Fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers' perceptions of the renewed curriculum: a qualitative single case study in Central Kazakhstan

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SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE RENEWED CURRICULUM i

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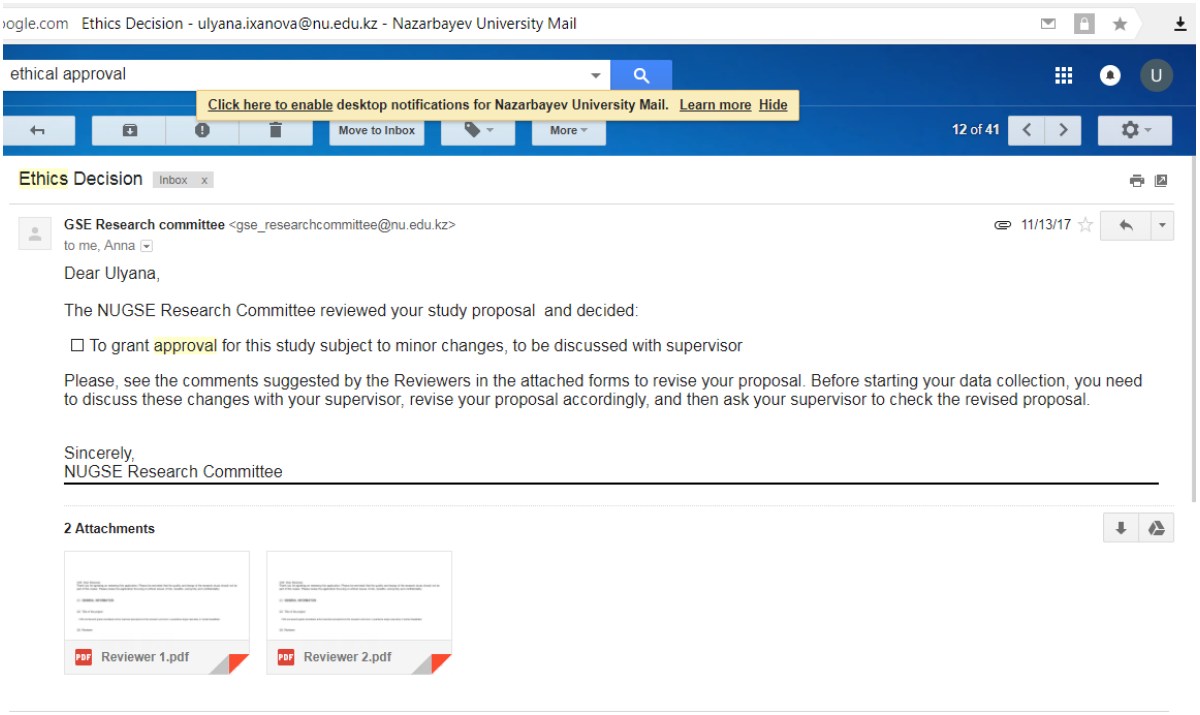

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I would like to thank all NUGSE professors whose courses helped me to frame my research topic. I can hardly find words to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Anna CohenMiller, who created a friendly collaborative research atmosphere in our thesis group and made us feel as a family. With a great patience, support and encouragement she led me through the research path and helped me grow as a researcher. Words are not enough to show how thankful I am to her.

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Abstract

Education is one of the fundamental factors in the socio-economic development of Kazakhstan. The recent Kazakhstani educational reforms are aimed at raising the quality and standards of secondary education through the implementation of a renewed curriculum (RC). In particular, the experience of the AEO "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools" has been pivotal in streamlining this reform for mainstream schools.

Despite the discordance of opinions about teachers' role in educational reform, teachers remain one of the most integral components of implementing the RC. Moreover, teachers' positive or negative attitude toward educational reform may either expedite or impede the implementation process. With the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, the RC was implemented in fifth and seventh grades of mainstream schools despite the absence of any preliminary RC testing or research about its implementation in secondary school. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of the renewed curriculum by mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grades. A single descriptive qualitative case study research design was used to answer the main research question by conducting semi-structured interviews and analysis of the RC documents.

The research findings were analyzed through a joint conceptual framework of Van den Akker's (2013) typology of curriculum and Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace & Dossett, 1973) which also guided the development of this study. Findings showed that teachers positively perceived the aim and the four distinguishing features of the RC and could easily explain them in their own words. Moreover, teachers' perception of the RC goal and main principles coincides with the intended curriculum which is reflected in documents. Using CBAM, it was revealed that teachers had different stages of concerns

regarding the RC implementation. While findings showed a lack of direct relation between teachers' experience and teachers' perception of the RC, there was a connection between the more extended and specific trainings teachers acquired and their ease at implementation the RC.

Keywords: teachers' perception, curriculum implementation, curriculum change, Van den Akker's typology, Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

Аңдатпа

Білім беру – Қазақстанның негізгі әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму факторларының бірі. Қазіргі уақыттағы білім беру реформалары білім беру мазмұны жаңартылған бағдарламаны (ЖБ) еңгізу арқылы орта білім беру сапасын арттыруға бағытталған. Соның ішінде, «Назарбаев Зияткерлік Мектептері» дербес білім беру ұйымы жалпы білім беру мектептеріне жаңартылған білім беруді тасымалдауда маңызды рөл атқарды.

Мұғалімдердің білім беру реформасындағы рөлі туралы пікірлердің әртүрлі болуына қарамастан, мұғалімдер бұл процесстің ажырамас қатысушылары болып қалады.Сонымен қатар, мұғалімдердің білім беру реформасын оң немесе теріс қабылдауына байланысты жүзеге асыру процесі тез жүруі немесе керісінше қиындауы мүмкін.2017-2018 оқу жылының басталуымен, жалпы білім беру мектептердің бесінші және жетінші сыныптарында мазмұны жаңартылған білум беру бағдарламасы орта мектепте алдын-ала пилоттық бағдарлама болмағанына қарамастан енгізілді.Осылайша, зерттеудің мақсаты - Орталық Қазақстандағы жалпы білім беру мектептерінің бесінші және жетінші сынып мұғалімдерінің мазмұны жаңартылған білум беру бағдарламасын қабылдауын зерттеу болып келеді.

Зерттеудің негізгі құралдары сұхбат пен оқу процесінің құжаттарын талдау болды.Зерттеудің нәтижелері бірлескен тұжырымдамалық үлгісін қолдану арқылы талданады:(1) Ван Ден Акердің оқу жоспарының типологиясы және (2) алаңдау деңгейіне негізделген қабылдау үлгісі (*Concerns-BasedAdoptionModel*). Зерттеудің нәтижелері мұғалімдер ЖБ-ның мақсаты мен ерекшеліктерін оң қабылдап, оны өз сөздерімен оңай түсіндіре алатындығын көрсетті.Оған қоса, мұғалімдердің тәжірибесінде жүзеге асырған ЖБ қағидалары оқу құжаттарында көрсетілген

қағидаттармен сәйкес келеді. Сонымен қатар,зерттеу мұғалімдер ЖБ-ны жүзеге асыру барысында алаңдаушылықты сезетінің көрсетті. Зерттеудің нәтижесі мұғалімдердің тәжірибесі мен мұғалімдердің ЖБ-нықабылдауы арасында тікелей байланыстың бар екендігін көрсетпеді. Дегенмен, зерттеудің нәтижелері ЖБ- ның ұзақ және тәжірибеге бағдарланған курстары ЖБ-нытиімді жүзеге асыруға ықпал етететіндігін көрсетті.Мұғалімдердің ЖБ-ны қабылдауының ЖБ-ны орта мектептерде жүзеге асыру барысында қалай өзгеретінің алдағы зерттеулерде қарасытыруға болады.

*Кілт сөздер:*мұғалімдердің қабылдауы, білім беру бағдарламысын енгізу, Ванден Аккер типологиясы, алаңдау деңгейіне негізделген қабылдау үлгісі.

Аннотация

Для повышения социально-экономического благополучия правительство Казахстана определило в качестве цели совершенствование системы образования. Текущие образовательные реформы направлены на повышение качества среднего образования посредством обновления содержания учебной программы. В частности, Автономная организация образования «Назарбаев Интеллектуальные школы» (далее - НИШ) сыграла ключевую роль в трансляции опыта НИШ в общеобразовательные школы.

Несмотря на расхождение мнений о роли учителя в образовательной реформе, учителя остаются неотъемлемыми участниками этого процесса. Более того, позитивное или негативное восприятие учителями образовательной реформы может как ускорить, так и затруднить процесс ее реализации. С начала 2017-2018 учебного года программа обновленного содержания среднего образования была внедрена в пятых и седьмых классах общеобразовательных школ, несмотря на отсутствие апробации в пилотных школах. Цель этого исследования - изучить восприятие обновленной учебной программы (ОП) учителями пятого и седьмого классов общеобразовательных школ в Центральном Казахстане.

Главными инструментами исследования являлись интервью и анализ нормативных документов. Результаты исследования были проанализированы на основе совмещенной концептуальной модели: (1) типологии учебного плана Ван ден Аккера и (2) модели принятия, основанной на уровне беспокойства (*Concerns-Based Adoption Model*). Результаты исследования показали, что учителя положительно восприняли цель и основные принципы ОП. Более того, принципы ОП, которых придерживались учителя при реализации ОП, соответствовали принципам,

представленным в нормативных документах. Исследование также показало, что учителя испытывали разные уровни беспокойства в соответствии с моделью принятия в ходе реализации ОП. Результаты исследования не показали прямой связи между опытом учителей и восприятием ими ОП. Однако результаты исследования выявили, что более продолжительные и практико-ориентированные курсы по ОП способствовали более эффективной реализации ОП. Дальнейшие исследования могут быть направлены на изучение того, как восприятие ОП учителями меняется с продолжением реализации ОП в средней школе.

Ключевые слова: восприятие учителей, внедрение образовательной программы, типология Ван ден Аккера, модель принятия, основанная на уровне беспокойства

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Chapter I: Introduction

This study investigates perceptions of mainstream secondary school teachers toward the renewed curriculum, which is currently being implemented in all 5th and 7th grades throughout the country. By the time the data were collected, teachers had completed the first semester teaching the renewed curriculum; in view of this, they were able to share their vivid perceptions along with concerns, challenges and hopes for further implementation.

This chapter presents the background of educational reform in Kazakhstan and explains the rationale of conducting the research. Then it outlines the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and states the main research question. Finally, it ends with significance of the study, key terms and conclusion.

Background Information

In his Address to the Nation entitled "Strategy Kazakhstan-2050", the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined the strategic objective for Kazakhstan to become one of the 30 developed countries (2012, III. para 2). This is an ambitious and audacious objective; its achievement leads to socio-economic development of Kazakhstan. Hence, its fulfillment demands raising the quality and standards of general education through the implementation of a renewed curriculum (RC). Policy-makers are focusing reform efforts on the renewal of curriculum content, teaching approaches and assessment. In particular, the experience of the Autonomous Educational Organization "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools" has been pivotal in streamlining the reform into mainstream schools.

Rationale

In 2015, testing of the renewed curriculum was launched in the first grade of 30 pilot schools across Kazakhstan. The monitoring of the new approved curriculum has showed a significant difference between pilot and control schools (MES, 2016, p. 57). The average

score of learners' achievement (137.7 points) in pilot schools was higher than the average score of learners (130.4 points) in control schools, which constituted the difference in 7.3 points (MES, 2016, p. 57). These results indicated a positive trend in the achievement rate of learners who were taught the renewed curriculum (RC). Along with the monitoring of learners' achievement, there was another research project, which investigated the attitudes of teachers and principals of the same 30 pilot schools toward the RC (Nazarbayev University, 2016, p. 2). That research project revealed weak and strong points of the implementation process and proposed recommendations for enhancing the realization of curriculum renewal in primary education of mainstream schools.

Having completed the testing of curriculum renewal in 2015-2016, the Ministry of Education and Science decided to implement the RC in first grades of all mainstream schools of Kazakhstan in the 2016-2017 academic year. The subsequent 2017-2018 academic year, students of first and second grades in primary school continued to study the RC; and for the first time the RC was implemented in fifth and seventh grades of mainstream schools despite the absence of any preliminary RC testing or research about its implementation in secondary school. In view of this, it is important to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions who teach the RC with the beginning of this year.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the discordance of opinions about teachers' role in educational reform (Luttenberg, Carpay, & Veugelers, 2012); teachers remain one of the most integral components of curriculum implementation. For instance, Hinde states that "teachers' belief in its need and efficacy" of the change facilitates the implementation of educational reform (as cited in Ungar, 2016, p. 117). Thus, teachers' positive or negative attitude toward educational reform may either expedite or impede the implementation process.

Consequently, it is highly important to investigate teachers' perception toward the

RC as a part of the educational reform and to identify the factors that may have an effect on it in order to enhance the teachers' support during the RC implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of the renewed curriculum by mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grades. In greater detail, this study considered how teachers of one school in Central Kazakhstan perceived the renewed curriculum, which has been implemented in Fall 2017 in all mainstream secondary schools over Kazakhstan.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question: How is the renewed curriculum perceived by mainstream school teachers working in fifth and seventh grades?

Significance of the Study

It is important to explore the perceptions of mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan toward the renewed curriculum, as they are direct implementers of this curriculum. Knowing the perceptions of secondary school teachers will help make adjustments in further RC implementation. As a professional who is directly involved in the translation of NIS experience and training of mainstream school teachers on the RC, it is important for me to understand how teachers perceive the RC, what kind of challenges they meet in their practice and what assistance they need. More importantly, the results of this research may assist policy makers, professional course trainers, school administrators and educators (NIS teachers, as well as mainstream teachers) in the implementation of the RC, as the approaches of translating NIS experience and professional course trainings could be improved by considering the findings of this study. Since investigation into this topic in Kazakhstan is quite scarce, this particular study will help fill the existing gap in literature on teachers' perception toward the RC in secondary school.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions, which are drawn from the reviewed literature, are used throughout the thesis:

- *Educational reform* is a purposefully induced change with set goals and a predicted outcome (Towndrow, Silver & Albright, 2009, p. 426).
- *Curriculum* is a set of normative documents that guide the educational process, along with "the implementation of those plans in the classroom" and teacher-learner collaboration (Glatthorn, 1987, p. 10).
- *Intended curriculum* is "vision and intentions as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials" (Van den Akker, 2007, p. 40).
- *Implemented curriculum* is "curriculum as interpreted by its users, especially teachers" (Van den Akker, 2007, p. 40).
- *The renewed curriculum* is a new curriculum implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year in primary school and the 2017-2018 academic year in secondary school within Kazakhstan, characterized with new learner-centered and active teaching approaches, renewed curriculum content and assessment model.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the background information and rationale of the research problem, stated the purpose of the study and the main research question that guided the study. Also, the significance of the study was explained and key terms used in this study were defined. The further organization of thesis is presented in five chapters. The second chapter discusses the literature related to the research topic, divided into four sections: conceptual framework, curriculum change, definition of curriculum, and teachers' perception of curriculum change. The third chapter explains the research design applied in this inquiry, data collection methods and instruments, sampling procedures; it considers ethical issues as well

as limitations of the study. The following chapter presents data analysis procedures and findings organized into six thematic categories. The fifth chapter discusses findings in relation to the reviewed literature, and the last chapter summarizes the whole study and provides recommendations and implications for future studies.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, I present the main concepts related to my study regarding curriculum change, teachers' perceptions of educational change, as well as providing definitions of curriculum and its aspects for this study. Moreover, I review and synthesize existing empirical studies held in different educational contexts that investigate teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward curriculum change, which has been exposed during curriculum reform. The research question that drove this study was: How is the renewed curriculum perceived by mainstream school teachers working in fifth and seventh grades? With this research question leading the way, I first searched on ERIC database for studies which examined teachers' perceptions toward curriculum change. My initial exploration led me to expand my search more specifically to looking at teachers' attitudes toward educational change and reviewing those studies too.

The chapter is organized into five sections: the first section presents the theoretical framework, which guided this study. In the second section I discuss curriculum change in the Kazakhstani context, describing the transition from the old curriculum to the renewed one. The third section presents definitions of the concept – "curriculum" and shows existing curriculum typologies. In the fourth section, I analyze recent inquiries investigating teachers' perceptions, attitudes and views on curriculum change. For the most part, I highlight the key methodological approaches used, the main findings and the limitations of the studies in the current literature, which can inform future research and this thesis. The last section concludes the review on literature and informs the role of this study in the Kazakhstani context.

Conceptual Framework

I used Van den Akker's typology of curriculum (2007) and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (1973) to build a conceptual framework for this study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) affirm that a conceptual framework determines "the conceptual link between

the research problem, the literature, and the methodology selected for your research" (p. 86). When the research problem was identified, the scope of empirical studies on teachers' perceptions toward curriculum change was analyzed. The literature review revealed that there is a difference between the way teachers perceive curriculum change (intended curriculum) and the way teachers implement it (implemented and attained curriculum) (Wang, 2011; Kruger et al., 2013; Yildirim, 2015; Mligo, 2016). In view of this, the three-level curriculum typology of Van den Akker (2007), who proposes a detailed description of intended, implemented and attained curriculum, was used as a lens to analyze participants' answers to interview questions to examine implemented and attained curriculum, whereas intended curriculum was studied through document analysis.

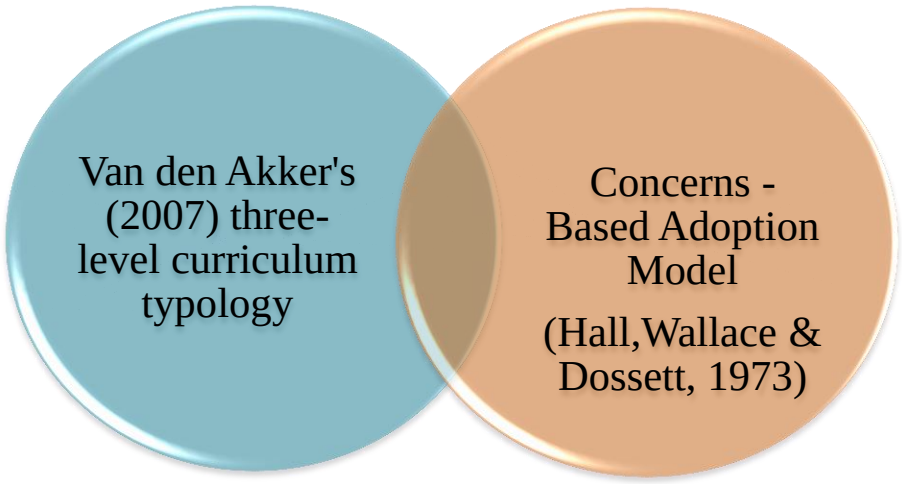


*Figure*1. Conceptual Framework

Another issue raised while studying the literature, was about a person's concern about change or innovation, which is essential to take into account for better change implementation. Hall (1974) assured that people involved in innovation differ in terms they react to change (p. 8). Thus, in the 1970s "Concerns-Based Adoption Model" (CBAM) originated in the result of Hall, Wallace and Dossett collaborative work on innovation adoption (Hall, Wallace & Dossett, 1973, p. 5). This model was designed "for the purpose of

assisting others who engage in the process of innovation adoption" (Hall et al., 1973, p. 5). Authors developed seven stages of concern depending on person's awareness of innovation (Hall, 1974, p. 8). The following table represents 'Stages of Concern and Typical Expressions of Concern about the Innovation' (Hord, Rutherford, Huling & Hall, 2006, p. 31):

Table 1. *Stages of Concern and Typical Expressions of Concern about the Innovation*

Stages of Concern	Expressions of Concern
6 Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
5 Collaboration	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what other instructors are doing.
4 Consequence	How is my use affecting kids?
3 Management	I seem to be spending all my time getting material ready.
2 Personal	How will using it affect me?
1 Informational	I would like to know more about it.
0 Unconcerned	I am not concerned about it (the innovation).

Source: Hord et al., 2006, p. 31

In view of this, a teacher as a facilitator of change implementation can be examined through the CBAM theory. This model is applicable on any level of the change implementation, as the main argument is that "stages where concerns are more (and less) intense will vary as the implementation of change progresses" (Hord et al., 2006, p. 30). By defining the stage of teachers' concern about the innovation, Hord et al. (2006) provide a list of recommendations on each stage to support the person and facilitate change implementation (p. 44).

In this thesis study, CBAM was used as a lens for when I was analyzing the interview transcriptsthat helped to interpret the findings, which depicted teachers' perception of the renewed curriculum. Moreover, following this model, teachers' individual concerns of how

they perceive and reflect to the change were taken into account for making recommendations on further RC implementation.

Curriculum Change

Innovation, requirements of the times and the need for continuous development in the world inevitably drive educational change. Huberman (1973), a prominent scholar in the field of educational innovations, distinguishes three conditions of educational change. The first one, he called "hardware," implies changes related to upgrading school or class equipment and the providing of teaching materials. Change not relating to material innovation is "software" – change caused in the content, aims and approaches of curriculum. The last condition is a change in "interpersonal relationships" between members of an educational process, such as relationships among students, teachers and administrators (as cited in Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015, p. 565). Considering that the aim of this study is curriculum change as an aspect of educational innovation, I focus on "software" condition and the other two types of educational change are not discussed in this thesis.

Kazakhstani context: Moving toward the renewed curriculum. In the Kazakhstani context of educational reform the role of 'selected and selective' schools was assigned to Autonomous Educational Organization (AEO) "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools." In some cases, a new curriculum is trialed before nationwide curriculum renewal in "selected (and in all these cases selective) schools before being 'translated' to the mainstream sector" (Bridges, Kurakbayev, Kambatyrova, 2014, p. 263).

AEO "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools" (NIS) were designed in 2008 at the initiative of the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. The primary aim of these schools was "to establish and to introduce innovative educational model, which integrates the best Kazakhstani and international practices" (AEO NIS, 2013, p. 4).These schools serve as a preliminary platform for "the development, monitoring, research, analysis,

approbation, introduction and implementation of modern educational program models"(AEO NIS, 2013, p. 5). The result of the successful approbation of new educational programs and teaching methods constitutes in one of the strategic aims of NIS – "sharing the Intellectual Schools experience into secondary education system of Kazakhstan" (AEO NIS, 2013, p.4).

NIS refers to an Autonomous Educational Organization, so they are not tied to the state curriculum. NIS curriculum was developed collaboratively with experts from Cambridge International Examinations board (AEO NIS, 2013, p. 8).The main policy of NIS curriculum is an implementation of trilingual education. This policy is realized in two ways: 1) by creating favorable conditions in class for development of communicative skills in Russian, Kazakh and English languages; and 2) through applying Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (AEO NIS, 2016, p.148). In both cases, the cooperation between subject and language teachers is expected in order to improve and promote students' language acquisition.

Teachers are recommended to implement "pragmatic, value-oriented and learner-centred approaches" (AEO NIS, 2016, p.147). In accordance with the previous mentioned approaches the following educational methods are used: active learning, STEM-education (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), concept-based-learning and design-thinking (AEO NIS, 2016, p. 148).

The development of a new curriculum for mainstream schools was based on the core policy and approaches realized in NIS curriculum. The renewed curriculum is organized in a spiral structure, where the subject content of each year is learned in more depth from grade to grade. The main distinction between the old curriculum and the renewed one is a change in teaching approaches in order to prepare learners who are capable to think critically and solve the problem-situations. In such a manner, teachers are recommended to go away from teacher-centred towards learner-centred approaches, from knowledge-based towards skill-

based and concept-based learning, organize more research and project work.

Defining "Curriculum"

As the aim of this study is teachers' perceptions toward the renewed curriculum, it is important to know what the word "curriculum" implies in and how it is defined in literature. In addition, this section presents the curriculum typologies, where one of them was used to frame conceptual framework for this study.

The term "curriculum" is a word originating from Latin and translated as a 'racecourse' (Marsh, 2009, p.3). Colin J. Marsh (2009) in his book "Key concepts for understanding curriculum" elaborates on this metaphor by explaining curriculum as a 'racecourse' by stating: "for many students, the school curriculum is a race to be run, a series of obstacles or hurdles (subjects) to be passed" (p. 3). Curriculum can also be considered as a race for teachers and school administrators as well. All stakeholders of an educational process are in a big race for catching the core basis and value of curriculum.

Currently, curriculum is a complex concept including not only the prescribed course programme, but also should reflect different dimensions and aspects of an educational process. As one can see, there is no unified definition of curriculum due to its multifaceted interpretation by different researchers.

During the period of Greek civilization, curriculum referred to the certain chosen subjects; gradually the meaning of curriculum was altered and broadened (Marsh, 2009, p.3). The author of "The curriculum: Theory and Practice", Kelly argues that the definition of curriculum, which includes "the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to 'teach' or 'transmit or 'deliver'" is not considered comprehensive enough (p.9). Kelly (2009) explains that the definition of curriculum needs to be expanded to include aims of curriculum delivery and consequences of its delivery on students and teachers (Kelly, 2009, p.9). Glatthorn, Boyschee and Whitehead (2006) made an attempt at compiling the

definitions of curriculum given by the scholars of the 20th century. These definitions are divided into "prescriptive, descriptive and combining both characteristics" categories (Glatthorn et al., 2006, p. 3). Prescriptive definitions mainly focus on suggestions for curriculum implementation: aims and objectives, content, knowledge and outcome. Whereas, descriptive definitions reflect "curriculum in action": the experience that is being built when learning happens (Glatthorn et al., 2006, p. 4-5). The most accurate definition of curriculum should combine both prescriptive and descriptive characteristics, a vivid example of it is an early definition introduced by Glatthorn (1987):

> The curriculum is the plans made for guiding learning in schools, usually represented in retrievable documents of several levels of generality, and the implementation of those plans in the classroom; those experiences take place in a learning environment that also influences what is learned. (p. 10)

The above mentioned definition is very clear in describing the diverse aspects of curriculum. First, it is the written prescription of the whole educational process stated in curriculum documents. The second feature refers to the practical part of its implementation - taught and hidden curriculum; third, it is everything that is learned by students, who are in their turn affected by school context.

Smith (2000) considers four approaches of defining curriculum including 'Curriculum as content', 'Curriculum as product', 'Curriculum as process' and 'Curriculum as praxis' (p. 2). In his work "Curriculum Theory and Practice" (2000), Smith regards these notions in relation to Aristotle's categorization of knowledge, where 'Curriculum as content' refers to theoretical category, 'Curriculum as process' and 'Curriculum as praxis' are a part of the practical category, and 'Curriculum as product' falls into the productive one (p. 2).

The first approach 'Curriculum as content' prioritizes teaching documents, which reflect the content of subject topics; it implies all the knowledge which is stated in subject

syllabus and further transmitted to students (Smith, 2000, p. 2). The limitation of considering curriculum only as content underlies in underestimating the role of teachers who provide the knowledge.

The next approach 'Curriculum as product' appeared in the result of 'vocationalism' of education in the late 1970s; when main focus was put on the development of learner's competences (Smith, 2000, p. 3). Strong points of this approach are that "it is systematic and has a considerable organizing power" (Smith, 2000, p. 4). It starts from defining learning objectives, then selecting and organizing content, and finishes with measuring students' outcome. However, weak points are that this approach does not take into account the individual needs of learners, as the programme is planned beforehand and cannot be changed. Also, there is a risk that an educator who just follows the prescribed plan of actions from learning objectives to learners' outcome, can become "a technician", who is required to provide products of his work (Smith, 2000, p. 4). The interaction between learners and an educator is dismissed, though it is not less important part of the learning process. The last thing is that this approach loses learning integrality by measuring separate skills instead of focusing on whole learner's development (Smith, 2000, p. 4-5).

The third approach considers "curriculum as process," Smith (2000) explains "In this sense curriculum is not a physical thing, but rather the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge" (p. 5). Basing on this approach, teachers address learning activities as a process during which students acquire knowledge and form new skills. In comparison to the previous two approaches, this one provides teachers with more freedom and flexibility to choose the curriculum content. However, the disadvantage of this approach is a lack of teachers' accountability: any teacher can organize the learning process in the way he considers to be right. Such an approach cannot guarantee the proper knowledge acquisition of students, as

much emphasis is put on the professionalism of a teacher and relevance of the taught material and applied teaching methods (Smith, 2000, p. 8).

The last approach refers to "curriculum as praxis," which is considered to be a developed version of curriculum process approach (Smith, 2000, p. 9). Curriculum as praxis mainly differs from the process one that knowledge-constructing is based not only on interaction between a teacher and students, but a teacher is involved in a thorough reflection process. The teacher's reflective practice helps to estimate students' learning outcomes.

Scholars in the curriculum field highlight the importance of distinguishing different levels or types of curriculum (Glatthorn et al., 2006; Marsh, 2009; Kilpatrick, 2009; Van den Akker, 2007; Yildirim, 2009). Glatthorn et al. (2006) identify seven types of curricula, they are: "the recommended curriculum, the written curriculum, the supported curriculum, the taught curriculum, the tested curriculum, the learned curriculum, and the hidden curriculum" (p. 6). Then four of these types are categorized into a subgroup: "the written, the supported, the taught and the tested – are considered components of the intentional curriculum" (Glatthorn et al., 2006, p. 6).

The terms used to define levels of curriculum differ among authors (Glatthorn et al., 2006; Kilpatrick, 2009; Marsh & Willis, 2007; Van den Akker, 2007). Marsh and Willis (2007) define the different levels as "planned, enacted, and experienced" curriculum (as cited in Marsh, 2009, p. 3), whereas Kilpatrick (2009) and Van den Akker (2007) refer to them as "intended, implemented, and attained" curriculum.

Though Kilpatrick (2009) and Van den Akker (2007) apply similar labels of the curriculum levels, the meaning implied in them differs in researchers' works. Kilpatrick (2009) suggests that these three levels show perspectives of different stakeholders in educational process (See Table 2).

Table 2. *Kilpatrick's Classification of Curriculum Levels*

Curriculum level	**Characteristic**
Intended	The administrator's point of view
Implemented	The teacher's point of view
Attained	The student's point of view

Source: adapted from Kilpatrick, 2009, p. 109.

While Van den Akker (2007) does not narrow the meaning only to stakeholders' perception; just the opposite, he broadens the explanation and provides the following visual distinction of the levels (see Table 3):

Table3. *Van den Akker's Typology of Curriculum*

Curriculum level	**Sub-types**	**Characteristic**
Intended	Ideal	Vision (rationale or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum)
	Formal/Written	Intentions as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials
Implemented	Perceived	Curriculum as interpreted by its users(especially teachers)
	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action)
Attained	Experiential	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners

Source: Van den Akker, 2007, p. 38.

While there are many definitions of the curriculum levels, the guiding typology for this study was Van den Akker's (2007) curriculum typology. Based on this typology, by investigating teachers' perceptions towards renewed curriculum it is possible to know whether the intended curriculum correlates with teachers' implemented curriculum and what implications it has on students' outcomes (attained curriculum).

Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions of Curriculum Change

It usually happens that changes in curriculum are caused by government initiatives in the form of educational reforms. Great responsibility devolves on schoolteachers, because they are functional implementers of the reform. Many researchers believe that teachers' positive attitude toward the educational reform directly influences the success of its implementation, whereas a negative or indifferent perception slows down this process (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012a; Duman, Baykan, Koroglu, Yilmaz, & Erdogan, 2014; Constantinescu, 2015; Vrabcova, 2015; Ungar, 2016; S. Sulaiman, T. Sulaiman & Rahim, 2017).

Duman et al. (2014) affirm that the "top-down nature of reform movements and lack of consultation of stakeholders" impede reform acceptance (p.627). In other words, the government, which runs the reform disregarding the perspectives of directly affected stakeholders – teachers, would probably face reluctance to their reform. Meanwhile, Sulaiman et al. (2017) accede to previously-mentioned assertion by reporting that teachers' positive perception of a new educational policy is "the early indicator of their acceptance and readiness to implement" (p. 205). In their study, the researchers conducted a qualitative multiple-case study inquiry to examine primary school teachers' perceptions on the standard-based English language curriculum in Malaysia. The data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews of five English teachers working in different national schools (Sulaiman et al., 2017, p. 197). The research findings showed that teachers shared positive attitude toward the new curriculum, which resulted in their compliance and willingness to follow it.

Another researcher, Ungar (2016) while conducting his qualitative study on teachers' attitudes toward the educational reform through metaphors, noticed that the teacher participants in the research differ in the way they react to reform. Having analyzed teachers' individual perceptions of the reform, Ungar (2016) suggested that all teachers could be

grouped regarding their attitude manner – cognitive, emotional, abstract or concrete (p. 124). The value of this research is that Ungar managed not only to determine the four different types of teachers' reform perception, but basing it on the teachers' interview data, he moved on to suggest the possible support needed for each type for effective reform implementation. Ungar's findings support the need for an individual approach taking into account different teachers' types in order to promote the reform implementation. However, there are some limitations to his research: Ungar did not delve further to see whether the teachers under each type had any commonalities affecting their attitude.

In contrast, Kruger, Won and Treagust (2013) chose an interpretive research design in order to study teachers' perceptions on the changes in Biology curriculum implemented in Western Australia in 2012-2013. Their study was guided by Cornbleth's contextual curriculum theory and van den Akker's levels of curriculum. Researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data from six experienced teachers. The findings of the study were outlined with two categories: "perceived changes in the curriculum" and "implementation of changes" (Kruger et al., 2013, p. 47, 50). Findings revealed in the category "perceived changes in the curriculum" reflect meticulous details of changes made in new syllabus and organization of learning, which is specific and relevant only for Western Australian context. However, "implementation of changes" findings can be correlated with different contexts; researchers found that teachers differently implemented new curriculum due to their "teaching philosophies, the student population, and the school environment" (Kruger et al., 2013, p. 53). In other words, all teachers had a good understanding of new curriculum; however, their curriculum implementation differed as teachers acted along with the needs of students and school, following their teaching principles. Though, Kruger et al. (2013) proved Cornbleth's contextual curriculum theory of teachers' diverse implementation;

however, researchers could not identify reasons of such practice and proposed that issue for further research.

The reviewed inquiries on teachers' perceptions toward curriculum, held in the international context, served as a starting point for this thesis study to consider the methodology and conceptual framework used, as no similar inquiries were done in Kazakhstani context. Moreover, the conceptual framework in this study was partially adopted from Kruger's et al. (2013) investigation, using Van den Akker's curriculum typology. Also, these studies showed the significance of investigating teachers' perceptions toward curriculum, and my study may add to the scope of empirical studies revealing the mainstream teachers' perceptions toward the renewed curriculum in Central Kazakhstan.

Internal and external factors affecting teachers' attitude toward reform. It is to be expected that teachers' attitudes toward reform vary in terms of their individual perception, but what are the factors that affect their attitudes. Many researchers are interested in finding the correlation between possible factors and teachers' attitudes. Having analyzed the studies presented in this thesis, these factors can be divided into two groups: internal and external determinants. This section first discusses what impact internal factors including teachers' age, experience, and beliefs have on teachers' perception of curriculum (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012a; Anghelache & Bentea, 2012b; Flores, 2005; Kin & Kareem, 2016).Whereas the second sub-section considers the influence of external determinants on teachers' curriculum perception, regarding the type of educational environment – urban or rural, school administration involvement in curriculum implementation process, professional trainings, frequent change of reforms, and school infrastructure including provision with teaching resources (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012b; Baglibel et al., 2014;Kassim & Abdullah, 2011; Kin & Kareem, 2016; Kursunoglu & Tanriogen, 2009; Mligo, 2016; Wang, 2011; Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015).

Internal factors affecting teachers' attitude. Anghelache and Bentea (2012a) believe that educational change is not an easy process because it is intended by policy makers to resolve the existing educational problems and it affects the *mentality* of society (p. 599). Thus, they investigated the relationship between teachers' attitude toward change and internal determinants related to mentality – personal involvement, output/ efficiency, and conservatism – unwilling to change (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012a, p. 600). Interestingly, the researchers had to question the assumption that personal involvement and conservatism correlate with the teachers' attitude, whereas the output factor showed positive correlation. It means that teachers are positive minded to change in order to increase the school efficiency.

While the previous research focused on personal-social factors as internal factors affecting teachers' attitude toward change, Flores (2005) considered an effect of curriculum change in Portuguese elementary school on teachers' sense of professionalism. Flores's instrumental case-study went in support of Stephens, Gaffeney, Weinzierl, Shelton and Clark (1993) assertion that "it is also important to understand how teachers change and grow so that we, as teachers and teacher educators, can make informed decisions about how best to support the change process" (p. 2 as cited in Flores, 2005, p. 403). The inquiry was conducted in one suburban school in northern Portugal; the research data were drawn from both quantitative and qualitative methods, which included 25-item questionnaire for all school staff and semi-structured interviews with 18 participants (1 headteacher, 5 heads of department, and 12 school teachers). The research findings were subdivided into two categories – "changes in school curriculum" and "effects of the recent changes on teachers and schools" (Flores, 2005, p. 406). The findings showed that teachers were able to report the changes related to curriculum content, organization of learning process and new formative assessment. Also, teachers complained on increased teachers' workload and responsibilities with implementation of new curriculum that included psychological support of students,

paperwork and financial issues. Therefore, it can be concluded that there were high demands evolved on teachers that did not directly relate to their main duty – implementing the new curriculum. Other challenges reported by teachers were scarce of learning resources and equipment at school, alongside the lack of professional training to implement cross-curricular links and curriculum projects. The findings of the second categories revealed that teachers experienced "ambiguity and challenges" while implementing the new curriculum. The new curriculum was intended to provide teachers with more freedom and innovation; however, the research showed that teachers were not well-trained and supported to implement it.

Other internal determinants, which are argued by the researchers to affect the teachers' attitude, included teachers' age and qualifications. According to Anghelache and Bentea (2012b),the older and more qualified teachers are more reluctant to change as it "involves additional cost: effort, energy, time, knowledge" (p. 596). Later research by Kin and Kareem (2016) questions the relationship of age and qualification to teachers' attitude. Their research included the sampling of 830 secondary school teachers in the age range from 21-60 years who possessed different academic degrees; however, the research results did not find any significant correlation between age, qualification and attitudes (Kin & Kareem, 2016, p. 114-115). Due to the contradictions, the age and qualification factors may not have a relationship to teachers' attitudes, though it can be assumed that the discrepancy indicated by the results might be explained by other extraneous factors, such as a specific educational context particular to the country.

External factors affecting teachers' attitude. Kin and Kareem (2016) affirmed that the nature of teachers' attitudes depends on the quality of school environment when comparing the attitudes of teachers representing schools with high and average academic performance. They state, "Teachers in high-performing secondary schools possess behaviorally and cognitively based attitudes, whereas the teachers of mediocre-performing

secondary schools hold cognitively based attitudes only" (Kin & Kareem, 2016, p. 118). It follows that teachers from average performing environment accept the reform only on the level of cognition without tending to take any actions; in contrast, teachers of high-performing schools react to the reform and act along with it. Consequently, the performance level of a learning environment may affect directly teachers' attitudes.

Considering the environment as an influencing factor, Anghelache and Bentea (2012b) hypothesized that teachers from urban and rural schools could hold significantly different attitudes toward educational change (p. 594). However, the results didn't prove their hypothesis showing that teachers from both urban and rural areas possessed quite similar attitudes toward change (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012b, p. 596). In this instance, it is interesting to explore whether the environment as a location does or does not affect the teachers' attitude in the educational context of another country.

Though, the purpose of Wang's (2011) study was not to compare teachers' perceptions toward curriculum reform from urban and rural areas, the researcher's findings revealed the obstacles in curriculum implementation specific only to urban region. Wang (2011), by conducting the research in the rural classroom in China, found discrepancies between teachers' acceptance of the national curriculum reform and the same time reluctance of applying new teaching approaches prescribed by curriculum reform (p. 157). The new curriculum in China had great demands for developing students' high-order skills, which in its turn affected the change in teaching approaches: the shift from a teacher-centered approach towards the student-centered one. Wang (2011) found that there were several reasons explaining why rural teachers continued to employ teacher–centered approaches, such as lecturing in class, despite their positive perception of the new curriculum. The researcher argued that "time is a crucial factor" in determining teachers' choice of the approach practiced in class (Wang, 2011, p. 157). By applying an ethnographic research

design Wang (2011) discovered during interviews with teachers and lesson observations, that rural teachers found the new curriculum to be "unrealistic" for rural students due to low level of students' preparedness (p. 160). As the content of curriculum was rather challenging for rural students, teachers had to spend more time on explaining the new material. In addition, rural teachers experienced that time allocated for covering units in the textbook was not enough. This fact did not allow them to apply student-centered approach prescribed by a new curriculum as it was more time-consuming comparatively with the teacher-centered approach when a teacher could easily regulate the needed time for every task. They had to lecture their lessons in order to cover all the content due to the set timetable. The last reason, which worsened teachers' situation, was a lack of teachers' professional training for utilizing the student-centered approaches aiming to develop students' critical thinking and inquiry skills. This research evidences that teachers' positive reception of 'intended' curriculum greatly differs from 'implemented' curriculum that teachers apply in class. Such teachers' discrepancy between curriculum perception and implementation is caused by challenges they face, such as time constraints, lack of professional preparedness, and complicated curriculum content.

Echoing challenges found in Wang's (2011) inquiry, Mligo (2016) found similar obstacles Tanzanian teachers experienced when they implemented the new curriculum that included time constraints, insufficient professional trainings and a lack of teaching resources. Mligo (2016) applied an interpretive case study design to investigate "teachers' perceptions and concerns about the implementation of the 2005 preschool curriculum in Tanzania" (p. 353). The main purpose of the 2005 preschool curriculum was to "shift from teacher-centred to child-centred learning" (Mligo, 2016, p.358). Mligo (2016) used interviews with 12 participants from four different schools to find out how teachers perceived the 2005 preschool curriculum over 10 year period (2005-2015); whereas document analysis showed

whether the principles of the 2005 curriculum were "visible" in curriculum and school documents (p. 358). The research findings indicated that teachers had obstacles while implementing the curriculum due to poor professional readiness: teachers did not understand the core principles of the curriculum; they were not taught to work with curriculum documents and lacked proficiency while working with children (Mligo, 2016, p. 359). The same as teachers in Wang's research (2011), Tanzanian teachers understood the significance to change their teaching approaches in relation to the new curriculum; however, numerous obstacles impeded that realization (Mligo, 2016, p. 362). Teachers reported that classrooms were overcrowded and they did not have proper teaching and learning materials; teachers' main concern was to provide them with professional training and time to adopt new pedagogical approaches. Mligo's research (2016) proves the significance of providing teachers with professional training and teaching-learning resources for better curriculum implementation.

The aforementioned studies used qualitative research designs for investigating teachers' perception on curriculum implementation; whereas Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2015) applied quantitative survey research design to draw the data from the sample of 236 primary school teachers in Turkey (p. 567). The research aimed to define the correlation between teachers' perception of constructivist curriculum change and teachers' constructivist curriculum implementation. The results displayed that though primary teachers did not favor the new constructivist curriculum change, they often applied constructivist principles in their practice (Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015, p. 572). The limitation of quantitative study is that it only shows the correlation between variables without explaining reasons. However, researchers suggested few causes of teachers' low support of constructivist curriculum. First, Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2015) assumed that teachers lacked sufficient in-service training before curriculum implementation; second, the constructivist curriculum was imposed by

government without involving and considering teachers' views (p. 573). While answering open-ended questions in a questionnaire, teachers outlined some challenges of curriculum implementation; the frequently-mentioned problems were teachers' unfamiliarity with new curriculum content, teaching approaches and assessment, poor school supply of teaching and learning resources, increased teachers' workload, lack of teacher collaboration and parental involvement in educational process (Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015, p. 573-574). Summarizing the findings of Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2015), the researchers gave recommendations for better curriculum implementation; they offered to provide teachers with in-service trainings taking into account their needs.

If the environment as a location does not influence the teachers' attitude, the climate of the learning environment may affect it. Kassim and Abdullah (2011) revealed that a positive learning environment created by school principals promotes a positive attitude toward change (p. 48).Here, it should be noted that the role of the principal is highly important as the great responsibility is laid upon principals in choosing the right leadership style to establish a favorable school climate. The research of Kassim and Abdullah (2011) echoes the findings of previously conducted research by Kursunoglu and Tanriogen (2009) that instructional leaders affect positively teachers' attitude toward change (p. 257). However, it should be assumed that instructional leadership style is beneficial for school organizational changes rather than bigger changes such as educational reforms, because its focus is often narrowed to short-term goals.

If the previously mentioned researchers examined only an effect of the instructional leadership on teachers' attitudes, Baglibel et al. (2014)investigated what type of a principal's behavior (initiator, manager, or responder) influenced more on teachers' positive attitude toward change. Their results showed that the least positive attitudes toward change had teachers who regarded their principals as responders; teachers discerning their principals as

initiators held the most positive change attitude, and the last group of teachers considering their principals as managers turned out to be in the medium (Baglibel et al., 2014, p. 61). In view of this, it can be concluded that teachers are more open to change in positive learning environment where a principal acts with a dominant initiator behavior.

Overall, it can be seen that teachers' perceptions on curriculum changes were investigated in multiple ways, including using varied methodological approaches such as within qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research designs. Likewise, researchers investigated the level of endorsement teachers felt towards curriculum changes, which varied from less to more positive and even ambivalent. However, the findings, which unite most of studies, are that teachers' perception of the intended curriculum differs from the implied one. The reasons for discrepancy between teachers' perceived and implemented curriculum are difficult to identify. The reviewed studies helped to determine challenges teachers face while implementing curriculum changes. The first and main issue is insufficient professional trainings; due to it teachers do not understand the content, teaching approaches and assessment within curriculum change. The second obstacle is poor provision of teaching-learning resources and school equipment; other challenges relate to teachers' increased workload and time constraints. Considering these studies, a question arises whether teachers' challenges to curriculum change found in the international literature are similar to the Kazakhstani context, and whether mainstream teachers' perception of the renewed curriculum in Kazakhstan differs from teachers' curriculum implementation.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion of the literature on one type of educational change, which refers to curriculum. Curriculum is a multifaceted concept, which affects the whole learning process including teachers and students. Due to curriculum complexity, scholars in the curriculum field distinguish different levels, aspects and approaches that

define curriculum from various perspectives. A teacher plays an integral role in curriculum implementation. The empirical studies reviewed in this chapter prove significance of teacher's positive attitude on successful curriculum implementation. Moreover, the findings of the studies showed factors that could impede the process of curriculum implementation, as well the aspects, which contribute to teachers' curriculum acceptance. In addition, this chapter presented the theoretical framework that further defined the methodology and guided data analysis in this study. From these studies it becomes clear that professional trainings and supply with teaching-learning resources are essential to support teachers while curriculum implementation process. However, a school location, namely urban or rural, did not appear to affect teachers' more or less positive curriculum perception; though, rural teachers faced some challenges regarding students' low school preparedness that impeded efficient curriculum implementation. The school learning environment as another external factor, especially the proper leadership style, enacted by a school principle, seemed to have a positive effect on teachers' perception of change. It was found that the role of teachers' collaboration and administration support was not sufficiently explored in the reviewed literature; thus, more needs to be studied on this issue especially in Central Asia.

My thesis study, guided by joined conceptual framework of Van den Akker's typology and Concerns-based Adoption Model, will help fill the gap on mainstream secondary teachers' perception toward the renewed curriculum in Kazakhstan. My study will show the role of methodological support including teachers' collaboration and administration support on teachers' curriculum perception, as well as obstacles teachers face while the renewed curriculum implementation. In the next chapter, I will present the methodology used in this thesis study.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of the renewed curriculum by mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grade. This chapter describes the methodology applied for answering the main research question. The following sections are presented in this chapter: research design, instrumentation, sampling, research site, data collection procedures, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

Research Design

This study was conducted based on a single descriptive qualitative case study research design in order to answer the main research question: How is the renewed curriculum perceived by mainstream secondary teachers working in fifth and seventh grades?

Leavy (2014) refers qualitative research to the "inductive" method of interpreting data, by clarifying that it is mainly used to research a phenomenon, reveal person's perception toward a range of things or aspects of life (as cited in Leavy, 2017, p. 9). The choice of this research design is justified by the need to discern teachers' perception toward the renewed curriculum, where teachers' perception is considered to be a central phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative research prioritizes gaining the intricate understanding of a core issue within a small number of participants (Leavy, 2017, p. 9). According to Creswell (2013) qualitative research design is the most appropriate for investigating the understanding of the research problem by participants, who experience it in "a natural setting" without any artificial influence (p.44).Through the lens of interpretive framework this research design allows to collect data, interpret the findings, and more importantly present research participants' voices as well as researcher's consideration on investigated problem (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

Choosing an approach within qualitative inquiry is the next important step a researcher undertakes, as it is the approach that defines the research procedures (Creswell, 2013, p.53). Case study approach was used to this qualitative inquiry. Yin (2014) states, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p.16). In terms of phenomenon this study considered teachers' perception of the renewed curriculum at the moment of its implementation in the context of a certain school in Central Kazakhstan. The rationale for choosing a single case study over other methods is that it "retains a holistic and real-world perspective" of the case (Yin, 2014, p.4). It allows a researcher to explore a common case, one mainstream school in Central Kazakhstan, which can further "provide insights into" relationship between teachers' perception of the renewed curriculum and its implementation (Yin, 2014, p. 52).

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This single qualitative case-study research design predetermined the use of semi-structured interviews as the main instrument. Yin affirms (2014) that "interview is one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (p.110). Moreover, the selected instrument enhances participants' disposition to the conversation (Yin, 2014, p.111). Therefore, the teachers' perceptions were explored through one-on-one interviews. Moreover, a document analysis was used in order to cross-check the collected data while interviewing.

Data collection instrument #1:One-on-one semi-structured interview (approximately 1 hour). The semi-structured interview is an instrument for collecting data by means of open-ended questions, which stimulate a participant to express own thoughts on the investigated topic (Leavy, 2017, p.139).Weiss (1994) recounts the alternative names of this type of interview, they are "intensive interview, in-depth interview, unstructured

interview", which are characterized with flexibility of formulating and stating the questions (as cited in Yin, 2014, p.110). The distinguishing feature of semi-structured interviews underlies in two-leveled questions. "Level 2" questions are researcher's planned questions, which he poses according to his interview protocol. "Level 1" questions can be considered as supportive queries for leading a conversational and intimate flow of participant's speech (Yin, 2014, p.110). The researcher used both levels questions while interviewing the participants. Data collection procedures part describes this method in more details.

Data collection instrument #2: Document analysis. Document analysis was applied to explore lesson plans provided by participants of the study along with main teaching documents (subject programme, course plan, assessment guideline), which were analyzed via content analysis. Content analysis is widely used both in quantitative and qualitative studies, it aims to figure out the ideas, concepts incorporated in the text (Leavy, 2017, p. 146). The template used for content analysis of documents was adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, p.261). It represents two-column table, which makes comfortable for a researcher to include key phrases, definitions in the left column, leaving the right one for commenting and connecting to the themes revealed in the interview analysis (see Appendix C).

Sampling Procedures

The target population of this research was secondary school teachers who teach according to the renewed curriculum implemented in Fall 2017, who work in fifth and seventh grades. Teachers working in other grades teach according to the old curriculum, therefore they were not included into the sample. The rationale for choosing a definite sampling strategy underlies in the need of participants who were eager to freely share their perceptions and provide the extensive data for further analysis. Purposeful sampling was applied to select participants for this investigation, therefore a researcher could get "in-depth understanding from a small sample" (Leavy, 2017, p. 80).

The sample consisted of five teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in this research. According to Creswell (2007) this number of participants can provide sufficient data "to identify themes of case studies as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis" (p. 128).There were four main criteria for the selection of participants: 1) all teachers should teach the renewed curriculum either in fifth or seventh grade; 2) these teachers should be linguists, in other words teachers of Russian, Kazakh or English; 3) they should be willing to share their perceptions and open to provide honest answers; 4) all participants are assumed to possess training on the renewed curriculum, which teachers were supposed to complete during summer period of 2017. During those trainings, teachers had to be trained and acquainted with key features of the renewed curriculum and assessment model in fifth and seventh grades. However, it cannot be excluded that some teachers may have not participated in the trainings due to different circumstances.

Table 4. *Characteristics of Participants*

Pseudonym	Subject taught	Grade they work in	Teaching experience	Training on the renewed curriculum
Anfisa	English	5^{th}	4 years	Yes
Sofiya	English	7^{th}	18 years	Yes
Katya	English	5^{th}, 7^{th}	15 years	Yes
Nina	English	5^{th}	12 years	Yes
Elina	English	5^{th}	25 years	Yes

The participants could be involved irrelevant of their background, teaching experience, age, and gender. The expected age of participants was between 22, the age when a person graduates from a college or a university, and 63, the age when people retire.

Research Site

The research site for this investigation was a mainstream school located in one city in Central Kazakhstan. Under the act of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2016), "Mainstream school is an educational institution that implements general educational curricula of primary, secondary education, and educational programs for additional education to students."This mainstream school is financed by the state and freely provides general secondary education to students.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection started after the review process and approval from NUGSE Research Committee in January 2018. As soon as I received the approval for research I had to speak to the gatekeeper, a principal of the selected school, in order to get access to teachers. Before meeting with a gatekeeper, I decided to make an appointment through a phone call. Having phoned at school, I explained the purpose of call, and was connected with a school principal. While talking with the school principal I introduced myself, the reason of applying, and the purpose of the study. The gatekeeper kindly agreed to consider my request and asked for me to email more details about the research. At the end of the phone call, I was offered time for a personal meeting with a principal, which was two days later. The meeting with the principal was held on time and spent on discussing the details, such as the research question, sampling and confidentiality procedures.

The recruitment of participants was organized with help of a colleague I knew working in the selected school who contacted and informed potential participants about the opportunity to take part in this research. That person had an access to the corporate mail of school staff, so she was able to send a letter with all necessary information on the research via email (see Appendix D). In case teachers had any follow-up questions concerning the research they were able to contact me via email or a phone call. After sending the recruitment

email, I received four letters from teachers willing to take part in my investigation. All four teachers corresponded to the criteria mentioned in sampling procedures section. Two weeks later after recruitment email, I got one more reply from a teacher, who was on sick leave. That teacher also stated his willingness to participate in the research.

Then I started scheduling one-on-one interviews with five volunteered teachers and faced the first challenges, which were not anticipated in advance. The participants had overload of teaching hours working in two shifts, that is why this made difficult to allocate their time for one-on-one interviews. The problem of interview scheduling was solved due to severe weather conditions, when classes for students were cancelled (interviews were held in February, when blizzards and low temperature frequently happened). The week when classes were cancelled, teachers had free time from lessons, so all five interviews were arranged during that week.

One-on-one interviews were held outside the school, as teachers expressed that they would feel more confident if no one from school colleagues got to know about their participation. The day before the interview, I sent a consent form (see Appendix A) and proposed questions of the interview (see Appendix B). One coffee shop in the downtown was chosen for having interviews because of its comfortable and quiet environment. At the beginning of each interview, I gave some personal background information and explained how I came to the investigated topic. This preliminary informal part encouraged participants to share their perceptions toward the renewed curriculum. During the interview I tried to keep the same sequence of interview questions written in the interview protocol, and the same time balance between "Level 1" and "Level 2" questions, as mentioned in Yin (2014, p. 110). My planned questions gave a direction of the whole interview, while supportive questions, which appeared in the course of interviewing, let a participant feel that he is heard and checked for clarification of the mentioned idea.

To get all data correct, as it is recommended by Yin (2014), the interviews were audio recorded with participants' approval using my smartphone (p.110). The expected time of interviews was about 60 minutes as agreed in the consent form; however, the five interviews lasted different amount of time: two interviews were longer – 30 and 40 minutes, where the rest three interviews took about 20 minutes. Having conducted the first interview, which lasted 30 minutes, I understood that proposed time in the consent form was overestimated. Ten questions asked in the interview could be fully covered within 30-40 minutes time frame. The three interviews, which lasted less time, could be in result of interviewees' distrust in value of their participation in this research. At the beginning of the interviews, teachers shared their disappointment of participating in different projects and not being heard afterwards. Another factor, which also plays a role in giving more or less detailed answers, is personal traits of an interviewee. Due to individual characteristics, some people are more opened to provide personal examples from their experience, while others tend to give only the direct answers. I assume that these two reasons were crucial for determining the time spent on interviews. At the end of the interviews, all the participants were given a box of chocolate as an appreciation for sharing their voice.

Also, teachers were asked to send via email one lesson plan for document analysis after the interview was conducted (see Appendix C). Participants sent lesson plans the same day of the interview. Document analysis of lesson plans was started when all interview data was collected, transcribed and analyzed. The detailed process of document analysis is described in data analysis chapter.

Ethical Issues

In order to provide confidentiality of participants I took the following actions. First, in discussing and writing about the topic, I did not identify the exact research site from which the participants were selected. Secondly, the participants were provided with pseudonyms

throughout data analysis and reporting. The list of pseudonyms and real names are known only by the researcher and are kept in an electronic version on the password-protected personal computer. All interviews were scheduled outside the school, so neither school administration not school teachers knew about the teachers volunteered to participate in the research.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) affirm that "safely storing the data also ensures that you are honoring the confidentiality of participants" (p. 136). Thus, the audio recording of interviews, as well as interview transcripts, the categorized interview quotations, and participants' sent lesson plans were dated, put in separate folders and safely stored on the password-protected laptop accessible only for the researcher. Moreover, while preparing the interview data for analysis only the researcher transcribed the audio and translated the transcripts without involving any other person; such approach bars a chance of data leak.

Limitations of the Study

The perceptions of participants from one educational context may differ from one another, for instance the sample for this study included the teachers working in urban school, so the collected data could not unpack the perspectives of teachers from rural schools.

Another limitation of this inquiry is that it reveals teachers' perceptions towards curriculum during a certain period of time. This data was collected in the middle of the 2017-2018 academic year, after implementing the renewed curriculum within the first semester. It could be assumed that data (teachers' perceptions) may vary depending on the period teachers work with the renewed curriculum.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the explanation of the chosen research design, data collection methods and instruments, sampling procedures with characteristics of participants and description of the research site to understand the perception of the renewed curriculum by

mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grade. Also, it specified data collection procedures, ethical issues and limitations of the study. The following chapters will present data analysis procedures and findings revealed from the interviews and document analysis.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Findings

In the previous chapter, I described the rationale for choosing a single descriptive qualitative case study research design which guided this study of secondary teachers' perceptions toward the renewed curriculum (RC) implemented in 5th and 7th grades across mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Moreover, I presented in detail data collection methods and instruments, the sampling and data collection procedures. In this chapter, the purpose is twofold: (1) I will provide a step-by-step description of how I analyzed interview data and documents, and (2) I will present the findings drawn from the participants' interviews and document analysis.

This chapter consists of eight sections: the first section is devoted to data analysis, whereas the following six sections present the categories identified when data analysis was completed. Specifically, the second section considers teachers' perceived changes in the RC, the third and the fourth sections describe the effect of methodological support and professional training courses on teachers' implementation of the RC. The fifth section shows the implications of the RC, while the sixth section defines the obstacles teachers faced while implementing the RC. The seventh section summarizes teachers' recommendations relating to the RC implementation, and the last section concludes the whole chapter.

Analysis of the Interviews

Having conducted one-on-one interviews with participants, I verbatim transcribed the audio myself within a few days after the interview. Such approach helped me recollect ideas and emotions a participant assigned while being interviewed. Word-for-word transcribing takes more time in comparison to the selected one; however, verbatim transcription preserves a researcher from the loss of important data (Leavy, 2017, p.142). Also, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) recommend researchers to complete transcribing themselves in the nearest time

for getting the better knowledge of data (p. 136). After transcribing all five of the interviews, I proceeded with data analysis.

First, I prepared transcripts for data analysis. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) attach particular importance to data organization, as it directly affects the quality of analysis (p. 136). In view of this, I carefully thought about the template used in my data analysis, thus I looked through the literature. Authors in research field propose various templates for data analysis, the distinguishing feature of which is organization of transcript and codes. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) present transcript coding of a whole text (p. 263). Another way is a two-column form, where the left column includes the transcript itself, whereas the right one is left for a researcher to put codes. Three-column organization locates the transcript in the middle by leaving space on both sides for researcher's comments (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). Having considered the existing templates for data analysis, I chose a three-column table, where the first column was devoted to interviewer's questions, the second column contained only interviewee's responses, and the last one was allocated for emerging codes. Such form visually organized what was the question, the extended answer, and did not distract from coding. Moreover, one line was left to divide the end of one answer and beginning of another one (see Figure 2).

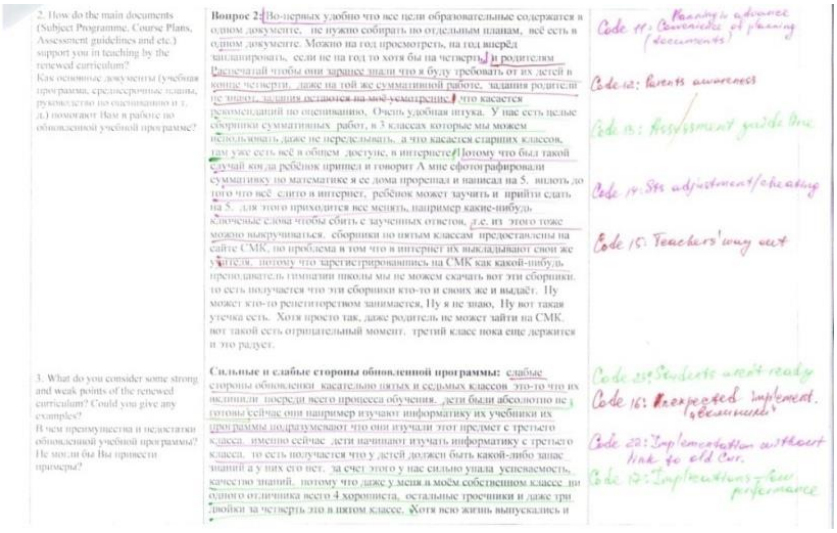


Figure 2. A Sample of a Coded Transcript

When the transcripts were ready and organized into the three column format, the second step was to identify the most appropriate strategy for data analysis. Different scholars suggest different approaches of data analysis, which depend on chosen research design (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Specifically, grounded theory researchers identify a central category, then correlate it with other categories and practice open, axial, and thematic coding; researchers, who follow phenomenology research design, have more flexible approach of data analysis focusing on phrases and statements that can explain the investigated phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 137).

As I mentioned in the methodology chapter, case study research design refers to inductive approach of data interpretation (Leavy, 2014; Creswell, 2012); in such a way data analysis should be detailed evolving from participants' ideas to common themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 137).Therefore, I used a process of reading one segment of the transcript a few times and attributing a code, which described the implied meaning of a phrase or a sentence. As it can be seen from Image1, a code had a number and a characterizing collocation. The number made it easier to find the definite code when interviewee's ideas were repeated. For example, Code 23: 'Students are not ready…' was drawn from the interviewee's words and appeared four times within one transcript. Meeting the code several times made me remember its number and I just put the number of the code without writing the collocation.

As the interviews were conducted in Russian, the transcript for data analysis was left in Russian in order to keep authenticity and avoid misinterpretation of words, caused in a result of translation. However, the codes were given in English to save time from further translating and renaming of codes. During the coding, some segments of the transcript appeared challenging for me to define the code immediately, thus I skipped them putting a

question mark and returned back after a while with a code. Going back and forth helped me reconsider the data in depth.

By the time I completed transcribing the first interview, I learned about MAXQDA program which is appropriate for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Creswell (2012) suggests the use of computer programs for data analysis and includes a list of various programs with a short description, where MAXQDA is described too (p. 243). I downloaded the trial version of this program from the official website www.maxqda.com, which allowed free use for 14 days. That amount of time was enough for coding all five transcripts. First, I uploaded five interview transcripts into the program, and then duplicated manual codes of the first interview, which led to finding 64 "unique" codes and 91 total, when including repetitions of the same codes. The rest four interviews were coded manually in MAXQDA using the existed codes and adding new ones. Though I did not use automatic coding as all the transcripts were carefully read and manually coded; MAXQDA simplified and speeded up data analysis. I just clicked on the chosen segment of the text and dragged it on the existed code; the program immediately attached the code to the highlighted segment (see Figure 3). Moreover, I could easily recode the segment or add more codes within the same sentence avoiding messy corrections as it could be while transcribing on hard copies.

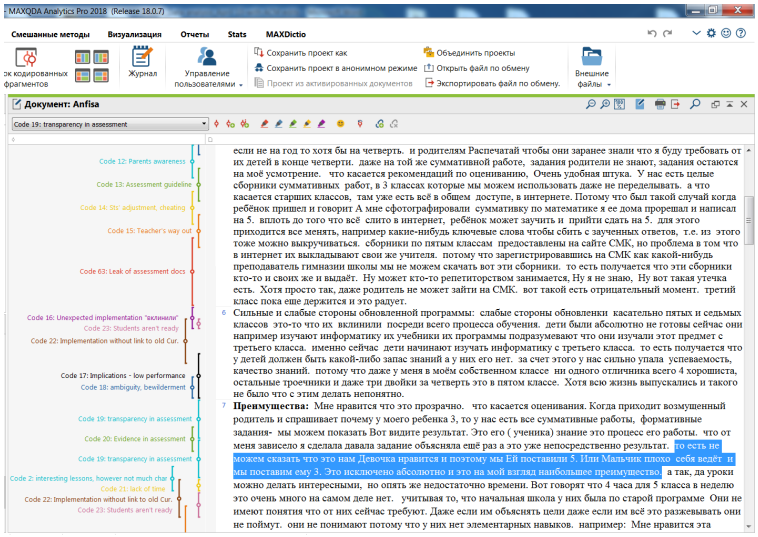


Figure 3. Coding of Interview Segments in MAXQDA Program

When coding of five interviews was finished, I had a list of 86 unique codes and the total amount of 232 codes. My next step was to organize and join the unique codes into the categories with common features. Therefore, I exported 86 codes from MAXQDA into excel document; looking at that list I organized 6 thematic tables in word document where I put similar codes in one table (see Figure 4).

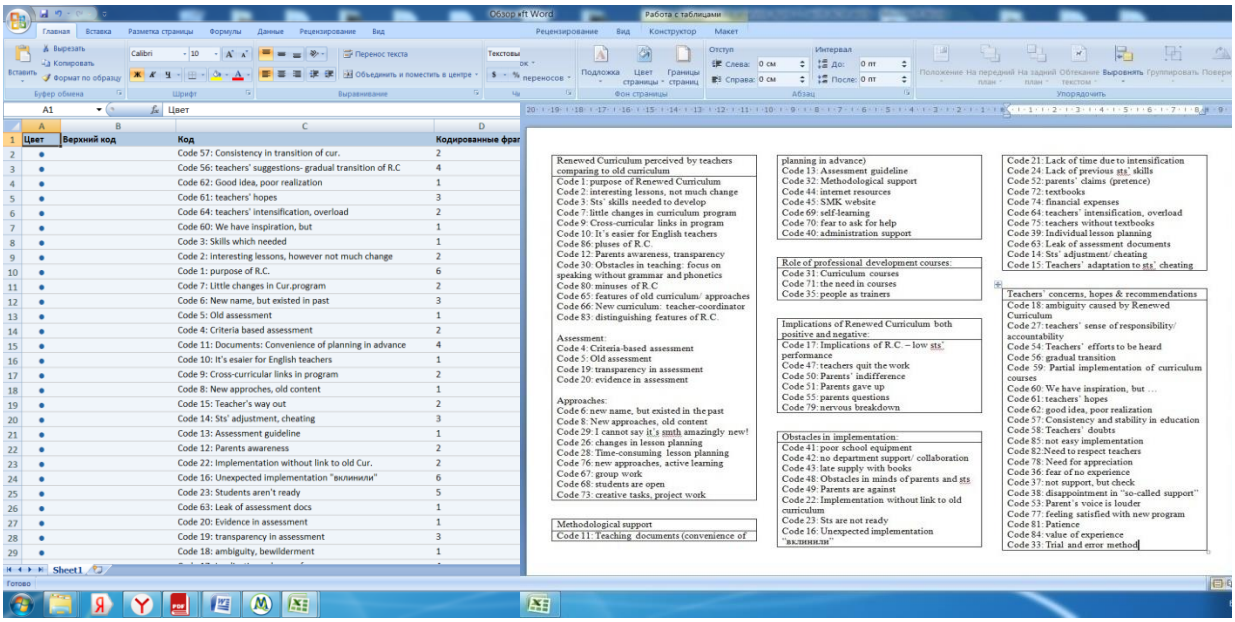


Figure 4. Excel Document of Codes and Word Document with 6 Thematic Tables

Each thematic table contained at least 3 and maximum 22 codes, the big amount of codes in one category complicated the analysis process. In such a way, I reconsidered codes joining them together and editing the code collocation. Consequently, I got 6 thematic categories with 3 to 5 sub-themes in each; these categories are thoroughly described in following sections.

Document analysis. Document analysis started when interview analysis was finished; the main documents that were investigated included instructive-methodical letter (IML) (*instructivno-metodicheskoe pismo*), a normative document on the organization of an educational process in the 2017-2018 academic year, English subject program, criteria-based

assessment guideline and participants' lesson plans. Information received while interview analysis helped to determine the focus of document analysis, so for instance: participants' perception of the RC goal and its distinguishing features were correlated with the RC principles presented in IML. Changes concerning lesson planning and assessment were compared with participants' lesson plans and assessment guidelines. Overall, document analysis clarified the participants' interview answers and allowed to strengthen them with evidence drawn from documents.

Perceived Changes in the Renewed Curriculum

This section presents secondary teachers' perceptions of the renewed curriculum implemented in 5^{th} and 7^{th} grades. Teachers were asked to express what they consider the main goal of the renewed curriculum and provide its distinguishing features from the old curriculum. Overall, the participants emphasized the changes in curriculum content, new assessment method and teaching approaches.

The goal of the renewed curriculum. When asked what the participants viewed as the main goal of the renewed curriculum (RC), five teachers had similar understanding and primarily outlined the need of educating a competitive and competent person prepared for the demands of a new century. This can be clearly seen from Anfisa's comment: "The goal of the renewed program is to educate a person who will meet all the requirements of the 21^{st}century." Another participant provided more detailed explanation of the "requirements" students need to obtain; it constitutes in being "educated and creative, competent and competitive personality who is able to live in a dynamically developing environment, ready for self-actualization in their own interests and in public interest" (Katya).

The following table presents the skills mentioned by participants that the RC develops in students:

Table 5. *Perceived Skills Developed by Students in the Renewed Curriculum*

	Skills/ Participant	Anfisa	Elina	Katya	Nina	Sofiya
21st century skills	Communicative skills	+		+		+
	Functional literacy	+	+	+	+	+
	Critical thinking	+		+	+	
	Creative skills	+	+	+		+
	Research skills	+	+	+		

The participants' answers closely reflect the definition of the RC goal presented in instructive-methodical letter (IML). Moreover, participants could name the skills the RC was designed to develop at students. This indicates participants' awareness of the current educational changes: teachers not only understand, but also can explain the reason of the RC implementation, which arises from the need to adapt the century of high demands.

Teaching approaches. Teachers pointed to the change of teaching approaches - 'active teaching methods,' as a tool to achieve the RC goal and advancement of students' skills. Moreover, all five teachers distinctly defined that the RC goal could be achieved by applying active teaching methods aiming at the development of students' functional literacy, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communicative and research skills. The above mentioned idea is presented in the words of Sofiya: "The development of a student happens through the introduction of active forms of teaching, during which it is assumed that students will develop functional literacy, they will self-learn, communicate with their classmates and creatively complete tasks." This shows an interconnection of new teaching approaches and development of students' skills.

Continuing on the topic of active teaching methods, participants accentuated the use of communicative approach, interactive teaching (*dialogovoe obuchenie*) and differentiation.

Table 6. *The Type of Teaching Approach Used by Participants*

Anfisa	Elina	Katya	Nina	Sofiya
Communicative approach	interactive teaching	Communicative approach	interactive teaching	interactive teaching
	differentiation			differentiation

The teaching approaches chosen by participants were also found among 18 teaching methods recommended in IML (MES, 2017, p. 17). The three active approaches presented in the table were mentioned in participants' interviews and met in the analysis of teachers' lesson plans. For instance, Katya stated: "When teaching I put much emphasis on a communicative approach…," the same as Anfisa stated that "the only thing, we [teachers] should teach, is communicative skill - they [students] have to talk, they have to communicate." The priority of communicative approach among teachers is caused by a peculiarity of teachers' taught subject and shift from factual knowledge to its application.

The other three participants indicated the importance of interactive teaching and differentiation at their lessons by explaining the methods they use. For example, Sofiya commented saying: "I have interactive teaching at every lesson. I take into account students' age peculiarities when planning the lessons." Whereas Nina stated: "Especially, I like interactive teaching, which helps to reveal all my students' abilities." The participants' quotes show that teachers' choice of approaches is based on their students' demands, and also

teachers adhere to the recommendations presented in IML and choose approaches that are most suitable for their subject.

Changes in curriculum content. This sub-section presents distinguishing features of the RC program found both in document and interview analysis. The following table shows the four main things that differ the RC from the previous one:

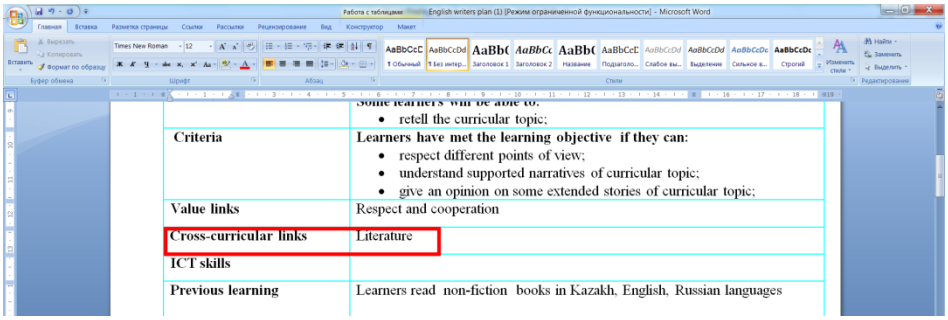
Table 7. *The Four Distinguishing Features of the RC*

Distinguishing features of the RC	
1. Principle of spiral curriculum	Mentioned in participants' answers and presented in English Subject programs of 5th and 7th grades
2. Learning objectives developed according to Bloom's taxonomy	Defined in English Subject programs of 5th and 7th grades and met in teachers' lesson plans and assessment guidelines
3. Cross-curricular links	Indicated in participants' answers, English Subject programs of 5th and 7th grades and teachers' lesson plans
4. Introduction of new units: "Independent Project" and "Reading for Pleasure"	Stated by participants in the interviews, and presented in English Subject programs of 5th and 7th grades

The first distinguishing feature of the RC mentioned by participants was the spiral organization of curriculum content. As stated in IML, the principle of spiral curriculum means that topics and units are repeated from grade to grade with gradual complication of curriculum content (MES, 2017, p. 269). It is expected that such approach facilitates the better acquisition of knowledge.

All learning objectives for the whole year are presented in the subject program; learning objectives show what skills should be developed by the end of each unit and the whole year. Moreover, teachers' lesson plans showed that planning started with learning objectives that determined lesson activities and tasks.

The third distinguishing feature of the RC, cross-curricular link, was first stated in participants' interviews and then found in Subject program and teachers' lesson plans. When the topic of the unit is related to another subject, it is written at the beginning of a unit. Moreover, the special place is devoted to define cross-curricular links in a lesson plan table, as it is seen in the figure below:



	• retell the curricular topic;
Criteria	**Learners have met the learning objective if they can:** • respect different points of view; • understand supported narratives of curricular topic; • give an opinion on some extended stories of curricular topic;
Value links	Respect and cooperation
Cross-curricular links	Literature
ICT skills	
Previous learning	Learners read non-fiction books in Kazakh, English, Russian languages

Figure 5. An Example of Cross-Curricular Link from a Teacher's Lesson Plan

The last change reported by participants was an addition of new units in the English subject program. All the participants easily named the distinguishing features of the RC, which showed that they had a clear understanding of changes made in curriculum.

Changes in lesson-planning. Three out of five participants mentioned that the time spent on lessons preparation significantly increased. Mainly, it is caused by two reasons: a form of a lesson plan, which should be detailed and explicit; and search for necessary lesson resources.

The first reason was explained by Anfisa: "Writing a lesson plan takes a lot of time, because you need write everything, even students' possible answers." Also, according to the new form of a lesson plan, teachers are asked to write learning and lesson objectives, as well as reflection after each lesson that teachers did not do before. As teachers did not use to write a reflection and describe lesson objectives in details, they spent much time on the lesson plan developing.

The second reason for teachers' increased lesson preparation time is related to textbook organization: when a textbook does not have material according to a topic presented in the subject program, teachers made additional efforts to find the necessary material for the unit (more details are provided in "Textbook" section).

Criteria-based assessment. Undoubtedly, the most evident change distinguished by teachers in the RC was new assessment model named "Criteria-Based Assessment" (CBA). The old assessment model was based on 5-mark scale, when students were assessed every lesson by teacher's subjective judgment. According to new CBA, students are assessed following the pre-defined criteria. Teachers noticed that CBA provided more objective and transparent assessment of students' achievements for all stakeholders of the learning process – students, parents, and teachers:

> I like that it's transparent … as for the new assessment [pause]. When an indignant parent comes and asks why my child has 3 [term mark], then we [teachers] have all the summative works, formative tasks - we can show: "You see the result. This is his [student's] knowledge and the process of his work." (Anfisa)

Along with transparency, it is evident that CBA gives the evidence of students' work and allows teachers to explain parents the students' performance in summative assessment papers.

In addition, teachers stated that CBA developed students' self-analysis and self-assessment skills:

> I remember when students used to come and ask: "Why I have 4 [mark for the work], and he has 5 – when our works are virtually the same, why is that so?" I had to explain [pause] … And now when they see already specific criteria, they have no questions. (Sofiya)

Despite the evident advantages that the new assessment brought, teachers also indicated some drawbacks. Teachers noticed that students stopped preparing for lessons and doing homework, as they did not get any mark for it. One of the participants, Sofiya, commented:

> Now, in the 7th grade, it is the first time when this program, new assessment was introduced. You know, we have problems … Because we have a school of ordinary students, the only motivation for them was grading, there were students who aspired and worked only for it [grade]. Now due to the renewed program, even those students who prepared before, they had already started to shirk.

Sofiya's words show that it is hard for students to realize that even if their work is not graded, they should study well and prepare for each lesson as it leads them towards successful passing of summative assessment per term. Students used to study for the sake of the mark, not for the sake of knowledge. The time is needed to make a shift in students' thinking and adapt to new "rules" of assessment. When Sofiya's words evidenced a decrease in students' motivation and studying, Katya's comments showed students' attitude to homework, caused by the introduction of the new assessment model:

> A big problem is a non-grading system for children. Realizing that for the uncompleted homework they do not get 2 [the lowest mark], as well as for the completed one do not receive 5 [the highest mark], children began to draw conclusions that homework is not necessary. There were also problems with feedback, teachers were not ready to write verbal comments, parents did not receive any marks as it was before, nor any other comments from the teacher. (Katya)

The second problem, mentioned in the previous words of Katya, was teachers' unpreparedness to provide students as well parents with feedback. Parents appeared to be unaware of their children learning results, because students did not get marks, which assessed their studying. Overall, teachers shared ambivalent perceptions of the new assessment model.

On the one hand, teachers outlined the advantages of CBA in comparison with the traditional assessment; on the other hand the new assessment caused unpredicted challenges for both teachers and students.

Overall, it is seen that teachers' have a clear understanding of the RC goal and its main principles; also teachers adhere to methodological recommendations and apply active teaching approaches to teach the RC. However, two issues were indicated that caused teachers' concerns: one of them is increased amount of time spent on lesson planning, which according to Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) relates to management stage of concern. The second issue referred to the new assessment that resulted in teachers' worries about students' lowered motivation and academic performance. According to CBAM, this indicates teachers' "consequence stage of concern" characterized by participants' worries about the outcome of the innovation implementation, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Methodological Support

Following the conceptual framework of the study, one of the interview questions was designed to discover the methodological support provided for teachers during the RC implementation. Data drawn from the interviews were categorized in the following themes: teaching documents and online resources presented on the teaching platform, department collaboration and administration involvement.

Teaching documents and online platform. When asked about the methodological help teachers were provided with, all five participants first mentioned teaching documents and lesson plans, which are in free access on a special website smk.edu.kz. The name of the website comes from three letters "smk" that stands for "*systemno-metodicheskiy kompleks*" (system-methodical complex), where teachers from mainstream schools can find all necessary subject programmes, assessment guidelines, calendar-thematic planning, package

of summative assessment for unit (SAU) tasks, and summative assessment for term (SAT) tasks. So, for instance, Anfisa shared by commenting: "We [teachers] do not feel the lack of any resources or materials. We can download the ready lesson plan from smk [website] and then adapt it to our class."

In addition, participants' answers showed that they shared one positive view concerning teaching documents: a variety of teaching resources simplified and enhanced teachers' lesson planning and assessment. Thus, for instance, Katya listed what documents she widely used: "In my work, I'm guided with subject program, course plan, assessment guidelines, samples of formative and summative assessment tasks …I have all these materials thanks to the site smk." The listed resources helped Katya in the organization of educational process and lesson planning. Moreover, participants named the benefits they got while working with new teaching documents. One of the main advantages was highlighted by Anfisa:

> Firstly, it's convenient that all learning objectives are contained in one document [subject program], you do not need to collect from separate docs - everything is in one document. You can review them [learning objectives] for a year, plan ahead for a year … if not for a year, then at least for a term.

So, it is seen that teachers appreciate the opportunity of having subject program, which clearly represents all learning objectives for the whole year. In such a way, teachers can plan in advance considering the provided learning objectives. Another participant, Nina, added more details:

> These documents help to realize the importance of the renewed curriculum and its essence. So, for example, the learning objectives, which a student must master, are presented in the units of the subject program; and it is necessary to plan lessons in accordance with these objectives. The course plan contains outlines of the lessons; it

> is possible for a teacher to make changes, but on the whole this document makes it easier to prepare for the lesson.

Participants' answers indicated that teachers understood well how to use the provided teaching resources in their work. The learning objectives presented in each unit helped teachers concentrate on the skills students have to acquire by the end of the unit; while outlines of the lessons given in the course plan allowed teachers to be flexible in choosing the resources.

Administration support. Another interview question concerned the support, which teachers received in the school, especially from the administration staff. Teachers' answers were not univocal: participants differently perceived involvement and help provided by administration. The main reason of participants' variety in answers is that administration staff is a big team of people, who are in charge of different issues and only certain members devote their time to teachers who teach the RC. For example, Sofiya, clarified:

> The persons who help us are our methodologist and a vice-principle for innovations. These are people who try to help us in all possible ways. They make an application on the issues that we need, then they [trainers] come and conduct seminars.

Another participant, Elina, also proved that teachers could get support from administration, she stated: "At the school level, I can discuss any problem with my colleagues and with the administration, and find solutions." The aid provided by administration is usually expressed in the form of seminars or trainings on the RC. In other words, school administration is interested in facilitating teachers' work on the RC implementation.

However, not all participants' answers were positive referring to administration work. For instance, Nina said: "On the part of school administration, there is no special support, unless we count numerous inspections of lesson plans and so on." This participant's statement shows that school administration takes control of the quality of teachers' lesson

planning, whereas teachers do not consider such frequent check beneficial for them. Also, teachers noticed that some members of administration remain indifferent toward the work teachers do in accordance with the RC. Sofiya commented by saying: "When there are some seminars to conduct, well, they [school administration] demand us to conduct well, but where you take resources, where you find everything - it does not bother them."

Across all interviews, it is seen that school administration support is provided partially from some members of administration, whereas the rest requires teachers' accountability. The participants' words showed that teachers appreciate when their voices are heard and administration organizes trainings in accordance with their needs. However, administration check and indifference in teachers' challenging moments make participants feel abandoned.

Department collaboration. When asked about teachers' collaboration in the department, participants divided in their answers: one group of participants, including Elina and Katya, stated that they collaborate with other teachers in order to plan lessons; another group of teachers, represented by Nina, Sofiya and Anfisa, could not collaborate with their colleagues due to the organization of educational process, teachers' overload and unawareness of the RC.

The examples of department collaboration between teachers are presented in Katya's answer, who said: "With colleagues, teachers of English, we together prepare for lessons in grades 1 and 7 helping each other." Elina, also planning with her colleagues, added: "Together with colleagues, we create summative assessment tasks for unit and for term." It is seen that teachers try to simplify the lesson preparation through collaborative planning. However, other participants fail to collaborate with their colleagues due to lack of time. Anfisa commented:

> It usually happens that one person teaches the whole parallel, it is rare when the class is divided into groups. For example, I work alone in Russian parallel, I have a partner

- she works in Kazakh classes. We don't have time to sit down, discuss, think and make the lesson as productive as possible. Unfortunately, we don't have time.

Following that, if a teacher works alone in all fifth or seventh grades, it means that he does not have a teacher-partner to plan together. Even, when a teacher has a colleague working in the same grade, as in the case of Anfisa, teachers cannot find time for collaborative planning. Teachers have more than 25 hours of classes a week, and when one teacher is free of classes, another one is teaching.

The second factor, which prevents collaborative planning, is teachers' unpreparedness to teach the RC due to a low level of professional training. So, for instance, Sofiya said that she could not find a person in her department who was competent in the RC: "I come to the colleagues who have completed the renewed program to ask: how is this, how is that. They say: we do not know yet." Another participant, Anfisa, also stated the same issue in the department: "The head of department has finished the courses only this year, I learned all this [the RC] before, so in the department we do it [lesson-planning] separately."

Overall, teachers tend to collaboratively work with other colleagues when it is possible. However, there is a range of factors that prevent effective collaboration including teachers' overload, teaching in one parallel, and lack of teachers' competence to teach the RC.

External support and visits. An unexpected finding revealed in the interviews was external support and control that teachers experienced. Two participants mentioned about additional sources of support: Nina highlighted the role teachers' online community, whereas Sofiya outlined the work of the City Department of Public Education (CDPE) (*gorodskoiotdel narodnogo obrazovaniya, GorONO).* So, Nina stated by commenting: "The main support is online community of teachers, where my colleagues helped me to answer arisen questions [about the RC]." During the term, when teachers teach the RC and face

unexpected issues, which were not discussed in the professional trainings, online community became the main source of help for Nina. There she could discuss her issues and simultaneously help other teachers. While, Sofiya told about support of CDPE:

> And here is our city department, I have to thank the person [head of the department] who sends teachers to all possible courses and tries to do everything at the high level. We have a special group of all English teachers of the city, the methodologist throws off general information about courses and we are aware of all courses.

CDPE leads the constant work on teachers' professional development. Moreover, the teachers' groups, which are created in email and phone application, allow all teachers to receive the updates on current professional courses.

Another form of external support is a visit of professional courses trainers to school. The aim of the visits is to observe teachers' lessons in order to provide teachers with constructive feedback how lessons and teaching approaches can be improved. According to participants' answers, feedback that trainers give after lesson observation usually highlights teachers' weak points that make teachers upset. Participants understand the need of external visits; however, they want to hear more practical recommendations: "I would like to see how this lesson, which I did incorrectly, could be conducted by a person, who gave me recommendations, to show how it works in practice." (Anfisa) When teachers receive feedback that points to teachers' weaknesses, teachers get unmotivated, unappreciated and puzzled. They do not get the direction, how the things should be done, that is why teachers are unwilling to these external visits.

Overall, teachers received methodological aid from teaching resources and members of educational organizations. Participants showed that they did not feel any difficulties working with new teaching documents: those resources were clear and essential in teachers' work. What concerns the member support, all participants expressed willingness to

collaborate with their colleagues, though some of them did not have time for it. Administration support was provided only from certain members, who helped to organize seminars upon teachers' request. External visit of trainers was an unexpected finding not found in the reviewed literature, and perhaps specific to the Kazakhstani context.

Role of Professional Development Courses

One of the interview questions was aimed to understand what kind of professional training teachers got to implement the RC and if they perceived those courses to be efficient and helpful for their practice. It appeared that only one participant had 1, 5 months of professional trainings, whereas the rest participants attended the RC seminars or completed level courses.

Anfisa stated that she received intensive and efficient amount of professional support in precise and clear manner. Moreover, she mentioned good collaboration and support between the participants of the training course. As the outcome of the training, teachers decided to help each other: they divided the units, made lesson planning for the whole year ahead, and then shared their lesson plans.

The second group of teachers, who did not receive extended professional training, but attended few seminars on the RC, was presented by Sofiya and Katya. Both participants experienced difficulties while implementing the RC because of insufficient knowledge they had at that moment. Sofiya explained, "When we [teachers] had the seminars, we did not know what we were expected to do. We just accepted the information and that is all, and when we tried it [the RC] in practice, so many questions appeared."Thus it follows, that seminars were probably more theoretical than practical, or the amount and duration of seminars were not enough as teachers did not get the thorough understanding of the RC.

The third group of teachers represented by Nina and Elina did not get any special RC training, the same as participants of the second group. However, these two participants had an

experience of professional "three-level" courses, where they were acquainted with new teaching methods and approaches. Such teachers' background positively affected their work on the RC implementation. For instance, Nina said: "In 2013 I completed the level courses and since that time I have already made changes in my practice, so for me the essence of the renewed program has not become something new and unknown." The words of Elina were analogous; she stated that "My approach to teaching has changed insignificantly, since I have used innovative teaching approaches after completion of the level courses." Thus, it can be concluded that though teachers did not get the special trainings on the RC, their previous experience of being involved in the level courses appeared to be beneficial for its implementation.

This section presented different options of teachers' professional trainings among participants. Teachers agreed on the need of professional trainings as it guaranteed the easier RC implementation. It is evident that the special RC courses and level courses appeared to be more efficient for teachers than separate seminars on the RC.

Implications of the Renewed Curriculum

By the time the research data was collected, the RC had been implemented for two terms during September-December 2017. Participants expressed that the first RC implementation in fifth and seventh grades caused an increase in teachers' workload resulting in both some people leaving their jobs, and also indirectly provoking students' learning processes.

Teacher retention. The RC brought changes in curriculum content, teaching approaches, lesson preparation; some teachers turned out to be unprepared to quickly adjust to it. One of the participants, Elina, stated: "My experience helps me, in this regard it is quite difficult for novice teachers - for some of them it is a disaster; hence, there is a staff turnover in schools." The staff turnover is a tendency appeared at schools with the RC implementation,

the reason is teachers' unpreparedness to teach the RC. However, it is not clear whether experienced or novice teachers inclined to leave their work. When Elina stated that her experience was an advantage in comparison with novice teachers, another participant, Anfisa said that more experienced teachers left school too: "Teachers, who all their life taught the old program, many of them just quit, they said: I don't even want to understand this, these are all European standards, they do not suit us." Some teachers do not want to change their practices; other teachers are reluctant to give up their previous resources, as shown in Sofiya's comment:

> One mathematics teacher said: "No, next year I will not work on the renewed program, because I feel sorry for the material that I have been working on for years to teach children." - She believes that what she has worked over the years will not be useful for her in the renewed program.

Analysis showed that teachers' desire to leave work is caused by worries and lack of the RC understanding.

Changes in student learning: Rote memorization. All teachers are provided with login and password to log in a special learning platform, where they can find all teaching documents and summative assessment (SA) tasks for units (SAU) and terms (SAT). Teachers faced a problem that students were acquainted with summative assessment tasks. Anfisa gave an example by saying: "There was a case when a student came and said: "I had a photo of summative on Math, I solved it at home and got "5"".Everything is on the internet; the student can memorize and pass it on 5." Another participant, Sofiya also was worried with this fact and explained the consequences:

> That is, the child knowing about this [opportunity to find SAU] can allow not prepare for lessons at all, because SAU is ready for him, he will do it with a tutor, he will come and write it successfully at the lesson.

Actually, the problem is not students' memorization of SAU and SAT, but it is a leak of SA tasks from the internet. Participants explained that nobody except teachers has an access to download SA tasks from the website, thus they assumed that some teachers, who tutor, may download the tasks and then give to students.

In order to solve the problem of students' SA memorization, teachers found the way out, so for instance Anfisa said: "We have to change everything, for example, some keywords to disorientate students from learned answers." Thus, when teachers do at least slight changes in SA tasks, it helps to check the students' real knowledge.

Implications of the RC appear to be both the issues of teacher retention and also students' SA memorization, which respectively are consequences of other problems. Teachers require additional training to stop teachers' turnover; whereas student learning could be improved by addressing the internet leak of information and developing the culture of academic honesty at schools.

Obstacles in Implementation

When asked about obstacles teachers faced while implementing the RC, three major categories were drawn from teachers' answers. The first challenge refers to supply and content of new textbooks; the second one relates to recipients of the RC – students' parents, and the last one concerns the process of the RC implementation.

Textbooks. The issue of the late supply with textbooks and organization of textbook content appeared to be the most urgent among teachers. Four out of five participants mentioned that they received some teaching materials by the end of the first term that was the end of October, whereas the full resource pack of teaching materials including teacher's book, student's book, workbook and audio disks was provided only when the first semester was completed. This was indicated in Anfisa's words: "In the fifth grade, it was only six

months later when everything [the full resource pack] came to us, it [textbook delivery] doesn't work in a timely fashion".

Despite late textbooks delivery, teachers were receptive to adapt to those inconveniences. However, the second issue concerning textbook content organization was highlighted by all participants. An example of discrepancy between a textbook and subject program was provided by Sofiya:

> You take the textbook - wonderful, in comparison with what we had, it's wonderful. But here you need to flip through the pages [of the textbook], because according to the course plan, the first topic is page 10, then the following unit according to subject program is page 80… Plus, there is a grammar in the textbook, which is constructed from easy one to more complicated one … and in practice we have backward - from the difficult one to the easiest one and not always this grammar is perceived by students.

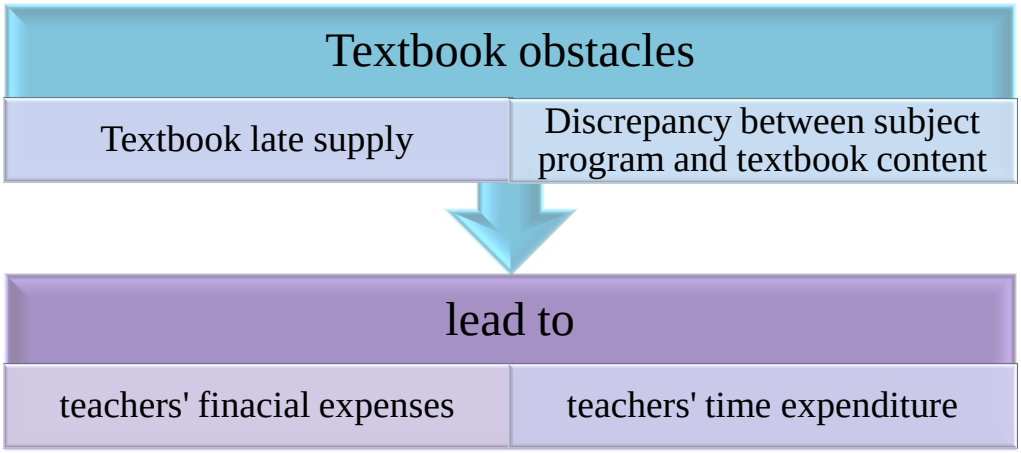


Figure 6. Obstacles Caused by Textbooks and its Consequences

First, it is seen that the organization of textbook content does not follow the content of subject program, which teachers have to adhere to. Second, when teachers had to flip the textbook back and forth, they lose the logical sequence of grammar and lexical material from less to more complicated one. Third, participants stated that some topics are not presented in

the textbook at all. Thus, inconsistency between the textbook and program content caused other problems including increased teachers' workload due to searching appropriate teaching materials and financial expenses, "the teacher has to spend hours on the internet in search of the necessary material for all types of speech activity, which is quite difficult" (Elina). Then teachers had to spend money on preparing materials needed for the lesson: "All printing is done at the teacher's expense, and the teacher's salary is not high, if you count - material costs are high enough. All at our own expense" (Sofiya). On the whole, teachers perceived problematic organization of textbook content as the main obstacle which impeded the educational process and caused teachers' increased workload and financial expenses.

Parental concerns. An unexpected theme emerged during data analysis, which teachers also identified as an obstacle, was parents' negative attitude toward the RC. Interestingly, all participants mentioned the negative position of parents that interfered teacher's work during the RC implementation process. One of the participants reported, "The main obstacle is the thinking of the parents of students, who [parents] are very difficult to convince in the correctness of new teaching approaches and the new curriculum" (Nina).

Parents' negative perception of the RC is expressed in the form of verbal discontent addressed to school teachers and even school administration. Participants explained that parents wanted teachers to change the situation taking into account parents' concerns. However, not all the time parents' worries were simple to address; with the implementation of the RC parents often told teachers their way of thinking about how to teach children basing on the principles of old "traditional" curriculum. Parents' concerns about the educational process, when it was constantly told to teachers, at times made teachers feel annoyed, appeared to discredit their authority, and thereby complicated teachers' work during the RC implementation.

"Unexpected" implementation. Concerning the process of the RC implementation, all participants mentioned that the implementation came too fast, especially in the fifth and seventh grades. If the most part of teachers was trained to implement the RC, students were not mentally and emotionally prepared for the RC. Moreover, students did not possess the basic skills and knowledge in order to build new knowledge on that base. The next example, provided by Anfisa clarified what kind of knowledge students were expected to have:

> Now they [5-grade students] study computer science; their textbooks, their [subject] programs imply that they studied this subject from the third grade [when students did not have computer science before]…That is, it turns out that children should have some reserve of knowledge which they do not have. Due to this, students' academic performance has dropped drastically.

This vivid example indicates that the RC program implemented in 5th grades did not fully account for the prior knowledge of students. The current RC program of 5th grade is intended for future students who will complete all grades studying the RC.

Another participant, Sofiya, commented: "Everything [the RC implementation in 5th and 7th grades] is so fast that people just do not have time to adapt to it." In 2016-2017 the RC was implemented in first grades of mainstream schools, and the following year it was implemented in the second grades and in secondary school – 5th and 7th grades. In such a way, teachers did not use to adapt to changes in primary school, when the RC was introduced in secondary school. Anfisa expressed: "The weakness of the renewed curriculum regarding fifth and seventh grades is that it [the RC] has been "stuck" (*vklinili*) in the middle of the entire learning process… and children were not ready for this." By using the word "stuck" Anfisa emphasized the abrupt transition from old curriculum to the RC. Students of fifth grades studied four years according to old curriculum and seven-grade students had six years respectively. Old curriculum was characterized with teacher-centred approaches,

memorization and traditional five-point grading assessment. With the implementation of the RC in the 2017 academic year, students did not know what to expect from new assessment model that does not have grades, in addition teachers' approaches have changed.

Overall, teachers reported three issues, which according to their opinion impede their work on the RC implementation. The first thing refers to teaching material, which is an essential component of curriculum implementation and frequently discussed in the studies on teachers' curriculum perception. Parental concerns were not expected to be defined as challenge in teachers' curriculum work; and the last difficulty stated by participants was rapidity of the RC implementation.

Teachers' Recommendations

This section presents the generalized teachers' recommendations regarding the RC implementation. Teachers, participating in this study, wished their voices to be heard and their recommendations to be taken into consideration. The following figure summarizes all teachers' ideas:

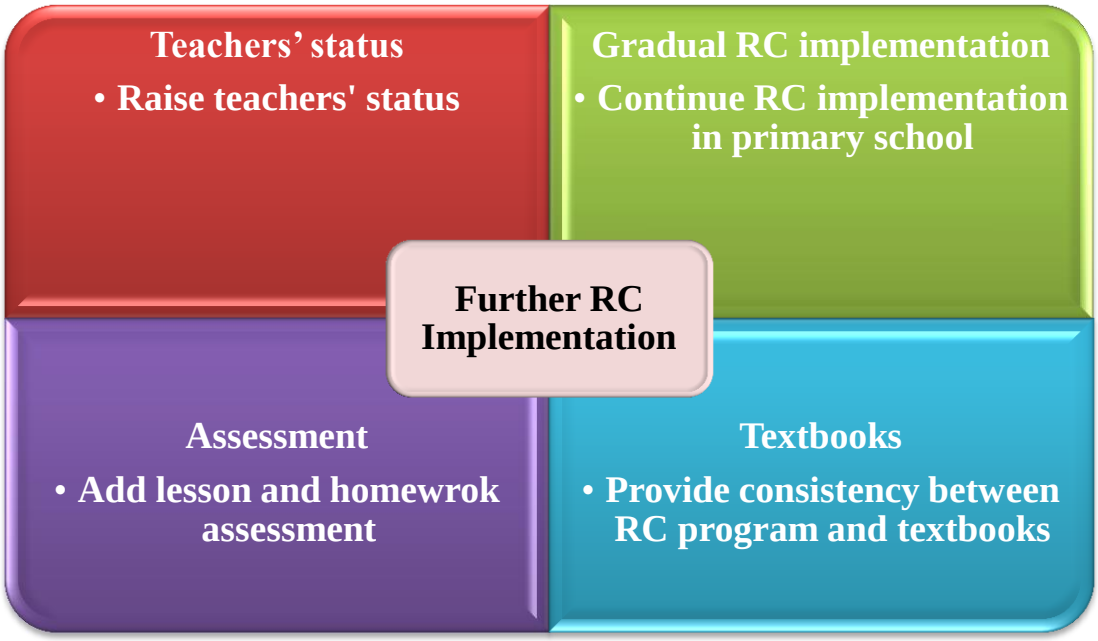


Figure 7. Teachers' Recommendations Concerning Further RC Implementation

First, with the RC implementation the teacher's status should be raised, as teachers are responsible for its implementation. Teachers should be treated respectfully from parents' side. Second, teachers hope that the speed of the RC implementation to be slowed down, because secondary school students are not ready to study the RC: mostly, it concerns the new criteria-based assessment model that caused students' performance drop, and lack of students' previous subject knowledge. According to teachers' opinion, the best way of the RC implementation would be to continue the RC implementation in primary school, allowing students to study all grades in primary school according to the RC. Then, students who completed the RC program in primary school could easily continue studying it in secondary school. Third, teachers felt the need to slightly modernize the new criteria-based assessment model. Their suggestion is to add lesson and homework assessment; because students, realizing that their lesson participation and homework are not assessed, stopped preparing for lessons. Finally, teachers would like to have the teaching resource including teacher's book and student's book, which fully corresponds to subject program. It would greatly simplify teachers' RC implementation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present findings drawn from interview and document analysis. The findings were organized into six thematic categories; the most important findings, teachers' perceived changes in the RC, are presented in the middle of the Figure 8, as they represent teachers' understanding of the new curriculum. Other findings were considered as components that formed teachers' RC perception, these are methodological support, role of professional development courses, the RC implications, obstacles and teachers' recommendations concerning further RC implementation. The expected findings referred to obstacles mentioned by teachers that correspond to challenges in the reviewed literature of the international studies.

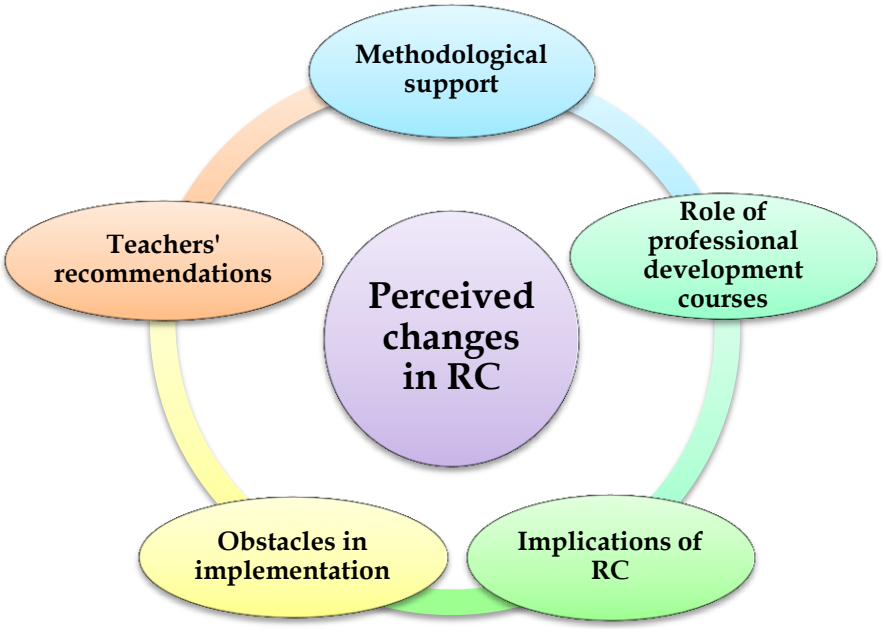


Figure 8. Six Categories of Thematic Findings

Among unexpected findings, the first one appeared to be teachers' identical perception of the intended curriculum with their implemented curriculum, which was opposite to the findings of the reviewed inquiries. Other unexpected findings that were not anticipated and met in the literature included external school visits by course trainers, online community support and parental concerns. The next chapter will interpret the findings in relation to the reviewed literature.

Chapter V: Discussion

In the previous chapter, I described the process of interview and document analysis, and presented the main findings drawn from participants' interviews, which were compared with information found in their teaching documents. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the main findings in relation to the reviewed literature. Mainly, the discussion is laid out in accordance with the organization of literature review chapter. In the first section, I consider teachers' overall perception toward the renewed curriculum (RC); the second section argues the role of internal factors regarding teachers' age and experience on teachers' RC perception. The third section presents discussion on the impact of external factors, including professional trainings, teaching resources, and administration support on teachers' perception, and the last section summarizes the whole chapter.

Teachers' Perception to the Renewed Curriculum

The research findings were interpreted through the conceptual framework, Van den Akker's typology of curriculum and Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) that guided this study. According to Van den Akker's typology the purpose was to find out if the intended curriculum reflected in teaching documents coincides with teachers' implemented curriculum. Meanwhile, CBAM allowed to determine teachers' stage of concern on the moment of data collection (See "Stages of Concern" in conceptual framework section). It was important to define teachers' stage of concern, as it allows to find the proper way of support in teachers' further curriculum implementation (Hord et al., 2006, p. 43).

The first interview questions were designed to understand how teachers perceived the goal of the RC and its distinguishing features. The findings showed that teachers positively perceived the aim and the four distinguishing features of the RC and could easily explain them in their own words. Moreover, teachers' perception of the RC goal and main principles coincides with the intended curriculum reflected in documents. According to Sulaiman et al.

(2017) teachers' understanding and favor of a new curriculum serve a good base for its further implementation. Also, teachers liked the change to active teaching approaches and frequently applied communicative approach, differentiation and interactive teaching at their lessons. This fact goes in line with Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2017) finding who reported that teachers' frequent application of new teaching approaches and activities correlates to their strong endorsement of the new curriculum (p. 573).

However, curriculum is multifaceted concept (Glatthorn et al., 2006; Kelly, 2009; Marsh, 2009); curriculum also implies the effect it has on teachers and students. In this case, the RC implementation caused participants' increased time spent on lesson preparation and teachers' worries about students' performance drop due to the new criteria-based assessment. Within CBAM, teachers' increased lesson preparation time refers to management concerns, when participants were not well acknowledged with the new form of a lesson plan and lacked the necessary learning material in the textbook. In order to cope with teachers' management concerns, Hord et al. (2006) recommend to "provide answers that address the small specific "how-to" issues", clarifying the details and giving more practical suggestions (p. 45). Teachers' worries regarding students' performance relate to consequence concerns; in other words, participants moved to the next stage of concerns, when they were troubled with the result of the RC implementation and its effect on students. Considering the previous mentioned aspect, teachers expressed ambivalent attitude toward assessment and impact the RC has on students and teachers. On the one hand, the new criteria-based assessment provides transparency in assessment, and due to new active teaching approaches students become open and eager to share thoughts at the lesson; however, on the other hand, because of the new assessment, which does not have anymore "lesson marks", only result of SAU and SAT, students' performance dropped. Thus, it follows that students' drop of performance was caused by their unpreparedness to a new way of assessment and lack of previous subject

knowledge. It can be assumed, that adoption to new assessment was not foreseen to cause challenges in students' performance (attained curriculum).

Overall, this section considered teachers' perception of the RC in relation to the conceptual framework consisted of Van den Akker's typology and CBAM. While reviewing the literature, it was assumed that Kazakhstani mainstream teachers could have discrepancy between the intended and implemented curriculum as it was revealed in the similar studies held in other countries (Kruger et al., 2013; Mligo, 2016; Wang, 2011). However, the research showed the opposite findings: teachers of one mainstream school in Kazakhstan perceive and implement the RC in the same way. Thus, the intended curriculum presented in curriculum documents is unchangeably implemented by Kazakhstani secondary school teachers; this finding deviates with general trend when teachers rather interpret a curriculum than unchangeably follow it (Van den Akker, 2013, p. 44). The explanation of such teachers' practice might be constant teachers' control by external trainers, who observe teachers' lessons - the implemented curriculum, and provide them with feedback. Though, teachers implement the RC alike; their RC concerns, which "are influenced by participants' feelings about innovation, by their perception of their ability to use it", vary regarding different components of curriculum (Hord et al., 2006, p. 43).

Teachers' Perception in Relation to Internal Factors

Internal factors, regarding teachers' age and experience, are questioned by researchers to have an impact on teachers' more or less positive perception of curriculum (Anghelache & Bentea, 2012b; Kin & Kareem, 2016; Yildirim & Kasapoglu, 2015). The findings of this inquiry did not show a direct relation between teachers' experience and attitude contradicting to assumptions of Anghelache and Bentea (2012b) and Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2015). For instance, one of the participants assured that her extended teaching experience helped her to cope with challenges related to the RC introduction, whereas her younger colleagues

experienced difficulties. However, another participant provided an example that a teacher from another department planned to leave school, as she did not feel that her previous experience and resources could be beneficial to teach the RC. Thus, it is seen that findings of this study resonate with Kin and Kareem's (2016) research that did not show any significant correlation between age, experience and attitudes. In addition, this finding revealed the issue of teacher retention: participants in their answers reported cases when both novice and experienced teachers, facing challenges of the RC implementation, wished to leave a school.

Teachers' Perception in Relation to External Factors

The first external factor that undoubtedly affects teachers' curriculum perception and implementation is the efficiency of professional trainings (Flores, 2005; Mligo, 2016; Wang, 2011). The five participants of this research got varied amount of professional trainings; the findings showed that the more extended and specific trainings teachers acquired, the easier RC implementation they had. All teachers agreed on the need of professional trainings which are practical-oriented that aligns with Mligo's (2016) finding to provide teachers with professional trainings and time to adopt the changes.

Another external factor concerns teaching resources, which caused an ambivalent attitude amongst teachers. Teaching documents that include subject program, course plans and assessment guidelines accessible on a special learning platform simplified teachers' work on the RC implementation, whereas late supply with textbooks and discrepancy between textbook content and subject program complicated teachers' work. Similar obstacles related to a poor supply of teaching resources were evidenced in Yildirim and Kasapoglu (2015), and Flores (2005). For instance, my findings showed that teachers had to prepare and print learning resources for their students at the beginning of the academic year due to textbook late supply or when a textbook did not contain the topics presented in subject program. In Mligo's (2016) study teachers tried to solve the lack of teaching-learning materials by

financial support of students' parents (p. 362); in case of this study, financial expenses were covered by teachers themselves.

The third external factor that plays a great role on teachers' positive perception is school climate created by a school principal (Kassim & Abdullah, 2011). In this study, participants were asked about administration involvement and support in teachers' RC implementation. Participants stated that they got support only from certain members of school administration, while other members of administration were not concerned. The research of Baglibel et al. (2014) revealed that teachers perceive the change more positive when it is well activated at the school level. Also, teachers were asked about department collaboration at school; the study findings resonate with Flores' (2005) research. Teachers positively perceived the teacher collaboration when it was possible; however, teachers' workload and lack of time impeded effective collaboration. An unexpected finding of teachers' additional support was online teacher community that was not reviewed in the literature; it is assumed that online teacher community is a novelty of the recent years, when mobile applications are frequently used.

Among other external factors that teachers perceived as obstacles to successful RC implementation were parental concerns and rapidity of the RC implementation. In regard to parental concerns, it was not expected to find out that teachers experienced parental negative attitude to the RC. What concerns rapid nature of the RC implementation in secondary school, teachers' suggestion was to finish gradual implementation of the RC in primary school and only then, implement it in secondary school.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the main findings, revealing mainstream secondary school teachers' perception toward the renewed curriculum (RC) implementation in fifth and seventh grades through the conceptual framework of Van den Akker's typology and

Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). This study showed consistency with other researchers' findings considering: (1) relation between teachers' positive curriculum perception and frequent use of new teaching approaches, (2) variety of teachers' stages of concern, (3) impact of age and experience on teachers' perception, (4) effect of external factors regarding professional trainings, teaching resources and school culture. However, unexpected findings from this study appeared to be an influence of parental concerns and online teacher community on teachers' perception of the RC implementation. In the next chapter I will summarize all the research, present recommendations and implications for further study.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the current study on the perception of the renewed curriculum (RC) by mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grades. The chapter is organized into three sections: the first section presents the summary of the complete research. The second section provides recommendations for interested stakeholders, while the last section explains implications for further study.

Summary of the Study

Currently, the Kazakhstani educational system experiences the school reform: transition from the old curriculum to the renewed one. This academic year 2017-2018, the RC was implemented in fifth and seventh grades of secondary school in all mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Teachers are considered to be the main agents of curriculum change as they teach the RC to secondary school students. Scholars in the curriculum field highlighted the importance of teachers' curriculum endorsement for its successful implementation. Considering the above, the purpose of this research was to investigate the perception of the renewed curriculum by mainstream school teachers in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grades. The main research question that guided this study was: How is the renewed curriculum perceived by mainstream school teachers working in fifth and seventh grades?

A single descriptive qualitative case study research design was applied to answer the main research question. The five participants for this study were recruited by means of purposeful sampling on a voluntary basis. The data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants and document analysis of teaching documents. The interview data analysis included several steps: audio transcribing, organizing interview transcripts, attributing codes in MAXQDA program, and categorizing codes into themes.

Document analysis was done after completion of interview analysis; document analysis helped to consider participants statements in relation to the main teaching documents.

The main findings of this research were organized into six themes: (1) perceived changes in the RC, (2) methodological support, (3) role of professional development courses, (4) implications of the RC, (5) obstacles in implementation, and (6) teachers' recommendations. The research findings were compared with findings of previous studies on teachers' perception of curriculum change. The study showed some expected findings that were anticipated from literature review and revealed unexpected ones.

Overall, this study uncovered teachers' clear understanding and endorsement of the RC's goal, its distinguishing features and recommended active teaching approaches. Teachers shared management concerns regarding lesson preparation caused by the new requirements of the lesson plan and missing topics in the RC textbooks. The new criteria-based assessment model was ambivalently perceived by teachers: they positively outlined the transparency of the new assessment, while stayed concerned about students' lowered motivation and unpreparedness for lessons. The most support in the RC implementation teachers received from teaching documents designed for work with the RC that included a subject program, a course plan, and assessment guidelines. At the school level, teachers were provided with methodological aid from certain members of administration. When it was possible teachers co-planned with their colleagues, though teachers' workload and time constraints complicated school teachers' collaboration.

There were two unexpected findings drawn from data analysis: the first one was teachers' online community created in phone application that appeared to be an additional source of help for teachers' RC implementation. The second unexpected finding that supervised teachers' RC implementation was a school visiting by professional course trainers,

who observed teachers' lessons. Concerning trainers' post-lesson feedback, teachers shared a desire to be provided with more practical-oriented recommendations.

The expected finding that greatly influenced teachers' the RC implementation and perception was professional trainings teachers received. As stated by teachers, the extended and practical-oriented trainings seemed to be the most beneficial for their further RC implementation. Also, teachers outlined the current implications taking place within the RC introduction; these are an issue of teacher retention and students' rote memorization of summative works.

The obstacles teachers named while implementing the RC relate to their recommendations, which they gave at the end of the interviews concerning further RC introduction. The perceived obstacles were textbook organization, parental concerns and the rapid nature of the RC implementation. Basing on teachers' views, the three obstacles could be overcome by providing textbooks that correspond to the RC subject program, raising teachers' status in society, gradual transition to the RC from primary school completing all the grades, and making adjustment into the new assessment taking into account assessment of homework and classwork.

Using the joint conceptual framework from Van den Akker's typology (2013) and Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall et al., 1973), it can be concluded that teachers' perception of the RC corresponds with the intended curriculum presented in the RC documents. Teachers' implemented curriculum identically perceived with intended curriculum assures the better realization of the RC goal. In addition, applying CBAM in analyzing participants' interviews uncovered that teachers did not have the first three levels of concerns, which are "unconcerned, informational and personal"(Hord et al., 2006, p.31). It shows that teachers had a good level of the RC comprehension, that is why they did not share the first three levels of concerns that refer to lack of innovation understanding.

The stages of concerns that teachers shared were: 'management'- concern how to do, 'consequence' – concern about the effect of the RC on students, 'collaboration' – concern about comparing personal RC experience with other colleagues, and even the highest stage – 'refocusing' that implies teachers' recommendations concerning better RC implementation. All these findings align with the efficiency of the RC professional trainings on teachers' perception of curriculum proving that teachers possess sufficient amount of knowledge to implement the RC.

Ultimately, while there are alignments with the reviewed literature on the effect of professional courses and obstacles faced by teachers in the RC implementation; there were also findings that deviated with the general trend in studied inquiries. For instance, the most evident one appeared to be Kazakhstani teachers' identical perception of the implemented and intended renewed curriculum.

Recommendations

This section presents recommendations to address the obstacles perceived by mainstream secondary teachers during the RC implementation. The following recommendations incorporated teachers' voices, the researcher's opinion and the reviewed literature; recommendations are applied for policy-makers, school administration and professional course trainers.

The obstacles reported by participants were textbook content organization, parental concerns, rapidity of the RC implementation in secondary school and students' lowered motivation due to the new 'non-grading' assessment (see Figure 9). Thus, it is first recommended to have a better textbook reviewing for eliciting the discrepancy between the topics presented in subject program and textbook. Moreover, the amount of a certain topic material for each unit in the textbook should be sufficient in accordance with allocated academic hours of a course plan. To address the issue of parental concerns, it is needed to

provide Kazakhstani society with the positive RC awareness by means of mass media. It would be beneficial to explain the aim and rationale of transition to the RC in accessible language and show videos of observational lesson where teachers apply active teaching methods and criteria-based assessment. Concerning the new criteria-based assessment, it is recommended to add a criterion for assessing students' homework completion and class work to the final term mark in order to motivate students for learning and active participation in the lesson.

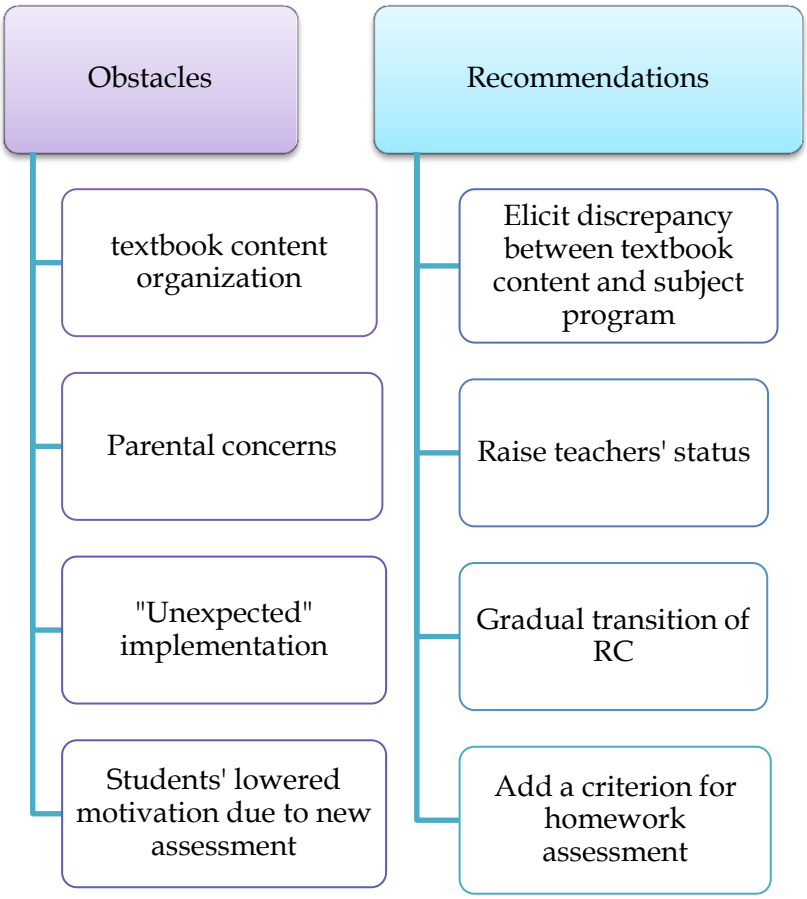


Figure 9. Teachers' Recommendations to the RC Obstacles

All participants were concerned with the rapid nature of the renewed curriculum implementation in secondary school. Students who used to study old curriculum with traditional assessment appeared to be unprepared for the new criteria-based assessment and lacked some subject knowledge due to discrepancy in subject material between the old and

the renewed curriculum. In this regard, participants suggested to implement the RC in secondary school when students complete all grades of primary school studying it. The following table presents the gradual implementation of the RC from primary school (Grades 1-4) to secondary school (Grade 5).

Table 8. *Teachers' Vision of the Gradual RC Implementation*

Years	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
2016-2017	+	-	-	-	-
2017-2018	+	+	-	-	-
2018-2019	+	+	+	-	-
2019-2020	+	+	+	+	-
2020-2021	+	+	+	+	+

* plus (+) colored green indicates the RC implementation, and dash (-) colored blue indicates the old curriculum

Teachers argued in favor of slow and gradual transition of the RC, as it provides the consistent approach of the RC implementation. Students will start studying the RC from the first grade and their new knowledge will be built on the previous knowledge of the RC content, avoiding gaps between the old and renewed curriculum.

Implications for Further Study

This study was focused on examining the perception of the RC by secondary school teachers of one mainstream school in Central Kazakhstan who work in fifth and seventh grades by applying a single qualitative case study research design. While the research findings uncovered teachers' RC perceptions at one urban mainstream school, future studies can be conducted using a multiple case study research design to compare teachers' RC perception from rural and urban schools to better understand if there is any difference in teachers' perceptions and concerns. Moreover, this study revealed the teachers' RC perception analyzed through CBAM conceptual framework and showed the stage of concern

teachers experienced after two semesters of implementation. As concerns and perceptions can change over time it would be useful to investigate how teachers' perceive the RC as implementation continues in future and examine what stages of concerns they have.

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Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on perceptions of the renewed curriculum by fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers. You will be asked to participate in focus group and one-on-one semi-structured interviews and provide your lesson plans for document analysis.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 60minutes for one-on-one interview and 80 minutes for focus group interview.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are minimized by taking precautious actions before the start of the research. One of possible risks is stress you may feel while answering the interview questions. In this case, focus group interview is designed to be conducted first, as it facilitates the creation of a friendly and trusting atmosphere and reduction of stress. Moreover, you are free not to answer to any questions, which you feel uncomfortable of or withdraw from participation at any moment. To minimize the risk of your overload caused by extra time spent on interviews, the focus group interview and one-on-one interviews will be scheduled taking into consideration the most convenient time and place for participants. The last minor risk is that you might feel pressure by your school administration staff to participate in this study. In these terms you are free to reject or withdraw from the participation at any time and that administrators will not know whether you have or have not participated.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are to reflect on the implementation of the renewed curriculum and to share thoughts and attitudes on the renewed curriculum, which can be taken into consideration by policy-makers in order to improve curriculum efficacy. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your employment.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, *Anna CohenMiller,anna.cohenmiller@nu.edu.kz.*

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

Please sign this consent from 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.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol (for semi-structured interview)

Title: Fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers' perceptions of the renewed curriculum: a qualitative single case study in Central Kazakhstan

Date: **Place:** **Time:**

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[After introducing yourself, thank the participant for agreement to be interviewed, tell the participant about (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the measures assuring the confidentiality of the interviewee (the name of the participant and other people mentioned in his\her answers will not be revealed), and (c) the approximate time for the interview.]

[Ask the interviewee to read carefully and sign the consent form.]
[Ask the interviewee's permission to use the tape recorder.]
[Test a tape recorder.]

Questions:

1. What are the goals of the renewed curriculum in secondary school?

1.1What are the main distinguishing features of the renewed curriculum?

1.2Howdoesthecontentoftherenewedcurriculumdifferfromtheoldone? Could you give any examples?

2. How do the main documents (Subject Programme, Course Plans, Assessment guidelines and etc.) support you in teaching by the renewed curriculum?

3. What do you consider some strong and weak points of the renewed curriculum? Could you give any examples?

4. What do you think are the key changes in teachers' practices according to the renewed curriculum? Could you give any examples?

5. How much would you say your approach to teaching and learning has changed recently?

5.1What, if any, are the new approaches to teaching and learning that you are using? Why are you using these? Could you give any examples?

6. What kind of support did you get in order to implement the renewed curriculum? Who\ what provides this support?

6.1Do you get support from the school administration and colleagues in implementing the renewed curriculum? Could you give any examples?

6.2What kind of methodological support are you provided with?

7. How did your personal background affect the work on implementing the renewed curriculum?

8. What barriers do you experience in implementing the renewed curriculum? Why?

9. What will you suggest in regarding the implementation of the renewed curriculum?

10. Is there anything else you would want me to know about your experience in implementing the renewed curriculum?

[Thank participants for answering the questions in the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of received information. Acknowledge them about the possibility to do a member check.]

Creswell, 2014

Appendix C

Documents Analysis Protocol

Project: Fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers' perceptions of the renewed curriculum: a qualitative single case study in Central Kazakhstan

Name or Type of Document: _____

Date Received: _____

Date of Document: _____

Significance or Purpose of Document:

_____

_____

Keywords/ Concepts	Comments: Relationship to Research Questions

Additional Comments/ Reflections/ Issues:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D

Email letter for participants' recruitment

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you about the opportunity to participate in the research, conducted by Ulyana Ixanova, a master degree student of Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University. She is planning to conduct a research titled "Fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers' perceptions of the renewed curriculum: a qualitative single case study in Central Kazakhstan". Within the frame of this research, she needs to recruit 5 teachers working in fifth and seventh grade who are currently implementing the renewed curriculum by teaching Russian, Kazakh or English.

The research will start in January 3 and end January 20. The purpose of this research study is to understand the perceptions of the renewed curriculum by fifth and seventh grade mainstream school teachers. Your participation is voluntary, if you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview (approximately 80 minutes) with 4 other teachers followed by one-on-one interview (approximately 60 minutes). You will be asked open-ended questions about aims, content and assessment within the renewed curriculum.

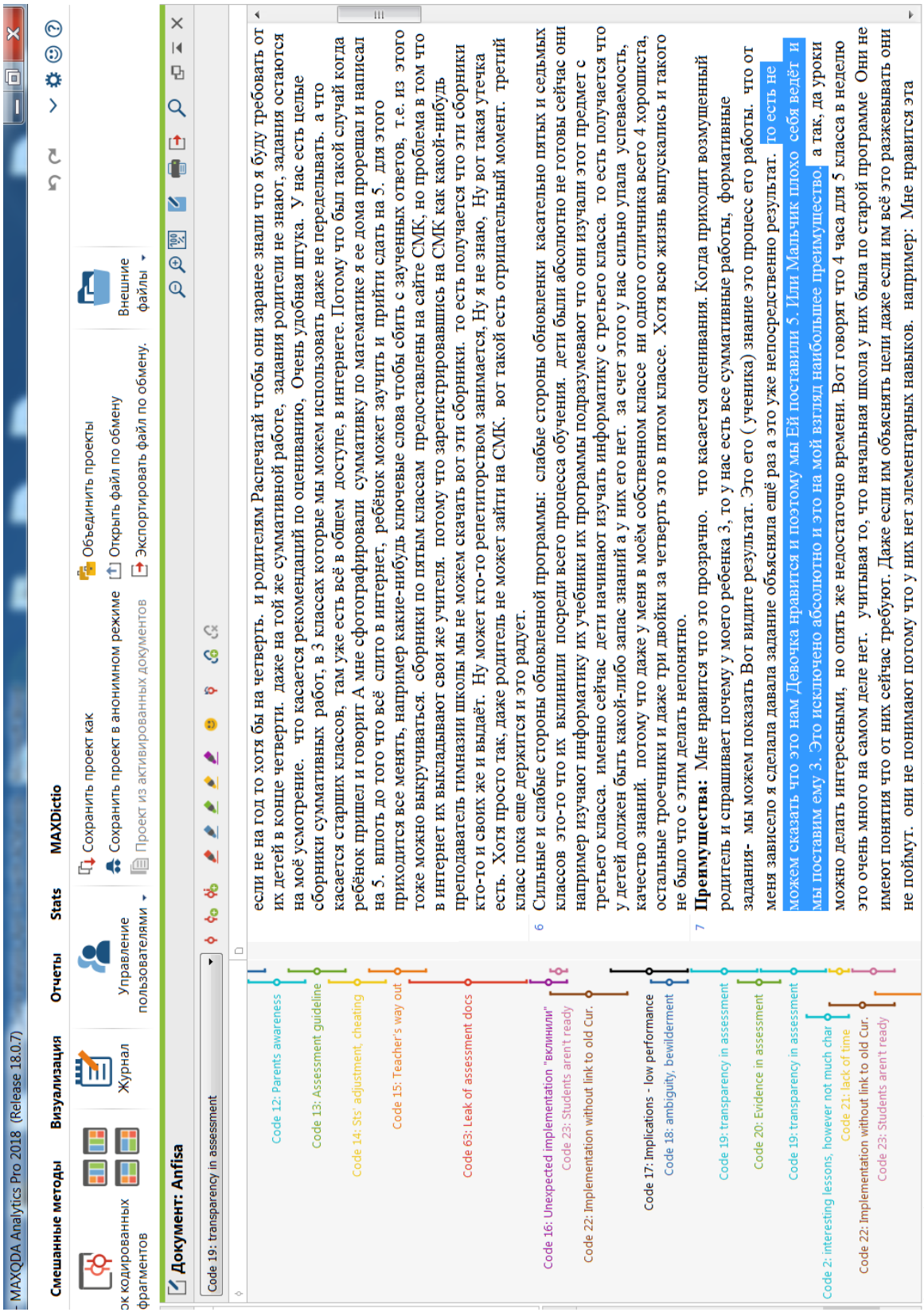
The researcher will provide full confidentiality; your participation will not affect your work.

If you have any questions about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact UlyanaIxanovaulyana.ixanova@nu.edu.kz ; +7 700 965 20 43

Best regards,

Ulyana Ixanova

Appendix E


MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2018 (Release 18.0.7)
Смешанные методы
Визуализация
Отчеты
Stats
MAXDictio
Журнал
Управление пользователями
Сохранить проект как
Сохранить проект в анонимном режиме
Проект из активированных документов
Объединить проекты
Открыть файл по обмену
Экспортировать файл по обмену.
Внешние файлы
Документ: Anfisa
Code 19: transparency in assessment
Code 12: Parents awareness
Code 13: Assessment guideline
Code 14: Sts' adjustment, cheating
Code 15: Teacher's way out
Code 63: Leak of assessment docs
Code 16: Unexpected implementation "включили"
Code 23: Students aren't ready
Code 22: Implementation without link to old Cur.
Code 17: Implications - low performance
Code 18: ambiguity, bewilderment
Code 19: transparency in assessment
Code 20: Evidence in assessment
Code 19: transparency in assessment
Code 2: interesting lessons, however not much char
Code 21: lack of time
Code 22: Implementation without link to old Cur.
Code 23: Students aren't ready
если не на год то хотя бы на четверть. и родителям Распечатай чтобы они заранее знали что я буду требовать от их детей в конце четверти. даже на той же суммативной работе, задания родители не знают, задания остаются на моё усмотрение. что касается рекомендаций по оцениванию, Очень удобная штука. У нас есть целые сборники суммативных работ, в 3 классах которые мы можем использовать даже не переделывать. а что касается старших классов, там уже есть всё в общем доступе, в интернете. Потому что был такой случай когда ребёнок пришел и говорит А мне сфотографировали суммативку по математике я ее дома прорешал и написал на 5. вплоть до того что всё слито в интернет, ребёнок может заучить и прийти сдать на 5. для этого приходится все менять, например какие-нибудь ключевые слова чтобы сбить с заученных ответов, т.е. из этого тоже можно выкручиваться. сборники по пятым классам предоставлены на сайте СМК, но проблема в том что в интернет их выкладывают свои же учителя. потому что зарегистрировавшись на СМК как какой-нибудь преподаватель гимназии школы мы не можем скачать вот эти сборники. то есть получается что эти сборники кто-то и своих же и выдаёт. Ну может кто-то репетиторством занимается, Ну я не знаю, Ну вот такая утечка есть. Хотя просто так, даже родитель не может зайти на СМК. вот такой есть отрицательный момент. третий класс пока еще держится и это радует.
Сильные и слабые стороны обновленной программы: слабые стороны обновленки касательно пятых и седьмых классов это-то что их вклинили посреди всего процесса обучения. дети были абсолютно не готовы сейчас они например изучают информатику их учебники их программы подразумевают что они изучали этот предмет с третьего класса. именно сейчас дети начинают изучать информатику с третьего класса. то есть получается что у детей должен быть какой-либо запас знаний а у них его нет. за счет этого у нас сильно упала успеваемость, качество знаний. потому что даже у меня в моём собственном классе ни одного отличника всего 4 хорошиста, остальные троечники и даже три двойки за четверть это в пятом классе. Хотя всю жизнь выпускались и такого не было что с этим делать непонятно.
Преимущества: Мне нравится что это прозрачно. что касается оценивания. Когда приходит возмущенный родитель и спрашивает почему у моего ребенка 3, то у нас есть все суммативные работы, формативные задания- мы можем показать Вот видите результат. Это его (ученика) знание это процесс его работы. что от меня зависело я сделала давала задание объяснила ещё раз а это уже непосредственно результат. то есть не можем сказать что это нам Девочка нравится и поэтому мы Ей поставили 5. Или Мальчик плохо себя ведёт и мы поставим ему 3. Это исключено абсолютно и это на мой взгляд наибольшее преимущество. а так, да уроки можно делать интересными, но опять же недостаточно времени. Вот говорят что 4 часа для 5 класса в неделю это очень много на самом деле нет. учитывая то, что начальная школа у них была по старой программе Они не имеют понятия что от них сейчас требуют. Даже если им объяснять цели даже если им всё это разжевывать они не поймут. они не понимают потому что у них нет элементарных навыков. например: Мне нравится эта