will be addressed to policy makers and school administration. Additionally, it will also suggest some implications for further research on exploration of teacher identity in Kazakhstan.

#### **6.3.1. Recommendations for policy makers.**

The main recommendation for policy makers is to start working in the direction of democratic professionalism which implies that teachers are those who initiate and enact changes. This recommendation goes in line with what was suggested by Teleshaliyev (2013)

who emphasized the importance of support and trust given to teachers on behalf of the state in such countries as Finland and Singapore. It is also consistent with recommendations of Bangs and Frost (2012) who claim that “policy should seek to establish the right to be heard and to be influential at all levels of policy making including the content and structure of the curriculum” (p. 40).

More specifically, if government wants to implement changes that would lead to real results, it should consider practitioners’ opinions before launching a new educational policy. For instance, they can create teacher unions and consult the members of these unions on improving the system. They can also conduct surveys among teachers on the effectiveness of the recently implemented reforms and analyze the data to take measures for avoiding the common flaws in future.

### **6.3.2. Recommendations for school administration**

In accordance with the above mentioned suggestions for policy makers, it is logical to recommend school administration to change the leadership style from instructional top-down to non-positional teacher leadership. To make administrators believe that distributed leadership does not mean losing power but developing teacher professional capacity, which will ultimately lead to school improvement, it is vital for them to understand the essence of this type of leadership. Thus, I would suggest all school principals and vice-principals take special leadership courses to become familiar with the ideas of distributed leadership, as well as create the community of school heads to share experiences and discuss pivotal issues arising in the process of a new policy implementation.

I would also recommend NIS administration to shift the focus from formal accountability purposes to improving instructions freeing teachers from unnecessary bureaucracy to provide more time for creativity, professional development and sharing practices with colleagues.

### **6.3.3. Recommendations for further research**

Considering the limitations of the current study, the following recommendations for further research can be suggested. Firstly, the results of the study cannot be fully objective due to the fact that I am myself a part of NIS system. Therefore, my personal bias might have predetermined the results of the research. It could be therefore beneficial to conduct other studies by outsiders of the NIS system to ensure making dispassionate conclusions.

Secondly, since the selected research method did not provide anonymity of the participants and interviews were conducted at their work place, it can be assumed that teachers were not totally honest in their responses. To get more reliable answers, a quantitative study employing surveys or questionnaires can be conducted. It will also allow covering a much greater number of participants from each sampling category such as age and area of specialization. Since only one or two representatives of these categories took part in the research, the results cannot be generalized for deeper analysis.

Thirdly, it is important to investigate mainstream school teachers' perceptions of their professional identity in relation to the reforms to obtain a holistic picture of this issue. With work conditions being different from those of NIS teachers, educators of regular schools will probably give a completely new insight into the problem.

Finally, due to the complexity of teacher identity phenomenon and the broadness of the research question, the results of the study appeared to be vague and difficult to provide clear answers. For this reason, it would be beneficial to explore the influence of school reforms on certain aspects of teacher identity independently such as the professional and emotional dimensions.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Letter of support**

I would like to express my support of the research project conducted by the Master student Yuliya Khegay from the Graduate School of Education of the Nazarbayev University. The title of the study is “Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in Kazakhstan: perceptions of NIS teachers”. I am sincerely requesting you to give your permission for conducting the interviews with different teachers within your school.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the evolution of teacher identity in the conditions of changing school environment from the perspective of NIS teachers. More specifically, the study aims to explore the influence of constructivist and neoliberal trends in education on teacher identity.

The proposed research project meets high standards of quality in methodological and ethical sense. Teacher participation in the interviews is associated with minimal risk for the respondents and will be conducted in the voluntary, confidential, and informed manner.

The research project will provide significant information, which will be useful first of all for teachers who will be able to identify their strengths, weaknesses and struggles associated with the current school reforms, and outline the trajectory of their future work. The latter may also have a positive impact on student performance and, consequently, school improvement in general. In addition to that, the results will be interesting for the wider international education research community.

Given the importance of the research project, I would like to emphasize again the importance of your collaboration in the study. If you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to contact me via email [aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz)

Aliya Kuzhabekova  
Assistant Professor of Graduate School of Education  
Nazarbayev University

**Appendix B****INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
(English version)**

Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in Kazakhstan:  
perceptions of NIS teachers

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a research study on exploring the evolution of teacher identity within the school reforms context of Kazakhstan. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of current school reforms of Kazakhstan on teachers' perceptions of themselves as professionals. You will be asked to participate in two sequential face-to-face interviews which will be recorded with your permission. I will ask you some open-ended questions. The confidentiality of the collected data is guaranteed. All materials will be stored in a password protected file and will be destroyed after transcribing. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the study materials. Your names will be replaced with pseudonyms to minimize possible risks associated with this study.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation in each of the two interviews will take approximately 60 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The potential risks associated with this study are those connected with some sensitive interview questions. However, all responses will be confidential; nobody except me and my supervisor will have access to it. When recording and transcribing the conversations, pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name. Your identity will not be mentioned in the reports of the results, either. Moreover, the interviews will be conducted only in places where nobody could see or hear our conversation.

To minimize the risk to interfere with your busy work schedule, you will choose the most comfortable time for conducting the interview.

The main benefit which may reasonably be expected to result from this study is the opportunity to express your opinions and attitudes towards current school reforms in Kazakhstan and influence of the latter on your professional identity. Through telling stories of your teaching practices, attitudes and beliefs in the new educational context, your voices could be heard.

Another benefit of this study is that during the interviews you will be able to self-reflect on what you presently do as a professional, what challenges you face and what role you play in your classrooms and, generally, in school. That reflection could be helpful in identifying your strengths, weaknesses and struggles, and outlining the trajectory of your future work.

**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. 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 me or the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this work,

*Yuliya Khegay*, [yuliya.khegay@nu.edu.kz](mailto:yuliya.khegay@nu.edu.kz), телефон: +7 707 275-55-90

*Aliya Kuzhabekova*, [aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz), phone + 7 7172 70-93-60.

**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](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz)

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

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**(Russian version)**

**ФОРМА ИНФОРМАЦИОННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ**

Исследование идентичности учителя в контексте текущих школьных реформ в  
Казахстане с точки зрения учителей НИШ

**ОПИСАНИЕ:** Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовании, целью которого является изучить, как меняется идентичность учителя в рамках происходящих в настоящее время школьных реформ. Целью данного проекта является изучение влияния настоящих школьных реформ в Казахстане на восприятие учителей себя как профессионалов. Вам будет предложено принять участие в двух последовательных интервью. Конфиденциальность материала интервью гарантируется. Вся информация будет храниться в файле, защищенном паролем, и будет уничтожена после транскрибирования. Только я и мой супервайзер будем иметь доступ к собранным материалам исследования. Ваши имена будут заменены на псевдонимы, чтобы минимизировать возможные риски, связанные с участием в данном исследовании.

**ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ:** Ваше участие в каждом из двух интервью потребует около 60 минут.

**РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА:**

Потенциальные риски, связанные с исследованием относятся к некоторым деликатным вопросам интервью. Однако все ответы останутся конфиденциальными, никто кроме исследователя и ее супервайзера не будет иметь доступ к материалам. Во время записи и транскрибирования данных, Ваше имя будет изменено на псевдоним. Также, ваше имя не будет упомянуто в результатах данного исследования. Более того, интервью будет проводиться в месте, где никто не сможет услышать нашу беседу.

Вы можете выбрать наиболее удобное для Вас время для проведения интервью, чтобы участие в данном исследовании не помешало Вашим должностным обязанностям на работе.

В качестве ожидаемых преимуществ в результате исследования можно рассматривать предоставленную возможность выразить свое мнение и отношение к текущим школьным реформам, а именно их влиянию на Вас как профессиональную личность. Рассказывая о своей практике преподавания, о своих профессиональных убеждениях в контексте новых образовательных реформ, Ваш «голос» может быть услышан.

Еще одним преимуществом данного исследования является то, что во время интервью у Вас будет возможность провести само рефлексии над тем, чем Вы в настоящее время занимаетесь как профессионал, с какими трудностями Вы сталкиваетесь и какую роль Вы играете в своих классах и школе, в целом. Данная рефлексия может быть полезна в определении своих сильных и слабых сторон, а также в выборе направления будущей работы.

**ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКОВ:** Если Вы прочли 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. 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 исследователем или ее супервайзером, используя следующие данные:

*Юлия Хегай, [yuliya.khegay@nu.edu.kz](mailto:yuliya.khegay@nu.edu.kz), телефон: +7 707 275-55-90*

*Алия Кужабекова, [aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:aliya.kuzhabekova@nu.edu.kz), телефон: + 7 7172 70-93-60.*

**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](mailto: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 по собственной воле.

Подпись: \_\_\_\_\_

Дата: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol 1 (English version)

Project: Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in Kazakhstan: perceptions of NIS teachers

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Good morning/ afternoon! I am very grateful that you agreed to participate in this project which purpose is to explore in-depth the influence of the current school reforms on NIS teachers' perception of their professional selves. Additionally, it aims is to identify what challenges in redefining your professional identity under the given conditions you experience.

To achieve this purpose I am going to conduct two interviews with different teachers of NIS Taraz. I hope to receive full and outspoken answers form my interviewees. Please, be assure that all data collected will be confidential and your answers stay anonymous. Our interview will be tape recorded with your permission and stored in a password protected file which will be subsequently destroyed after transcribing. This is the first interview and it will be about an hour long.

Please read again and sign the consent form.

[Ask the interviewee's permission to use the tape recorder.]

[Test the tape recorder]

### ***Interview questions***

#### Part 1: General personal information

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. How long have you taught in the system of NIS?
4. What discipline do you teach?
5. *For experienced teachers:* What is your previous place of work (mainstream school, private school, University, etc.)?  
*For novice teachers and alumni:* Where did you get higher education?

#### Part 2: Professional information

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?  
 Probing Q: Are you happy with your decision? Have you ever regretted about your choice?
2. What does it mean for you to be a teacher?
3. In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have?

4. How would you define your role in the classroom and at a larger scale (in school and education in general)?
5. How do you feel yourself as a member of school community?
6. Do you prefer working on your own or in a team? Why?
7. What do you think about social status of teachers in Kazakhstan? How does this status of teachers affect your work as a teacher?
8. To what extent are you satisfied with your current job? What are the sources of your job satisfaction / dissatisfaction?
9. What is the level of your job motivation (high, medium, low)? Specify the reasons.  
For experienced teachers: Is it different from that you had at your previous job?

[Thank respondents for participating in the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the collected data. Arrange the date of the next interview.]

**Interview Protocol 1 (Russian version)**  
**Протокол интервью**

Название проекта: Исследование идентичности учителя в контексте текущих школьных реформ в Казахстане с точки зрения учителей НИШ

Время интервью:

Дата:

Место:

Интервьюируемый:

Доброе утро/день! Большое спасибо, что Вы согласились принять участие в данном исследовании, целью которого является изучить влияние текущих школьных реформ на восприятие учителя НИШ себя как профессионалов. Оно также направлено на то, чтобы определить, с какими трудностями сталкиваются учителя в процессе переосмысления своей профессиональной идентичности в данных условиях.

Для достижения этой цели я собираюсь взять по два интервью у разных учителей НИШ г.Тараз и надеюсь получить полные и открытые ответы от своих интервьюируемых. Пожалуйста, будьте уверены в конфиденциальности материалов исследования и анонимности Вашей личности. Наш разговор будет записываться с Вашего разрешения. Данная запись будет храниться в защищенном паролем файле на моем личном компьютере и впоследствии будет уничтожена. Это первое из двух интервью, и оно продлится около 60 минут.

Пожалуйста, прочтите еще раз форму информационного согласия и подпишите ее.

[Спроси, не возражает ли участник интервью, чтобы разговор записывался]

[Проверь, как работает записывающее устройство]

***Вопросы интервью***

Часть 1: Общая информация

1. Назовите, пожалуйста, свой возраст.
2. Каков Ваш педагогический стаж (в годах)?
3. Как долго Вы работаете в системе НИШ?
4. Какой предмет Вы преподаете?
5. *Для учителей с опытом:* Назовите место предыдущей работы (общеобразовательная школа, университет, т.п.)?

*Для молодых учителей, не имеющих опыта работы кроме НИШ:* Where did you get higher education?

Часть 2: Профессиональная информация

1. Почему вы решили стать учителем? Вы никогда не жалели о своем выборе профессии?
2. Что значит для Вас быть учителем?
3. Какое самое важное качество для учителя, на Ваш взгляд?
4. Как бы Вы определили свою роль как профессионала в классе и в школе?
5. Как вы ощущаете себя, будучи частью школьного сообщества?
6. Вы предпочитаете работать индивидуально или в команде со своими коллегами?

7. Что вы думаете о социальном статусе учителей в Казахстане? Как этот статус влияет на вашу работу как учителя?
8. В какой степени вы удовлетворены своей работой? Что является источником удовлетворенности/ неудовлетворенности?
9. Оцените, пожалуйста, Ваш уровень мотивации к работе (высокий, средний, низкий)? Объясните причины.

[Поблагодари респондентов за участие в интервью. Еще раз убедите их в конфиденциальности полученных данных. Уточните дату следующего интервью.]

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol 2 (English version)

Project: Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in Kazakhstan: perceptions of NIS teachers

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Good morning/ afternoon! Thank you again for agreeing to participate in the given study which purpose is to explore in-depth the influence of the current school reforms on NIS teachers' perception of their professional selves. As you remember, at the previous interview you answered some general questions as well as questions related to how you define your teacher identity. Today I am going to ask some other questions about your professional practices and how they change under the current reforms.

[Ask the interviewee's permission to use the tape recorder.]

[Test the tape recorder]

#### *Interview questions*

1. *For experienced teachers:* How does philosophy of teaching and learning at NIS differ from other schools? Why?
2. *For experienced teachers:* What did you feel when you encountered these teaching practices?
3. *For experienced teachers:* How did your views about teaching practices and about being a teacher in general change if at all?  
*For novice teachers:* How have your views on teaching and learning changed since you were a student?
4. *For experienced teachers:* How did the student-teacher relationships change? Are there any challenges associated with that?
5. How did your confidence and self-efficacy change in NIS?
6. What are your responsibilities in addition to teaching? What difficulties (if any) do you have in performing various job tasks (related and not directly related to teaching)?
7. How is teacher's work assessed in the school? Do you consider this assessment reasonable and fair?
8. How does accountability affect your work as a teacher?  
Probing Q: How many reports a week do you usually prepare? How does report writing influence your teaching (planning, assessment, etc.)?
9. How do school inspections affect your work? Benefits / challenges
10. To what extent do you possess autonomy in your work?  
Probing Qs: Do you feel free in choosing methods of teaching and assessment of students?

11. Have you ever felt disempowered inside and/or outside the classroom? If yes, in what situations?
12. How do you work with students' parents? What challenges do you face?
13. How do you balance your work at school and your family relations?

[Thank respondents for participating in the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the collected data. Acknowledge them about the possibility to do a member check]

**Interview Protocol 2 (Russian version)**  
**Протокол интервью 2**

Название проекта: Исследование идентичности учителя в контексте текущих школьных реформ в Казахстане с точки зрения учителей НИШ

Время интервью:

Дата:

Место:

Интервьюируемый:

Доброе утро/день! Еще раз большое спасибо, что Вы согласились принять участие в данном исследовании, целью которого является изучить влияние текущих школьных реформ на восприятие учителей НИШ себя как профессионалов. Если вы помните, в предыдущем интервью вам было задано несколько общих вопросов, а также были вопросы, относящиеся к тому, как вы понимаете свою профессиональную идентичность, и как она меняется под влиянием настоящих школьных реформ.

[Спроси, не возражает ли участник интервью, чтобы разговор записывался]

[Проверь, как работает записывающее устройство]

***Вопросы интервью***

1. *Для опытных педагогов:* Как отличается система обучения и преподавания в НИШ от остальных школ?
2. *Для опытных педагогов:* Что вы чувствовали, когда вам пришлось столкнуться с этими изменениями?
3. Как поменялись ваши взгляды на обучение и преподавание, а также на то, что значит быть учителем в целом?  
*Для молодых учителей:* Как изменились Ваши взгляды на обучение и преподавание с тех пор, когда Вы были студентом?
4. *Для опытных педагогов:* Каковы взаимоотношения между учителем и учащимся сейчас по сравнению с Вашей предыдущей практикой? Есть ли какие-либо трудности, связанные с этим?
5. Насколько изменилась ваша самооценка и уверенность в своей компетентности после того, как вы пришли в НИШ?
6. Какие дополнительные обязанности у вас есть, помимо преподавания? С какими трудностями (если таковые есть) Вы сталкиваетесь в выполнении этих заданий (касающихся и не касающихся напрямую преподавания) и как Вы с ними справляетесь?
7. Как оценивается работа учителя в школе? Считаете ли в данное оценивание разумным и справедливым?
8. Как отчетность влияет на вашу работу как учителя?  
Сколько отчетов в неделю вы обычно готовите? Каким образом написание отчетов влияет на ваше преподавание?
9. Как школьные проверки влияют на вашу работу? Каковы преимущества и недостатки?
10. Насколько независимым вы себя чувствуете в своей работе?  
Например: Вы можете свободно выбирать методы обучения и оценивания учеников?
11. У Вас когда-либо было чувство, что Вас лишили права голоса/ контроля/ независимости на уровне класса и/или школы? Если да, то в каких ситуациях?

12. Как вы работаете с родителями учеников? С какими трудностями вы сталкиваетесь?
13. Как вы совмещаете работу в школе с личной жизнью (семьей)?

[Поблагодари респондентов за участие в интервью. Еще раз убеди их в конфиденциальности полученных данных. Проинформируй участника о том, что в последующем ты свяжешься с ними с целью проверки правильного понимания полученной информации.]

## Appendix E

## Sample of Data Analysis

Sub-question 2: How does the teaching-related aspect of the reforms in Kazakhstan influence teacher identity?

Themes	Interview questions	Responses (Quotes)	Codes	Potential sub-themes
Influence of reforms on teaching views and practices	How does philosophy of teaching and learning at NIS differ from other schools?	<p>P8: Система преподавания в ниш <b>строится на целях</b>, а в простых школах привязана к темам урока. Второе, у нас <b>критериальное оценивание</b>, в простых школах это отметочная система. Третье, <b>учителя ниш не ограничены в выборе ресурсов</b>, учебников, видео.</p> <p>P4: Новая программа, абсолютное <b>новое видение предмета</b> и абсолютно <b>новая методика</b> подачи информации.</p> <p>P6: В старой системе образования я <b>была больше классным руководителем, чем учителем</b>. Здесь уровень намного выше. Изменилось место мое в классе. Если раньше я <b>была авторитарной</b>, и в центре была я, сейчас я учусь постепенно перейти к методу обучения, когда учитель только направляет.</p>	<p>Goal-oriented learning Criteria-based assessment Freedom in choice of resources</p> <p>New vision of the subject New methods of teaching</p> <p>Different teacher roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifting roles</li> <li>• Reconsidering personal and professional views on teaching</li> </ul>
	<p><i>For experienced teachers:</i> How did <b>your views</b> about teaching practices and about being a teacher in general change if at all?</p> <p><i>For novice teachers:</i> How have your views on teaching and learning changed since you were a student?</p>	<p>P8: Я <b>переосмыслила свои взгляды</b>. Мои <b>уроки стали более качественными</b>, мое планирование стало более качественным. Я стала <b>серьезнее относиться к работе</b> исходя из ответственности, возложенной на меня.</p> <p>P5: <b>Все поменялось</b>. Когда я там работал, я <b>преподавал как-то совсем по-другому</b>. Формулы, вот это все, теорию никогда не давал. Я все им <b>давал так, как им в жизни пригодится</b>. Здесь ученики не воспринимали такой подход, не старались сами учиться. Потом учителя тоже не понимали то, что я делаю.</p> <p>P10: It has <b>changed dramatically</b>. Previously, I thought that our aim is to give students knowledge directly, by explaining and demonstrating. Nowadays I understand that you need to be able to accentuate the effective teaching and learning ways which are: <b>active learning, collaborative learning, differentiation, cross-curricular links, responding to learners' needs, learning conversations, using e-learning and new technology</b>.</p> <p>P1: My views have <b>changed hugely</b>, since</p>	<p>Teacher reconsidered views and methods Another attitude to work</p> <p>Absolute change of teaching practices Dissatisfaction of new ones</p> <p>Significant changes</p> <p>New teaching methods and techniques</p> <p>Theory vs. practice</p>	

		when i studied at university <b>we focused more on theory rather than practice</b> . We practiced a little and it wasn't effective.		
Challenges of transition	What did you feel when you encountered new teaching practices?	<p>P8: При переходе на эту систему я <b>чувствовала удовольствие</b>.</p> <p><b>P4: Труднее всего</b> было в себе <b>сломать учителя-лидера</b>. Ну, и наверное, это переломить в себе стойкое утверждение, что, то, что мы делали до этого, оно всегда было правильным. Но с другой стороны, <b>мне это нравится</b>. Я сюда пришла, потому что была <b>неудовлетворенность старой системой</b>.</p> <p>P7: <b>Трудности вызывало</b> только <b>оценивание</b>. Несмотря на это, мотивация работать здесь была очень высокой. Отличается <b>отношение к тебе как к учителю</b>. Когда ты приходишь из общеобразовательной школы с высшей категорией, ты становишься обычным учителем. Это <b>обидно</b>.</p> <p>P6: <b>Переход дался трудно</b>. Но я отношусь к категории людей, которые трудолюбивые, и поэтому это не было для меня сильной мукой.</p> <p>P2: Я несколько инертный человек, и естественно моя <b>внутренняя инерция мешала</b> мне перестраиваться, внутреннее нытье было, что <b>не хочу я учиться новому</b>. А что касается самой философии преподавания, в общем-то, у меня и до сих пор есть <b>некоторые внутренние сомнения</b> касательно эффективности новой системы.</p> <p>P5: <b>Переход</b> из предыдущей школы <b>в НИШ был очень трудным</b>. Там у нас была не конкуренция, а взаимопомощь. Здесь не так. Я был в шоке. Многие <b>учителя не хотят делиться</b>. <b>Администрация</b> после посещения твоего урока в первый год <b>сказали, тебе лучше уйти</b>, вместо того чтобы объяснить, в чем мои проблемы. Сама идея нового образования хорошая, но просто <b>человеческий фактор местных людей</b> не дает ей работать правильно.</p>	<p>Feeling of pleasure</p> <p>Difficult but desirable change</p> <p>Dissatisfaction by the attitude to experienced teachers</p> <p>Difficult transition</p> <p>Inner resistance to change</p> <p>Conflict with old teaching beliefs</p> <p>Poor collaboration and administration support due to local mentality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal resistance to change</li> <li>• Local mentality interferes</li> <li>• Diminished respect and loss of humane relations</li> <li>• Lack of time for multiple responsibilities</li> </ul>

## Appendix F

### Interview Transcript Sample

Project: Exploration of Teacher Identity in the Context of Current School Reforms in Kazakhstan: perceptions of NIS teachers

Time of interview: 15.30

Date: January 25, 2017

Place: NIS

Interviewee: #1

Interview 1

#### General personal information

**1. How old are you?**

Twenty-two

**2. How long have you been teaching?**

1.5 years

**3. How long have you taught in the system of NIS?**

1.5 years

**4. What discipline do you teach?**

English

**5. Where did you get higher education?**

Taraz State Pedagogical Institute, 1 semester in USA and 1 semester in Czech Republic

#### Professional information

**1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?**

Well, I can't say that it was a conscious decision, I just did it because my parents advised me cause teaching is a profession when you'll always have a job. And also there's space for PD and P growth. I haven't regretted. But there were moments when i sometimes thought that it wasn't mine, but i think this is coz you have some kinds of issues, it's ok to regret. But generally I'm really happy about my choice.

**2. What does it mean for you to be a teacher?**

Well, first of all it means a lot of responsibility cause I'm in charge of not only my job but also people and their lives, their behavior and may be even future.

**3. In your opinion, what is the most important quality a teacher must have?**

It's dedication. If you're dedicated to your job, you actually take it seriously and you try to do your best and you're just loving your job. I think it's more important than knowledge coz if you're dedicated you'll be eager to learn something and move forward and it'll make you grow professionally. Sometimes we meet people who know a lot but they're not dedicated, and that's why they don't show good results.

**4. How would you define your role in the classroom and at a larger scale (in school and education in general)?**

I'd say my role in the classroom is a guide, I don't really control them, I just try to show them the best way to get somewhere, correct them when necessary but I can't say I'm an active leader in the classroom. I just try to guide them and make students be a center of

education rather than be teacher-centered. But of course there are still lessons when I'm a leader and all the learning is focused on me. But most of the time I'm a guide.

**5. *How do you feel yourself as a member of school community?***

I feel myself really comfortable. I can't say I play any kind of role, I'm just a teacher trying to be productive during my lessons. Outside the lessons, I feel really comfortable too coz all my colleagues try to support me, I can go and ask any question to my colleagues. I've been involved in some social projects but still it's not a big role yet.

**6. *Do you prefer working on your own or in a team? Why?***

I prefer working in a team coz when you work in a team.. there's a Russian proverb which says "One head is good, two are better" which means ok, you've got your own experience but you may have a person next to you who has another experience and other point of view and he can help you make your ideas better and to make your product more interesting. That's why I prefer working in a team, or at least in a team of 2 people.

**7. *What do you think about social status of teachers in Kazakhstan? How does this status of teachers affect your work as a teacher?***

I can't say I'm happy about the social status of teachers here because people judge a lot by how much you earn here. And teachers generally don't earn a lot, that's why social status is not that high, however, when NIS system was introduced, it started to grow. If we continue transferring our experience to other schools, I think the status will grow somehow, but it'll take time. The social status doesn't affect my work at all, coz I really enjoy my work and it doesn't really matter to me.

**8. *- To what extent are you satisfied with your current job?***

If we take in a rate between 1 and 10, I'd say around 8-9. I can't say 10 cause I'm not satisfied with the system of management and leadership here. Things could be managed better here. But I'm still satisfied generally coz many positive things going on in and outside my classroom. So I have space to grow.

**- *What are the sources of your job satisfaction / dissatisfaction?***

The results of my students, when I see they're growing and my lessons are helping them to acquire and use the language and also positive relationships with my colleagues when we do planning sessions, we discuss our plans and this atmosphere is also the source of my job satisfaction. Dissatisfaction - teachers have so many things to do, but our straight responsibility is teaching and makes the lessons effective and useful. So the administration could manage the work better so we needn't do so much useless stuff but focus on teaching.

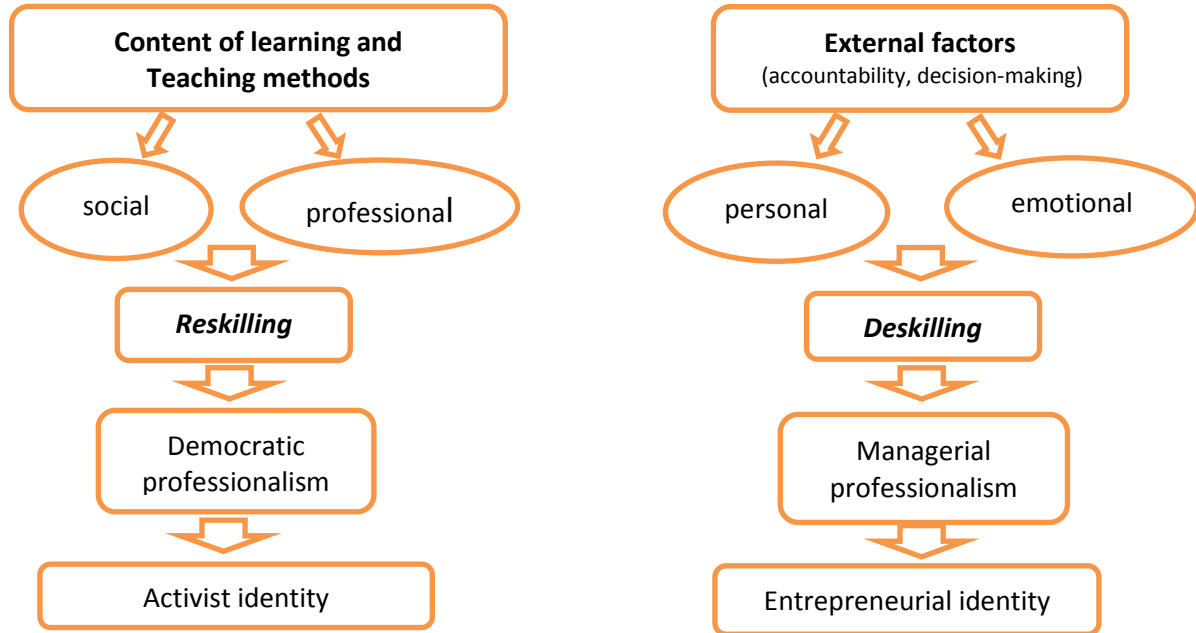
**9. *What is the level of your job motivation (high, medium, low)? Specify the reasons.***

I'd say somewhere between medium and high, may be closer to higher. People say I'm motivated coz I'm young and not tired yet. But I think I'm also motivated coz I don't know a lot and eager to learn, to see what is new out there.

**Appendix G**

**Conceptual framework of the literature review**

*Influence of reforms on teacher identity*



## Appendix H

### Abstract (Russian version)

#### Аннотация

В настоящее время школьное образование Казахстана претерпевает значительные изменения, пытаюсь использовать лучший зарубежный опыт и практику. Важной фигурой на данном этапе развития являются Назарбаев Интеллектуальные Школы (НИШ), созданные с целью воплотить в жизнь новые подходы к преподаванию, обучению и управлению школ. Они служат платформой для реформирования всей системы школьного образования с целью вывести Казахстан на новый, более высокий, уровень развития. В данном контексте учителя столкнулись с кардинальными изменениями в требованиях к компетентным профессионалам, и это означает, что им нужно пересмотреть свои личные и профессиональные взгляды и практику, чтобы соответствовать новым стандартам. Проблемой является то, что основной акцент делается на самих реформах, в то время как голоса тех, кто фактически воплощает их в реальность, как правило, игнорируются. Данное исследование нацелено на изучение сложного феномена идентичности учителя по отношению к нынешним школьным реформам с точки зрения главных заинтересованных лиц, учителей. В данной работе использовался качественный метод исследования, основанный на интервью, для получения информации о том, как различные аспекты реформ влияют на профессионализм учителя. Используя метод целенаправленной выборки, десять учителей НИШ были отобраны согласно следующим критериям: возраст, опыт работы и область специализации. Данная выборка обоснована целью определить, отличается ли восприятие учителей разных категорий по данному вопросу. Результаты исследования показали, как учителя НИШ понимают свою профессиональную идентичность в четырех измерениях: личном, социальном, профессиональном и

эмоциональном. Они также показали, как учебные и административные аспекты школьных реформ влияют на различные составляющие идентичности учителя.

Исследование завершается предложением некоторых рекомендаций в адрес политиков и администрации школ по поводу того, как повысить эффективность процесса улучшения школьной системы с учетом мнения учителей.

**Ключевые слова:** *идентичность учителя, профессионализм, школьные реформы,*

*НИИШ*

**Abstract (Kazakh version)****Аңдатпа**

Қазіргі таңда Қазақстан мектептері шетелдік озық тәжірибені қолдана отырып айтарлықтай өзгерістерге орын берді. Бұл кезеңде мектептерде оқыту, білім беру мен басқарудағы жаңа тәсілдерді жүзеге асыру мақсатында құрылған Назарбаев Зияткерлік Мектептері (НЗМ) айшықты орын алып отыр. Бұл мектептер Қазақстанды жаңа, анағұрлым биік әрі дамыған деңгейге шығару мақсатында мектептегі білім беру жүйесін реформалауға негіз болады. Бұл ретте оқытушылар кәсіби біліктілік талабына күрт өзгерістерге тап болды, бұл жаңа стандарттарға сай болу үшін өзінің жеке кәсіби көзқарасы мен тәжірибесін қайта қарау керектігін білдіреді. Негізгі мән реформаларға ғана беріліп, ал нақты жүзеге асырушылардың дауысы әдеттегідей ескерілмейтіндігі өзекті мәселеге айналды. Бұл зерттеу басты мүдделі тұлғалардың, мұғалімдердің көзқарасына сәйкес бүгінгі мектепке арналған реформаларға қатынасы ойынша мұғалімнің күрделі сәйкестік феноменін зерттеуге бағытталған. Бұл жұмыста реформалардың түрлі аспектілері мұғалімнің кәсібилігіне қалай әсер ететіні туралы ақпарат алу үшін жүргізілген сұхбатқа негізделген сапалы зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Мақсатты бағытталған таңдау әдісін қолдана отырып, Назарбаев Зияткерлік мектебінің 10 мұғалімі келесі талаптарға сәйкес іріктеліп алынды: жасы, еңбек тәжірибесі мен маманданған саласы. Бұл іріктелім түрлі санаттағы мұғалімдердің аталған мәселені қабылдауы қалай екенін анықтау мақсатында негізделген. Зерттеу нәтижесі НЗМ мұғалімдерінің өзіндік кәсіби болмысын төрт өлшемде түсінетіндігін көрсетті: жеке, әлеуметтік, кәсіби және эмоциялық. Сонымен қатар ол мектеп реформаларының оқу мен әкімшілік аспектілері мұғалімнің кәсіби болмысына және түрлі өлшемдерге қалай әсер ететіндігін көрсетті. Зерттеу саясаткерлер мен мектеп әкімшілігіне мектеп жүйесін

мұғалімдердің пікірін ескере отырып жақсарту процесінің тиімділігін қалай арттыру керектігіне қатысты бірнеше ұсынымдарын берумен аяқталады.

**Кілт көздер:** мұғалімнің кәсіби болмысы, кәсібилік, мектеп реформасы, НЗМ