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Constructing Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment

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Abstract

This study explores the connection between the role of assessment and teachers' subjectification of assessment in relation to supporting teaching and learning processes. It refers to the teacher's thought processes in developing subjective theories of assessment with regard to the purpose of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

Teachers' subjective theories about the purpose of assessment are relevant with regard to how assessment is planned and implemented in classroom settings. Using a range of data sources, this qualitative interpretive study examined how 10 English as a Foreign Language teachers in the Czech lower secondary schools developed their subjective theories of assessment and how these subjective theories influenced their assessment practices within the classroom.

Findings showed that teachers construction of subjective theories were influenced by few contextual factors; however, teachers' understanding and subjectification of the purpose of assessment revolved around five distinct assessment themes with the lower secondary teachers: a) assessment for teacher and student accountability, b) assessment for certification, c) assessment for improving teaching and learning, d) assessment for managing behaviour, and, e) assessment for motivation purpose with assessment for certification being the most dominant theme. The 3 C's (consultation, cooperation and collaboration) or collaborative learning among the teachers, were essential factors that aided the teachers' construct of subjective theories of assessment with regard to the role of assessment for transforming teaching, and for bettering learning. On the other hand, policy provisions, workload and ineffective professional development were factors that thwarted assessment construction. Additionally, incidences like peer observation, feedback and self-reflection were critical support systems in streamlining and transforming teachers' subjective theories of assessment practices with the setting of the 3 C's.

Furthermore, the results revealed how teachers confront conflicting situations with regard to the purpose of assessment under the influence of policy, practice and their own beliefs.

This study recommends consistent deliberation of learning within the vicinity of the 3 C's among teachers to support effective development of teachers' subjective theories of assessment. Furthermore, a more in-depth refinement of the teachers' understanding and subjectification of the role of assessment in teaching and learning is needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ..... **I**

List of Figures ..... **V**

List of Tables ..... **V**

List of Abbreviations ..... **VI**

Chapter 1: Introduction **1**
1.1 Introduction **1**
1.2 Practical background **4**
1.2.1 Statement of the problem 4
1.2.2 The idea of classroom assessment 5
1.2.3 Research Questions and Theoretical position 7
1.2.4 Significance of the study 8
1.4 Organization of the dissertation **9**

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework **11**
2.1 Introduction **11**
2.2 Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment **11**
2.3 Assessment **16**
2.3.1 Questioning 17
2.3.2 Feedback 20
2.3.3 Self-Assessment 23
2.3.4 Peer Assessment 25
2.3.5 Formative use of Summative tests 28
2.4 Constructive Alignment **30**
2.5 Conclusion **36**

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methods **38**
3.1 Introduction **38**
3.2 Research Paradigm and Interpretive qualitative research approach **38**
3.3 Constructivist and Interpretative research approach **42**
3.4 Research Setting and Sampling **44**
3.5 Data Collection **46**
3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews with teachers 47
3.5.2 Classroom Observation 51
3.5.3 Researcher's Diary 53
3.5.4 Document Analysis 55
3.6 Data analysis procedures **58**
3.7 Quality of Research **60**
3.7.1 Credibility 61
3.7.1.1 Consensus 61
3.7.1.2 Triangulation 62
3.7. 2 Research Ethics 63
3.9 Chapter Summary **65**

Chapter 4: Findings **66**
4.1 Introduction **66**
4.2 Assessment types in relation to assessment themes **66**
4.2.1 Assessment for teacher and student accountability 68
4.2.2 Assessment for certification 74

4.2.3 Assessment for improving Teaching and learning 78
4.2.4. Assessment for motivation purposes 88
4.2.5. Assessment for managing behaviour 93
4.3 Teacher learning about assessment **96**
4.3.2 Consultation 99
4.3.3 Collaboration 100
4.4.4 Policy 103
4.4.5 Workload 104
4.4.6 Professional development 104
4.4 Teachers' subjective theory of assessment **106**
4.4.1 Balancing 111
4.4.2 Blending 112
4.4.3 Diversity 113
4.4.4 Choices 113
4.4.5 Student involvement 114
4.5 Conclusion **117**

Chapter 5: Discussion of the empirical findings **119**
5.1 Introduction **119**
5.1.1 Interpretations 119
5.2 Discussion on assessment types in relation to the themes **119**
5.2.1 Interpretation 119
5.3.1 Interpretation 131
5.4 Discussion teacher subjective theory of assessment **138**
5.5 Conclusion **142**

Chapter 6: Conclusion **146**
6.1 Introduction **146**
6.2 Summary of the results **147**
6.3 Significance of the study **148**
6.4 Implication for Teaching and Research **150**
6.4.1 Implication for the teachers 150
6.4.2 Implication for Research 150
6. 5 Limitation, Future studies and Recommendations **152**
References **154**
Acknowledgement **174**

Appendixes **175**
Appendix 1: Publications **175**
Appendix 2: Paper Presentations **175**
Appendix 3: Writing Rubric and Checklists **176**

List of Figures

***Figure 1**. Illustrates the overview of the plan for the research study 41*
***Figure 2**. Overview of research plan 47*
***Figure 3**. Evidence of student portfolio 73*
***Figure 4.** A sample of the researcher's note 80*
***Figure 5**. An example of teacher's written feedback on a student's essay writing 82*
***Figure 6.** The researcher's note showing sample questions 84*
***Figure 8.** A sample displaying a student's project work 90*
***Figure 9.** Interventions to resolve teacher's assessment conflict 111*

List of Tables

***Table 1.** Participants' Information 44*
***Table 2.** The Czech lower secondary teachers appropriation of assessment types in relation to the assessment themes 67*
***Table 3.** Writing Rubric and Checklists 176*

List of Abbreviations

AoL	Assessment of Learning
AfL	Assessment for Learning
CA	Constructive Alignment
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CoA	Conceptions of Assessment
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EDiTE	European Doctorate in Teacher Education
FA	Formative Assessment
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SA	Summative Assessment
STs	Subjective Theories

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Dedication

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The present thesis is a study of teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and their encounters with assessment: how teachers perceive the impact of assessment on learning and how they plan and practice assessment in order to support teaching and learning.

The theoretical assumption is that assessment should contribute to assessing learning instead of testing students' understanding. Assessment as planned and practiced by the teachers will play a critical role in such an undertaking. Therefore, it is essential to understand how the combination of planning, practice and integration of teaching, learning and assessment affects life in the classroom.

This study aims to examine teachers' construction of subjective theories of assessment within the context of EFL. However, the main focus of the study is on teachers' subjective theories regarding planning and practice of assessment rather than the actual subject matter (EFL). The reason for studying EFL in particular is because English as a subject is a recent introduction in Czech Education and understanding how EFL teachers plan and implement assessment tasks to develop students' language skills is crucial in understanding how effectively these assessment tasks support and enhanced learning. Furthermore, globally, English is seen as a subject that connects different cultures and ethnicities. A subject of global importance must have an assessment scheme that is unique to its own needs.

With regard to teachers' subjective theory regarding assessment, teachers are firstly crucial in the lives of students and as part of the students' lives, they have to make constant judgement and decisions about appropriate pedagogy, curriculum, organization of classroom activities, including assessment and so on. This is because students not only learn from what they say, but also from what they do. Moreover, it is said that assessment is the critical lifeline

of teaching and learning as it helps to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes.

Secondly, the development of the curriculum and its intentions are guided by the views of its developers and policy makers. However, when it comes to implementation and decision making, teachers play a central role. Realising the goals of the curriculum rest in the hands of the teachers. Therefore, teachers need to make constant judgements and decisions as to how they are going to organize teaching and learning to achieve the intentions of the curriculum. Since assessment has been claimed as the critical lifeline of teaching and learning, it is imperative to learn about teachers approach to assessment in pursuing the goals of curriculum. Owing to above reasons, teachers' construct of subjective theories around the subject need to be understood in order to understand their thought processes and decision-making mechanisms that guide their classroom actions. Furthermore, as assessment is essential part of teaching and learning, it is very important to explore how teachers subjectify assessment in teaching and learning. Hence, the study of teachers' subjective theories was found to be significant as teachers' construction of subjective theories around the phenomenon will guide the process of their classroom planning and implementation of assessment. Therefore, understanding teachers' subjective theories is crucial to understanding how teachers approach assessment practices within the lower secondary classrooms.

Considering the above views, this study of teacher subjectivity is deemed important in understanding the roles of teachers in assessment planning and practices with regard to supporting student learning. Additionally, several studies have indicated the significance of teacher subjectivity as an effective way to approach educational issues, including instruction and assessment (Barnes, Fives, & Dacey, 2015; Brown, 2008; Brown & Remesal, 2017; Diaz, Martinez, Roa, and Sanhueza, 2010; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Remesal, 2011), therefore, this study deems that examining teachers' subjective theories will be useful in understanding and

explaining assessment related issues as past research has brought to the forefront concerns associated with classroom assessment practices. For example, studies reported a misalignment between methods and in the intended use of varied assessment approaches or purposes (Volante & Fazio, 2007; Santiago, Gilmore, Nusche, & Sammons, 2012; Strakova & Simonová, 2013) or between instructional goals and assessment (Campbell & Evans, 2000; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013) or in the capacity of teachers to implement rigorous programs of assessment for and as learning in their classrooms. Currently, researchers report the prevalence of ineffective assessment practices in many classrooms (Hattie, 2009; Hill, 2011; Strakova & Simonová, 2013).

This concerns directly relates to teacher's daily classroom assessment practices and points out many issues related to classroom assessment. As a result, this led me to develop my major research questions that would help me address these concerns: What thought processes occur when teachers plan and implement their assessment practices to support learning within an assessment challenged environment?

While a large body of research has already examined teachers' conceptions of the purpose of assessment and the complexity of constructs, specifically assessment constructs, and the resulting effects upon educational methodologies (Brown & Hirschfield, 2007; Barnes et al., 2015; Brown & Hattie, 2009; Brown & Remesal, 2017; Brown, Hui, Flora, & Kennedy, 2011; Harris, Irving, & Peterson, 2008; Remesal, 2007; Wang, Kao, & Lin, 2010), there is however a dearth of research available in this area in the Czech context. Since teachers' construction of subjective theories of assessment with regard to improving teaching and learning are crucial, this study will describe how EFL teachers approach assessment, with a special focus on the ways these teachers construct subjective theories about assessment in order to understand how it can support and enhance student learning within an assessment challenged environment.

Research also points out that teachers' approaches to assessment in relation to planning and implementation constitute a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that can only be investigated through a combination of different qualitative research methods. As such, this study adopts qualitative interpretive design as an overarching methodological framework for capturing teachers' socially and culturally constructed subjective theories about assessment, and how these subjective theories affect teachers' assessment practices.

Finally, understanding current assessment conceptions, epistemologies, and practices can contribute to greater educational accomplishment. The study may also be useful for the overall improvement of assessment practices with a greater effect on producing knowledgeable and skilled teachers. More specifically, the study attempts to discover factors and critical incidences that aided or obstructed teachers' development of subjective theories of assessment. The present dissertation hopes to expand theoretical and empirical information on current research on teachers' subjective theories of assessment.

1.2 Practical background

In the following paragraphs, the background for research study is presented. The focus of the study was on constructing teacher subjective theory of assessment in the context of EFL teachers in the Czech lower secondary schools. Additionally, factors or critical incidences that aided or obstructed teachers' construct of their subject theories of assessment with regard to the purpose of transforming teaching for better learning is presented at length.

1.2.1 Statement of the problem

The education policy has placed growing emphasis on assessment and drawn policy attention toward consolidation of assessment for and as learning in the classroom (OECD, 2013). However, there is a problem in assessment and how they relate to determining learning in a lower secondary setting. That problem, specifically, is the misalignment between methods

and the intended use of various assessment approaches or purposes (Antoniou & James, 2014; DeLuca, Luu, Sun, & Klinger, 2012; Scheerens et al., 2012) or in the capacity of teachers to implement rigorous programs of assessment for and as learning in their classrooms. Currently, research reports the prevalence of ineffective assessment practices in many classrooms (Hattie, 2009; Hill, 2011; Strakova & Simonová, 2013). If the purpose of assessment is to determine learning, it is essential to understand teacher's subjectivity regarding the role of assessment.

While the purpose and practice of assessment continues to be a hot topic of discussion, the availability of data on teachers' subjectivity regarding assessment is critical to understanding their assessment practices. Past studies have shown the significance of teacher subjectivity as an effective way to approach educational issues, including instruction and assessment (Barnes, Fives, & Dacey, 2015; Brown, 2008; Brown & Remesal, 2017; Diaz, Martinez, Roa, and Sanhueza, 2010; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Remesal, 2011). What is not known in the Czech context is the impact teachers' subjectivity has on teaching and learning and whether assessment planning and practices are impacted by teachers' subjectivity.

1.2.2 The idea of classroom assessment

Assessment is crucial for an effective teaching and learning process and teachers are key to ensuring it. In an effective teaching and learning process, teachers need to plan and implement effective assessment tasks. However, several researchers have noticed gaps in the capacity of teachers to implement rigorous programs of assessment for and as learning in their classrooms (Antoniou & James, 2014; DeLuca, Luu, Sun, & Klinger, 2012; Scheerens et al., 2013). And in general, effective assessment in the classroom occurs only rarely (Hattie, 2009; Hill, 2011) and there is lack of alignment and little balance between methods and in the intended use of varied assessment approaches or purposes (Volante & Fazio, 2007; Santiago, Gilmore, Nusche, & Sammons, 2012; Strakova & Simonová, 2013) or between instructional goals and assessment (Campbell & Evans, 2000; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD), 2013). And in the Czech Republic, research states that assessments have not been well designed and had unclear goals and methodological flaws, with the most important flaws identified in student assessment (Santiago, Gilmore, Nusche, & Sammons, 2012) and that assessment is still based on summative means of measuring what students have learned through testing and examination (Scheerens et al., 2012; OECD, 2005).

In regard to classroom assessment planning, Fives, Barnes, Dacey, and Gillis (2016) point out that classroom assessment lacks planning, portrays a wide variation in the depth of coverage with little focus related to assessment planning, and lacks theoretical connections between assessment and instructional practices. In line with teacher support, most studies claim that teacher assessment must support learning, but several studies of lower secondary students' perceptions of teacher support have found countless opinions expressing a very low level of such support (Gamlem & Munthe, 2013).

In summary, the above studies call attention to huge gaps in terms of classroom assessment planning and implementation globally. With regard to teachers, the researchers have pointed out a lack of assessment knowledge and skills in rendering support to students. In light of these problems, teachers encounter even greater challenges. Another concern that have deeply bothered me is my own classroom experiences. Being in a classroom as an educator and having known the problems associated with assessment within my own classroom space has left me with many unanswered queries and quests. I undertook this research because the question of what it means to be a teacher educator in the 21st century classroom whereby teaching, learning and the assessment environment faces many difficulties began to deeply worry me. I wanted to know more, to gain in-depth understanding on how teachers within a problematic assessment environment deal and learn about assessment. Furthermore, these unsolved quests and queries have driven me to explore this topic within the Czech context to find out if a similar situation exists in Czech schools and if, so, how they confront these issues.

Hence, the above concerns have led me to venture into the present study and to help me find answers to my questions.

1.2.3 Research Questions and Theoretical position

This qualitative interpretive research, which investigates teacher subjective theory of assessment, is urged by the desire to discover what it means for a teacher to use their subjective theories while planning and implementing assessment. Interpretive studies usually attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people bring to the forefront. It studies people's experiences from the subjective point of view. Interpretive studies concern itself with discovering the specific ways in which local and non-local forms of social organization and culture relate to the activities of specific persons in making choices and conducting social action together (Erickson, 1986).

The study focuses on teachers' experiences while developing subjective theories of assessment. It seeks to uncover, retrospectively how teachers plan and implement assessment techniques that supports learning guided by the following questions: 1) What thought processes occur when teachers plan their assessment practices to support learning? The study also explored how they deal and address problems associated with assessment learning and how teachers confront assessment issues related to the purpose of assessment, and so the final questions are: 2) What factors/critical incidences support or obstruct teachers' learning of the assessment? 3) How do teachers' construct their subjective theories regarding the purpose of assessment?

The main intention of this research is to uncover the two main aspects of classroom assessment: firstly, the teacher's subjectivity regarding assessment planning and implementation and secondly, the relationship between contextual factors and subjective theories. The third aim is to ascertain whether the use of the interpretive approach might contribute to Brown and Biggs's framework (Brown, 2008; Biggs, 1996).

1.2.4 Significance of the study

Assessment is a vital component of the teaching and learning process as it enables educators to evaluate student learning and utilize the obtained information to improve learning and instruction (Harris, Irving, & Peterson, 2008). In Czech schools, the formative type of assessment is underrepresented (Santiago et al., 2012; Strakova & Simonová, 2013). Assessment practices mostly appear summative in nature with common forms being test and term examinations (OECD, 2012; Strakova & Simonová, 2013). Studies have shown that teachers focus more on teaching than learning, thereby ultimately promoting teacher-centered learning (Scheerens et al., 2013).

This clearly indicates a gap in terms of teachers' capacity to implement rigorous assessment for and as learning. Similarly, studies around the globe and in the Czech Republic found that teachers and administrators enter the educational field without systematic training in assessment (Scheerens et al., 2013). Santiago et al. (2012) and Calveric (2010) confirmed and ascertained the weakness of teachers' preparation in classroom assessment by pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.

The study of EFL teachers' subjective theory of assessment of lower secondary students assessment practices is situated in the nation of the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic is a landlocked country in Central Europe bordered by Germany to the west, Austria to the south, Slovakia to the east and Poland to the northeast. The teachers who participated in the study taught English as Foreign Language to Grades 7 to 9. EFL teachers were chosen for the study as English as a subject is a recent introduction in the Czech curriculum and understanding how EFL teachers plan and implement assessment tasks to develop students' language skills within an awkward assessment environment was crucial in understanding how effectively these assessment tasks supported and enhanced learning.

There are several reasons as to why this study is important to me and to the Czech Republic's evolving emphasis on teacher education. The reasons are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, by conducting this research, I wanted to gain specialised knowledge in the area, which profoundly interests and captivates me.

Secondly, the findings will provide insights and shed light on the experiences of teachers involved in the process of constructing their subjective theory of assessment that support learning.

Thirdly, the study findings are intended to more clearly define teachers' subjective theory of assessment with regard to the purpose of assessment. These results will then inform a variety of stakeholders who play a significant role in public education to make informed decisions pertaining to assessment practices considering teachers' subjective theory in improving overall classroom assessment practices.

Fourthly, understanding current assessment conceptions, epistemologies and practices and formulating relevant and appropriate intervention strategies such as teacher led workshops aimed at improving teachers' assessment knowledge, methods and practices can contribute to a greater educational accomplishment.

Lastly, the study may be useful for the overall improvement of assessment practices with a more positive outcome in producing knowledgeable and skilled teachers.

1.4 Organization of the dissertation

This paper is organized into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the background and significance of the study. The conceptual framework for the study is described in Chapter 2, where an outline of the range of theoretical perspectives drawn on this study is given. Chapter 3 presents the methodology, study participants, data collection methods, procedures, analysis tools, and

ethical considerations. The findings of the study are discussed and interpreted in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 draws the research together by discussing the events and issues that impacted teachers' construction of subjective theory of assessment. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the results, discussing the implications for teaching and research as well as limitations of the study and areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Interest towards assessment has significantly increased in recent years. Assessment has multiple purposes that range from providing information about student learning and progress, to improving teaching and learning and upholding institutional accountability. Hence, the study of teacher subjective theory is critical in understanding and explaining assessment issues.

In this chapter, a wealth of current and seminal literatures were explored related to the study. Firstly, teachers' subjective theory of assessment is examined as a method for understanding and explaining assessment issues. It begins by illustrating the importance of teacher subjective theory of assessment in the process of learning. Then current and seminal ideas and practices associated with assessment of, for and as learning are outlined. The chapter concludes with the discussion on the impact of using Brown's (2008) conceptions of assessment and Biggs's (1996) constructive alignment as a theoretical framework for understanding teacher subjective theory of assessment.

2.2 Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment

Research on teacher subjectivity is proven to be an interesting way to approach educational issues which can be explained from the perspectives of teachers (Diaz, Martinez, Roa, & Sanhueza, 2010) and several studies draw attention to teachers' beliefs or conceptions and the ensuing results point to teachers' conceptions as one of the key factors that influence classroom decisions (Griffiths, Gore, & Ladwig, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). In general, conceptions consist of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that people have (Brown, 2008) and are significant contributors to behavior (Ajzen, 2005). This study chose to base the exploration of teachers' thought processes in the form of teachers' subjective theories.

Whether it is called capacity, literacy, or knowledge, subjective theories are people's explanation of phenomena present in their environment and in their own behavior and, generally speaking, they are considered helpful in improving academic teaching and learning as they are closely linked to practice (Pajares, 1992). Subjective theories (STs) presume that humans are autonomous and reflective beings, actively constructing the world around them (Hermes, 1999). Subjective theories include learner's and teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning. Therefore, teacher's subjective theories can be defined as teacher's overall personal understandings about various aspects of their daily school practice such as: teaching, learning, assessment, classroom management, and so on.

More importantly, Rubie-Davies, Flint, and McDonald, 2012; Hoy, Davis and Pape, 2006 and Wolf, Bixby, Iii, and Gardner, 1991) state that the ideas that teachers hold about educational process, teaching and learning, the nature of assessment tasks, and about evaluation criteria matter as they ultimately shape their understanding and practices of assessment and contribute meaningfully to actions that teachers take. This points to the fact that the real impetus for changing classroom practices comes from teacher subjective theory. Thus, if the purpose of assessment is to improve learning, teachers' subjectification and reasoning are crucial in explaining classroom practices, including assessment issues.

Research further expounds that subjective theories are useful in understanding educational issue as they are prone to revision and change. Therefore, they are ideally suited to classroom research and for making room for new innovations in any teaching situation (Hermes, 1999). This determines how important teacher subjective theories are and how they can assist teachers in making appropriate and informed decisions regarding classroom practices including assessment.

Teachers are primarily expected to create a plethora of innovative assessment practices that will actually take students' learning forward. In this regard, their subjective theories can

prove useful in understanding the paths they take to improve their classroom practices, including assessment procedures in this case.

Subjective theories have been explored through many avenues. For example, research indicates that teachers can achieve this through exploration and reflection, discussion and collaboration, commitment, and support (Lieberman, 1995) and through dialogue (Weidemann, 2001). Such practices need to be used frequently by the teachers especially if they intend to improve learning by altering assessment practices. Moreover, reflection allows teachers and students to re-examine their subjective theories and critically appraise their experiences, knowledge, and belief systems in relation to their newly acquired knowledge (Adler, 1990) and alter their classroom practices in an appropriate way. In addition, Torrance and Pryor (2001) convey that using collaborative action research as professional development measures for teachers helps in bringing change regarding their assessment practices and provide a sound base for further development and refinement of theory on formative assessment. Ogan-Bekiroglu (2009) studied science teachers' attitudes towards assessment and factors impacting these attitudes. She concluded that subject-matter knowledge influence pre-service teachers' confidence in their expectations of implementing constructivist assessment procedures. Other studies contend that paying attention to particular curricular aspects of mathematics, such as practices and forms of assessment shapes teachers' knowledge pertaining to mathematics assessment (Rico & Gil, 1997; Rochera, Remesal & Barbera, 2002). These researchers conclude that subjective theories not only relate to cognitions, but also to pedagogical practices.

What is more, aligning to assessment, Fulmer, Lee, and Tan (2015) puts forward that teachers' assessment philosophy tends to reflect the social, historical, and cultural priorities established in each jurisdiction in which the teachers are employed. Therefore, interpretation of assessment requires paying attention to contextual factors operating in that jurisdiction with

particular reference to both social norms and educational and institutional policies (Remesal, 2007). Within these contextual priorities, similar to the notion of subjective theories research indicated that assessment can also be interpreted following various conceptions of assessment. In general, teachers' construct of each of these beliefs influence assessment. Following this, Brown's (2008) model of teachers' conceptions of assessment (CoA) categorised four major purpose-related beliefs: assessment is for improving teaching and learning; assessment evaluates and holds schools and teachers accountable; assessment certifies students' learning and holds them accountable; and assessment is irrelevant). For the purpose of this study, Brown's (2008) CoA model will be used as the theoretical base in understanding and explaining teacher's subjective theory of assessment. Assessment for improving teaching and learning is often referred to as assessment for learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and relates to assessment that can help students understand their progress in terms of learning. Brown (2008) associates assessment for teacher and student accountability in relation to achieving learning outcomes or standards. This belief operates according to Smith and Fey (2000) on the basis that teachers need external pressure, such as policy, to ensure that teachers' meet the intended outcome or standard. In regard to student accountability, teachers are expected to ensure that student accountability is achieved by providing challenging tasks. The third belief, assessment for certification, is often expressed as assessment of learning by awarding grades or certificates of achievement. Finally, Brown (2008) links the last belief assessment as irrelevant with a negative attitude to both the forms of accountability or the use of assessment tools for improvement. This belief further explains that teachers do not need assessment to understand students' learning progress.

Following Brown's (2008) CoA, many studies have been conducted to better understand teacher assessment. One such study was by Brown and Remesal (2017) which examined two different teacher conceptions of assessment with 566 Ecuadorian primary and

secondary teachers in two rounds of surveying. The results showed that teachers correlated teaching, certifying, and accounting domains with accountability and improvement purposes, and correlated caution with societal control, and correlated irrelevance with formative regulation. These findings were consistent with how teachers seem to conceive assessment within strong examination systems. In harmony with Brown and Remesal (2017), Barnes et al., (2017) investigated 179 north-eastern U.S. K-12 teachers' conceptions of the purposes of assessment and their findings supported the perspectives that teachers hold multiple beliefs simultaneously and so several findings have been found in common with that of Galvin Brown's study on understanding teachers' and students' conception of assessment. Brown points out that teachers and students conceived assessment in a certain way (e.g., assessment improves quality or assessment is bad or deep learning cannot be assessed) but such consequences need to be further examined to understand if it can actually contribute to higher or better educational outcomes.

In one of the Czech-based investigative studies into the development of subjective theory of formative assessment (FA) it was revealed that the teachers' subjective theories of formative assessment have changed during the implementation of experimental teaching units and that teachers' individual differences were seen as important actions for upscaling the use of FA in their own teaching. The research also revealed that it is very important among teachers to develop a deeper understanding of teaching goals, and especially the role of formative assessment (Stuchlikova, Zlabkova, & Hospesova, 2017).

Following the review, this section concludes that if the purpose is to improve learning, it is crucial to understand the subjective theory underlying teachers' ways of assessing their students' learning and teachers' own process of learning as they are critical in transforming their own practice of assessment to further student learning.

2.3 Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and so understanding teachers' subjective theory which underlies their assessment system is vital. For many years, however, the word "assessment" was used primarily to describe the processes of evaluating the effectiveness of what has been learnt (Black & William, 1998). Scrivan (1967) defines "assessment" as a judgment of students' work or as a process through which instructors obtain information about student learning or performance on academic tasks, where the information according to certain standards or criteria is judged, and then decisions are made about learning based on that judgment. Remesal (2011) defines classroom assessment as a complex process of collection, analysis and evaluation of evidence of the teaching and learning process and its learning outcomes. In this study, assessment is defined as all activities that teachers and students undertake to gain information that can be used to alter teaching and learning**.**

Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (1971) formally introduced the idea that assessment need not be used solely to make summative evaluations of student performance, arguing that teachers should include episodes of formative assessment following phases of teaching (Allal & Lopez, 2005). Consequently, assessment has been categorized as formative or summative depending on the functions they served (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Bloom et al., (1971) defined summative evaluation tests or assessment of learning as those assessments given at the end of units, mid-term and at the end of a course, which are designed to judge the extent of students' learning of the material in a course, for the purpose of grading, certification, evaluation of progress or even for researching the effectiveness of a curriculum (pp. 117).

Shute (2008) uses the term formative feedback instead of formative assessment and defines it as "information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning" (p. 154). The distinctions between assessment of learning (AoL) and assessment for learning (AfL) on the one hand, and between

summative and formative assessment on the other, are different in nature. The former distinction relates to the function it actually serves, while the second relates to the purpose for which the assessment is carried out (Wiliam, 2011).

Black and Wiliam (1998) point out that one of the outstanding features of studies of assessment in recent years has been the shift of attention paid to testing as a form of assessment, placing instead importance on the interactions between assessment and classroom learning and moving away from aspects of assessment tightly embedded in tests that are weakly linked to the learning experience of students. Nowadays, assessments are principally looked upon as methods seeking to understand activities that are intended to guide the learning towards the intended goal, and that take place during the learning process, as forms of assessment.

Consequently, Scrivan (1967) asserts that since the process of assessment is a single process i.e., making a judgment according to given standards, goals and criteria, he concludes that both SA and FA are therefore processes. It is possible for assessment to be uniquely summative where the assessment stops at the judgment. However, it is not possible for assessment to be uniquely formative without the summative judgment having preceded it (Taras, 2005). Black, Harrison and Lee (2003) identified four forms of formative assessment practices: (questioning, feedback, self- and peer-assessment, and formative use of summative tests). The section below deals with a discussion on formative forms of assessment practices.

2.3.1 Questioning

Teacher questioning is a powerful tool in achieving effective classroom discourse. However, many teachers do not plan and conduct classroom dialogue in ways that might help students to learn. The key to overcoming such an unfavourable situation is to create effective questioning sessions. Research has revealed that questioning is second only to lecturing in popularity as a teaching method and that classroom teachers spend anywhere from thirty to fifty percent of their instructional time conducting questioning sessions (Cotton, 1988).

Aschner (1961) claims that the only way teachers can stimulate student thinking and learning is by asking questions. Following the same line, Cotton (2001) explains the concept of the question as any sentence which has an interrogative function and instructional stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it. In order to serve this function, the content of a teacher's question depends on many things, including the intended function of the question, the teachers' understanding of the subject matter, and also to its context (Carlsen, 1991).

As teacher questioning has a direct impact on students' cognitive processes (Chin, 2006 & Morge, 2005), Lemke (1990) asserts, in support of this fact, that teacher questioning should elicit student thought and encourage students to elaborate on their ideas. Chin (2006), on the other hand, illustrates that questioning should be characterized by flexibility wherein the teacher adjusts his questioning based on student responses in order to stimulate higher order thinking in students. Moreover, Roth (1996) states that teachers' questions should be open-ended and that their responses should remain neutral rather than evaluative, and they should be used to detect and expand students' ideas and scaffold students' thinking.

A teacher will, without a doubt, influence student learning through questioning. Hence, in the field of language teaching and learning, questioning as a strategy is regarded as of immensely important (Almeida, 2010; Chin & Osborne, 2008). In addition, studies indicate that interpretative or reflective questioning techniques are more useful, as such questions encourage, expand, develop and challenge students' thinking (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). However, several studies reveal that teachers frequently ask low-level questions without any logical sequence and that the majority of such questions are closed-ended and aim to recall details from memory, where only one answer is acceptable and seen as correct (Lucking, 1977; Black & William, 1998; Smart & Marshall, 2013). Furthermore, they are often characterized by a low level of cognitive demand, requiring students merely to show that they remember

subject matter presented to them earlier as was revealed in a Czech study (Strakova & Simonová, 2013).

In connection to this, Alexander (2006) states that useful questions should be structured in such a way that it provokes thoughtful answers and these answers should further provoke new questions leading to a coherent line of enquiry. However, research has shown that many teachers wait less than one second after asking a question and then, if no answer is forthcoming, ask another question or answer the question themselves (Black & William, 1998). Tobin (1987); Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam (2004) assert that increasing the wait time will not only help more students become involved in discussions, but it will also increase the length of their replies and so will lead to higher cognitive levels of questions formulated by the instructors (Tobin, 1987; & Rowe, 1974). Aligning to this, Chin's (2006) study suggests that teachers should use various questioning strategies to provoke reflection and productive thinking in classroom discourse. In the same area, McCarthy et al., (2016) examined the questioning strategies used by two grade 8 teachers randomly selected from twelve middle schools in Tennessee. The study revealed that guiding teachers through an analysis of the questions they ask and the responses they get from students during mathematical discourse may in fact enable them to recognize both effective and ineffective questioning strategies.

Additionally, Gonzalez's (2010) study provides evidence for the inappropriate nature of teacher questioning that rarely monitored or provoked thinking in students. Further, the findings bring to light that developing effective questioning skills requires careful planning and practice, and requires students to take hold of and guide their own learning when given the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process.

It is apparent from the review that questioning as a pedagogical tool and the nature of questioning itself is very important when students to want to represent, organize, communicate and conceptualize their abstract thoughts depends on them (Deed, 2009)**.** Therefore, a major

revelation from this section is that teachers should ask questions that develop a clear sequence of inquiry.

2.3.2 Feedback

A wide range of education research support the idea that by integrating feedback into teaching, we can produce greater learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2012; Gamlem & Munthe, 2013; Hattie, 2012; Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen, & Simons, 2012). In education research, feedback is understood as information given by an agent such as teacher, peer, book, parent, self, and experience with regard to aspects of one's performance or understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this study, feedback is explained as effective information provided by the teacher to monitor and scaffold learning.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Sadler (1989) claim that the main purpose of feedback is to reduce discrepancies between current understandings and performance, and a goal. Positioning to this, Hattie and Timperley (2007) stress the need for teachers to provide more evaluative information in their feedback as a means of providing specific helpful information. This was further extended by Shute (2008) whereby she explains specific feedback as one that provides information pertaining to the accuracy of particular responses or behaviours. These elements are important when it comes to giving effective feedback.

Furthermore, Hattie and Timperley (2007) identify four types of feedback: feedback task, feedback process, feedback self-regulation, and feedback-self. It can be understood that feedback can be effective if the first three types are given regularly rather than the feedback-self. Hence, following this, Clynes and Raftery (2008) suggest feedback should be constructive and not destructive in nature.

Research indicates the usefulness of feedback on student learning and the importance of teacher's understanding in delivering quality feedback. For example, Hattie (2012) pointed out the effects of feedback in his meta-analyses study on various strategies that have influenced

student achievement. The effect sizes suggest that some types of feedback are more powerful than others. A central purpose of formative feedback is to bridge the gap between present performance and a desired goal when moving to the next step in learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1998). Hattie (2012) points that it is possible only if it involves students receiving information about a task and how to do it more effectively, while lower effects were related to praise, rewards, and punishment.

Additionally, Schartel (2012) revealed that feedback should be delivered in an appropriate setting, focusing on the task and not on the individual and that it should be specific and non-judgmental. This is important because researchers point out that feedback leads to learning gains only when it includes guidance on how to improve, so that when students have opportunities to apply the feedback, they will understand how to use it and are willing to dedicate effort (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Furthermore, Hoy and Hoy (2006) posit that "with older students (late elementary through high school), written comments are most helpful when they are personalized and when they provide constructive criticism" (p. 268).

In another video-based analyses of lower secondary classroom study, the quality of teacher feedback is shown to be essential for students' learning (Gamlem & Munthe, 2013). Although the lessons analysed were characterized by positive classroom atmosphere, feedback was found to be more encouraging in nature rather than learning-oriented. To consider feedback merely in terms of encouraging is impractical. Feedback should rather embody the effects it can have on learning. For instance, in the case of praise, Dweck (2007) asserts that praise (process praise) related to effort puts students in a growth mind-set which results in excellent performance and improvement. On the other hand, praise related to intelligence puts them in a fixed mind-set, leading to poor performance since they have lost their confidence,

resilience and motivation. Subsequently, Gamlem and Smith (2013) claim that the value of feedback varies in terms of giving, using, appreciating and seeking.

While effective feedback is critical in enhancing learning, both international (Gamlem & Munthe, 2013) and Czech-based research (Strakova & Simonová, 2015; OECD, 2013) calls attention to a number of issues with regard to teachers' feedback practices. For instance, feedback till date is found to be ineffective (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Kyaruzi, Strijbos, Ufer, & Brown, 2018), and teachers neither ask quality questions (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Smart & Marshall, 2013, Seden & Svaricek, 2018) nor do they actively promote feedback seeking (Gamlem & Smith, 2013; Winstone, Nash, Parker, & Rowntree, 2017). Apparently, feedback is more general in nature than learning-oriented, hence, teachers need more knowledge on quality aspects of formative feedback interactions to support learning (Gamlem & Munthe, 2013, Seden & Svaricek, 2018).

In the Czech Republic, effective feedback rarely occurs, even though students are tested by both externally-based examinations and ongoing formative assessments (OECD, 2013). Strakova and Simonova (2015) indicate that in Czech schools, feedback given to students was not immediate, and the types of feedback were often in the form of grades or brief comments. For instance, marks are used as a means of communicating the status of a student's learning, but not as the basis for measuring their understanding or determining how much a student has learned or how to render support for bringing improvement. In addition, little emphasis is placed on providing effective feedback to students (OECD, 2013; Seden & Svaricek, 2018; Strakova & Simonova, 2015).

Recent studies indicated that although the learning progress did not differ, feedback was perceived as more useful when given in the formative assessment context; at the same time, self-efficacy was greater, and interest tended to increase (Rakoczy et al., 2018). In another study, Skovholt (2018) examined the anatomy of a teacher-student feedback in upper

secondary school in Norway. Its findings showed that the teacher used questions to establish a basis to promote her own agenda and worked to optimise students' contributions by providing positive feedback and minimising critiques and disagreement, while the student observed the teacher's feedback with resistance. This indicates that both the teacher and students need to be taught how to give and receive feedback effectively and constructively, as providing effective and explicit feedback is crucial to improving learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). What is more, Jónsson, Smith, and Geirsdóttir (2018) revealed that the stronger the culture around formative assessment, the stronger the dialogue between teachers and students.

To sum up, research concludes feedback as an integral part of the educational process. However, up to the present there is a substantial gap in the way feedback is provided, received and experienced by both the teacher and students (Jónsson, Smith, & Geirsdóttir, 2018). Therefore, if feedback is understood as information delivered to improve learning, then teachers understanding of effective feedback practices in relation to student learning and how these practices influence these perceptions is essential for it to have the desired effect on learning.

2.3.3 Self-Assessment

In recent years, learning based on self-assessment has received a lot of attention (Ross, 2006 and Taras, 2010). Research indicates that student involvement in assessment appears to be on the rise nowadays (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). The reason for this is that self-assessment promotes learning as students become more self-regulated in their learning (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009) and engages the students in purposeful reflection of what they are learning and how they are learning it (Wong, 2016).

Self-assessment means more than just students grading or marking their own assignments. It involves the learners in the processes of determining what good work is in any given situation (Freeman & Lewis, 1998). Students can achieve a learning goal only if they

understand that goal and can assess what they need to do to reach it. Hence, self-assessment is essential to learning as it helps in the development of learner autonomy and enables the learners to identify their needs, to set learning goals and to monitor their progress.

Many teachers who have tried to develop their students' self-assessment skills have found that the first and most difficult task is to get students to think of their work in terms of a set of goals (Black & William, 1998). Panadero (2011) has proposed two crucial factors for appropriate self-assessment to occur, namely: 1) using adequate assessment criteria, and 2) using them at the right time.

According to Andrade and Du (2007), self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect on explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly. Furthermore, Heritage (2010) discerns self-assessment as a complementary feedback process which encourages students to monitor their own learning. Additionally, learning can also be enhanced by peer contributions which may take the form of questions, comments or challenges which prompt one to reflect on what has been done (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999). Likewise, Boud (1995) expresses the need for the interplay of self- and peer-assessment whereby the individual learner ultimately makes a judgment about what has been learned, and not forgetting that others offer input to it (p.200) and so peers provide rich information which can then be used by individuals to make their own self-assessments (Boud, 1995) and consequently will follow up with actions to improve their work. In other words, self-assessment in the form of both self- monitoring and self-regulation is a prerequisite for students to take responsibility for their learning and mature into self-reliant lifelong learners.

If the purpose of assessment is to make learners accountable for their own learning, then self-assessment is proven to be useful as it in a way promotes active participation of

students in the assessment process, from the decision making to the overall evaluation by appreciating their own learning and achievement on the basis of evidence from themselves and from others (teachers and peers) (Boud, 1995). Similarly, to Boud (1995), Topping (2003) adds that self-assessment engages learners actively in their own learning and fosters learner reflection on their own learning processes, styles, and outcomes and critical thinking.

A review of recent studies has described the positive impact of the use of self-assessment on students' learning. In a study by Wong (2016) it was revealed that students as young as 10 years of age have the ability to assess themselves and when given the opportunity to either have training in self-assessment or to use it, the students were willing and able to take ownership of their learning and they were not resist using self-assessment.

An intervention study using the portfolio method to enhance middle-school teachers' and students' perceptions and practices of formative assessment of writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes showed that teachers see the value of including self- and peer assessment and text revision in assessing writing (Burner, 2015). In support of Burner (2015), Bourke's (2016) study with a group of primary and secondary students who participated in a school-based assessment exercises demonstrated the benefits of involving students in the assessment process. The study found that developing the learner's ability to self-assess lead to a better understanding of themselves and their learning. Thus, learning to assess themselves more accurately and confidently through practice, students can move on to learn how to learn, and use the information gained through the self-assessment activity to further improve their learning (Wong, 2016).

2.3.4 Peer Assessment

The overarching conceptual rationale for peer assessment and peer feedback is that it enables students to take an active role in the management of their own learning. It is an element of self-regulated learning (Butler & Winne, 1995) by which students monitor their work using internal

and external feedback as catalysts. Peer assessment is uniquely valuable because students will accept criticism of their work from one another in a way that they would otherwise not take seriously if those remarks were offered by a teacher. Peer work is also valuable because the interaction will be in the language that students themselves naturally use and because students learn by taking the roles of teachers and examiners.

Peer assessment is an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other equal-status learners (Topping, 2009). Peer assessment activities include writing, oral presentations, portfolios, test performance or skilled behaviours. According to Topping (2009) peer assessment can be summative or formative. The former occurs when peers provide a grade on the task, while the latter entails the intent to help students help each other plan their learning, identify their strengths and weaknesses, target areas for remedial action, and develop meta-cognitive and other personal and professional skills (Topping, 2009).

Peer assessment also involves increased time spent on a task: thinking, comparing, contrasting, and communicating. Van Lehn, Chi, Baggett, and Murray (1995) suggested that peer assessment involves the assessor in reviewing, summarizing, clarifying, giving feedback, diagnosing misconceived knowledge, identifying missing knowledge, and considering deviations from the ideal. These are all cognitively demanding activities that help to consolidate, reinforce, and deepen understanding in the assessor. Thus, it is often claimed that peer assessment encourages students to become critical independent learners as they become familiar with the application of assessment criteria and develop a clearer concept of the topic being reviewed (Falchikov, 1995). Peer assessment is mutually beneficial for both the assessor and the student receiving it (William & Thompson, 2017). By acting as assessor, a process that involves reflection around learning itself, it can further develop a student's understanding of their own learning. In addition, by understanding what a student says about a peer's work, we

can easily interpret how well they have grasped the underlying learning goals and assessment criteria. Hence, peer assessment provides students with opportunities to reflect upon their own understanding, to build on prior knowledge, generate inferences, integrate ideas, repair misunderstandings, and explain and communicate their understandings (Roscoe & Chi, 2007).

The phrase peer feedback means a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards. Peer assessment is defined as students grading the work or performance of their peers using relevant criteria (Falchikov, 2001). Consequently, the distinction between the two terms is that peer feedback is primarily about rich detailed comments but without formal grades, whilst peer assessment denotes grading (irrespective of whether comments are also included). Whether grades are awarded or not, the emphasis is on standards and how peer interaction can lead to enhanced understandings and improved learning (Liu & Carless, 2006).

Peer assessment is useful because when students do not understand an explanation, they are more likely to interrupt a fellow student than a teacher. In addition to this advantage, peer assessment is also valuable in placing the work in the hands of the students. The teacher can be free to observe and reflect on what is happening and to frame helpful interventions (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

A two-way factorial design study showed that low and average-achieving students significantly improved in their performance immediately after the integration of the peer assessment model, while the model had a lesser effect on high-achieving students (Li & Gao, 2015). On the whole, peer- and self-assessment practices encourage students to identify learning objectives and to understand the criteria used to judge their work, with the function of increasing self-regulation (Andrade, 2010).

2.3.5 Formative use of Summative tests

Assessment of learning or summative assessment (SA) judges the overall progression of students in a systematic fashion (Taras, 2005 & Biggs, 1998). Although SA raises concern, it is nevertheless a dominant force in education. Summative assessment consists of a test that teachers have constructed themselves. Brookhart and Nitko (2008) describe a test as "an instrument or systematic procedure for observing and describing one or more characteristics of a student using either a numerical scale or a classification scheme" (p. 5). The methods used in summative tests are multiple choice questions, matching questions, short questions, essay questions, extended response items, oral examinations and performance tasks. They are highly significant for students because of the importance attached to the final grade (Brookhart, 2001). Each assessment method has a different strength in testing a student's knowledge, skills or attitudes, but it requires a carefully balanced combination of these elements to comprehensively reflect the assessment blueprint (Epstein, 2007).

As a result, summative tests fail to further student learning or to encourage students to take responsibility for their own educational needs. Gipps (2002) felt they can also create tension between the student and the teacher. Most students cope with the task of passing these tests or end-of-the-semester examinations through a combination of rote learning and memorisation which is a very superficial approach. A loophole of SA is that it encourages students to passively accept ideas without necessarily understanding the underlying theory and core foundation principles (Biggs, 1998; Ramsden, 2003).

Some have argued that formative and summative assessments are so different in their purpose that they have to be kept apart, and such arguments are strengthened when one experiences the harmful consequences that limited summative tests can have on teaching. However, Black and Wiliam (1998) argue that it is unrealistic to expect teachers and students

to practice such separation; rather, the challenge is to achieve a more positive relationship between the two.

Implementing the formative use of summative tests is one such approach. In doing so, the teachers devise three main ways of using classroom tests, not only to assess knowledge attainment, but also to develop students' understanding. The first one involves helping students to prepare for tests by reviewing their work and screening past test questions to identify areas of uncertain understanding. This reflection on their areas of weakness enabled them to focus on their revision. The second one is to ask students to compose test questions and devise marking schemes. This helps them in understanding the assessment process and in applying further efforts for improvement (Black et al., 2003, p. 54). The third one is for the teachers to use the outcome of tests diagnostically and to involve students in marking each other's tests, in some cases after devising the marking scheme together.

A more fundamental change is needed if assessment is to be designed to serve both purposes from the start. The overall message is that summative tests should become a positive part of the learning process. Through active involvement in the testing process, students can see that they can be the beneficiaries rather than the victims of testing, because tests can help them improve their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). However, most often a test is used to assess how much a student has learnt at the end of a unit, chapter, quarter or semester (Dixson & Worrell, 2016).

Hence, it is of immensely beneficial if tests are used for formative purposes as the formative use of summative test results has lot of advantageous. One of the most valuable features is that it acts as a source of data that can be used as evidence to support educational decision-making (Zapata-Rivera et al., 2011). Since the test results are presented using score reports, it acts as a vehicle for translating the test results into useful actions that support

learning. Besides, the test developers should also ensure that the content of the score reports fits the information needs of the user (Ryan, 2006).

In the same line, Hopster-den Otter, Wools, Eggen, and Veldkamp (2017) examined the types of actions users want to perform with the use of test results and the information needed to enable these actions. The findings revealed that in relation to desired uses, respondents mostly chose actions relating to the purpose of supporting learning; however, the test results were primarily used to evaluate the learning process by determining the student's ability. This indicates that the teachers' use of a test is still summative in nature.

Accordingly, if the purpose of assessment is to improve learning, then, teachers need to consider the critical component of assessment of/ as learning (how we learn) to broaden their ideas of assessment for learning (formative assessment) as recent study by Pla-Campas, Arumi-Prat, Senye-Mir, and Ramirez (2016) brought to light. The study showed that students who have been assessed using formative assessment practices achieve higher marks than those who had not been assessed in this way.

This review of a selection of research around assessment has shown that, teachers agree with the formative basis of assessment practices because it offers strategies for students to know why are they learning and where they are heading in terms of their learning. However, what has been revealed is the dominance of summative ways of assessing learning indicating a lack of formative assessment literacy in teachers. Hence, the major revelation of this review is the need to include teacher perspectives in understanding and explaining classroom assessment issues as teachers are fundamental individuals in students' lives.

2.4 Constructive Alignment

This study is guided and shaped by a constructive alignment paradigm grounded in the principle of constructivism. The concept of constructivism and its key principles are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning describing both what knowing is and how one comes to know (Fosnot, 2005). It rests on the assumption that knowledge is actively constructed by learners as they attempt to make sense of their experiences (Driscoll, 2000). The concept of constructivism can be explained in terms of its four characteristics: knowledge construction, cooperative learning, meta-cognition in learning, and authentic learning tasks (Loyens, Rikers, & Schmidt, 2006):

1. Students construct their own knowledge, based on their prior knowledge, by going through the process of discovering, transforming, and checking information, and by revising rules when they no longer apply.
2. Knowledge construction can be fostered through the interactions of the learner with others.
3. Meta-cognition (knowing about our own thinking) plays a significant role in the learning process, whereby learners preferably acquire new information through self-regulated learning (such as goal setting, self-observation, self-assessment, and self-reinforcement).
4. Authentic learning tasks, including working on problems that are similar to problems that they will encounter later in their life (encourage meaningful learning).

The central idea of constructivism is that learners actively engage in learning and that knowledge is not passively received but built up by cognizing the subject (Von Glasersfeld, 1995). Additionally, Creswell (2007) posits that the constructivist approach allows researchers to focus on the processes of interaction among individuals and on the specific contexts in which individuals live and work, and also to recognize that the researcher's own background shapes their interpretation.

This study decided to use Biggs (1996) constructive alignment as its theoretical framework; firstly, because it is grounded in the principle of constructivist theory, and, secondly, it provides a set of classroom improvement practices focusing on learner centeredness. Furthermore, Clark and Creswell (2010) typically associates constructivism with qualitative approaches and that works from a different world view. As a result, the understanding or meaning generated through participants and their subjective views make up this world view. Because of the justifications mentioned above, this framework was felt ideal for this study as it may help in ameliorating the traditional way of teaching and assessing learning that still dominates lower secondary classrooms (Santiago, Gilmore, Nusche, & Sammons, 2012; Seden & Svaricek, 2018; Strakova & Simonová, 2013).

Biggs (1996) claims "constructive alignment" (CA) has two aspects. The "constructive" aspect refers to the idea that students construct meaning through relevant learning activities. That is, meaning is not something imparted or transmitted from teacher to learner, but is something learners have to create for themselves. Teaching is simply a catalyst for learning. What matters most is what the student does in determining what is learned rather than what the teacher does (Shuell, 1986).

The "alignment" aspect refers to the situation when the teaching and learning activities, and the assessment tasks, are aligned to the Intended Learning Outcomes specifically referring to what the teacher does, which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key to this system is that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks are aligned with the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes. The learner is in a sense "trapped", and finds it difficult to escape without learning what he or she is intended to learn. In setting up an aligned system, the teacher specifies the desired outcomes of teaching in terms of not only of topic content, but in the level of understanding

that they want students to achieve. They then set up an environment that maximises the likelihood of the students' engagement in the activities designed to achieve the intended outcomes. Finally, the teacher decides on assessment tasks that will convey how well individual students have attained these outcomes, in terms of graded levels of acceptability.

As such, the framework relays four prospective steps:

1. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) needs to be defined;
2. Teachers must choose teaching/learning activities likely to lead to the ILOs;
3. Assess students' actual learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended;
4. Then, arrive at a final grade.

Positioning to the prospective steps, CA has another form to it which is referred to as outcomes-based learning that focuses entirely on three questions:

1. What do I intend my students to be able to do after my teaching that they could not do before, and to what standard?
2. How do I supply learning activities that will help them achieve those outcomes?
3. How do I assess them to see how well they have achieved them? (Biggs & Tang, 2010).

The above aspects are about processes teachers can apply to achieve their teaching and learning goals. As CA outlines steps and procedures, it was felt that these can be used as a basis for understanding teachers' construct of subject theories of assessment in order to comprehend how teachers align teaching, learning and assessment to support teaching and learning processes. In this manner, this framework was found to be applicable for the study.

Furthermore, it is also critical that teachers should have a clear idea of what they want their students to learn and how to assess their learning effectively. They must also provide challenging yet supportive learning environments catering to students with diverse academic

needs in order to realise the goals of teaching and learning. As CA ensures this through the shared language of construction and alignment, there is no better alternative than to use this as the framework in accomplishing the intentions of this study.

Additionally, CA approaches teaching with the aim of knowing what the intended outcome of that teaching will be rather than what the teacher is going to teach. As it allows the teachers to design teaching and assessment methods that will best allow them to achieve that outcome and to assess the standards at which the outcome has been achieved (Biggs, 2003), this was another reason that justified why CA is seen as the suitable theoretical lens for the study.

Besides the above importance and justification regarding CA, it also has other benefits. For example, Biggs came to realise the benefits of CA during his sabbatical experiences in Canada. Biggs began to work out his ways of teaching by reflecting. Upon reflection, he realized that he had been teaching and assessing declarative knowledge, which was inauthentic to the purpose of the unit. Biggs realised that the students are not there to learn about psychology, but rather to learn psychology in order to make better teaching decisions. Thus, based on this experience, he decided to assess them on how well they could demonstrate that psychology had indeed improved their teaching. The assessment required his students to compile a portfolio of examples of where they thought their teaching had improved. They negotiated a series of learning activities that were likely to result in their achieving those outcomes, such as reading set material, raising questions in class about that material, discussing with other students, swapping notes with a learning partner and keeping a reflective journal. He claims it worked. The portfolios surprised him with their high quality, their relevance to teaching – and the student ratings for that course were the best that he had ever achieved (Biggs, 2014). In this way, CA is seen as useful in capturing the intended goals of teaching and learning by assigning appropriate assessment tasks fitting to the learning situations.

Likewise, McLoughlin (2001) brought to the forefront the usefulness of CA when he offered a framework for culturally inclusive pedagogy that can be applied online using CA. The findings assert that assessment tasks need to be aligned with learning outcomes and teaching approaches so that all aspects of pedagogy are supportive of cross-cultural learning needs.

Yet another study that talks about the benefit of CA is Larkin and Richardson's (2013) report on an application of constructive alignment principles to explore student outcomes. The results provide evidence of improvement in student satisfaction and academic grades as a result of implementing constructive alignment. Additionally, they pointed out that constructive alignment facilitates students' learning and experiences.

Following Larkin and Richardson's (2013), Wang, Su, Cheung, Wong, and Kwong (2013) investigated whether instructors' adoption of CA has any impact on university students' learning approaches. The analysis of co-variance results suggests that regardless of individual differences, students would adjust their learning approaches and study behaviours in response to the classroom teaching and learning environment. However, it was found that students in more 'constructively aligned courses' were more likely to adopt deep learning approaches and less likely to use surface learning approaches in their study of a particular course.

Hence, what makes CA fascinating is that it embraces the principles of constructivism by placing importance on what students ought to be learning or what a learner should be able to do as a result of that teaching. Biggs (2014) makes it clear that his focus is on the constructivist side of the learning embedded in the key principle of supportive culture. He explains that alignment may be an engine of effective learning but "knowledge is constructed through the activities of the learner and through collaboration. The Intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in CA ensure the alignment of teaching and assessment by focusing on what the learners do; while the teaching/learning activities in CA enables students to apply learning activities

that foster the construction of their own knowledge, behaviour and skills, and assessment. CA provides a structured reflective framework to anchor teaching decisions in achieving or assessing the "intended learning outcomes" (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Moreover, teachers in the 21st century need to constantly reflect in order to improve their own practices to support learning which forms the core of student-centred learning. Along these lines, using CA represents immense benefits, as it would necessitate teachers in lower secondary schools to rethink their assessment practices from the point of traditional practices with a view to creating innovative practices for the benefit of the students.

2.5 Conclusion

The chapter reviewed the relevant literature for the present study. The chapter began by examining the theoretical perspectives of subjective theory and concluded that subjective theories (STs) are useful in explaining educational issues, especially classroom practices. The literature on assessment mainly delved into the concept of assessment, its techniques and past research findings that support student learning as a result of assessment practices. The review around the selected literature revealed the importance of formative nature of assessment in improving learning. However, the review illustrated the pitfalls in line to effective planning and execution of teacher assessment practices.

The discussion on subjective theory and constructive alignment concluded by revealing that subjective theory and constructive alignment are crucial to gaining a richer understanding on teachers' planning and practice of assessment.

Taking everything into consideration, this study concluded that subjective theory is all about considering participants' subjectification and reasoning in understanding how they interpret knowledge and skills regarding a particular issue in order to improve classroom practices. I chose Biggs' constructive alignment embedded in constructivist principles as the

theoretical framework as it offers a complete tool for planning and implementing assessment practices. Thus, it goes without saying that one of the current issues facing us today is how to plan and implement assessment effectively. Additionally, current research recognizes the importance of improving learning by improving teaching and CA provides that avenue to change and improve classroom practices by altering assessment practices.

Finally, a major revelation of this review is the need to use teachers' STs and CA epistemology and principles while planning and implementing assessment in order to improve the overall quality of classroom assessment practices.

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodology chosen to investigate the following research questions:

1. What thought processes occur when teachers plan their assessment practices to support learning?
2. What factors/critical incidences support or obstruct teachers' learning of the assessment?
3. How do teachers' construct their subjective theories regarding the purpose of assessment?

The research design, the paradigm, the methods selected and the purposes underlying their selection are described followed by the description about the research setting and sampling. The data sources, and the procedure for data analysis are also briefly discussed. Finally, the chapter addresses the issues related to qualities of research and ethics.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Interpretive qualitative research approach

According to Creswell (2012) research involves asking a question, collecting data, and analysing data to determine the answer to the question. Creswell (1994) and Mason (1996) posit that good research-undertaking starts with the selection of the topic, a problem or an area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Stanage (1987) states that a paradigm is an action of submission to a view. According to Licoln and Guba (2003); Denzin and Lincoln (2013), a paradigm is a set of claims, assumptions or beliefs about how something will be learned and what will be learned during the inquiry which guides the world of the researcher. A paradigm comprises of four key assumptions: ontology (what is knowledge), epistemology (how we

know it), axiology (what values go into it), and methodology (the process for studying it) (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The ways of knowing are described objectively or subjectively, in quantitative or qualitative terms (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010).

This study is guided by the constructivist paradigm as it fits with the study theme. Social constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work. They perceive that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences toward certain objects or things (Creswell, 2012). The aim of this study is to explore how teachers develop subjective meanings of their assessment practices. Creswell (2013) states that the purpose of such a standpoint is to gather as many views as possible from the participants through discussions and interactions. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically and are conceived through cultural norms that are present in the individual's life. Since social constructivism allows the collection of information through interactions with participants, it is chosen as a paradigm for this study because the very intent of this study is to collect views from teachers teaching Grades 7-9 on how they think when they construct their subjective theories of assessment. Interaction with certain teachers from selected lower secondary schools and incorporating semi-structured questions that provide flexibility to use open-ended questions are the basis for the data collection. Additionally, the study also aims to expand further the subjective meanings teachers have on their assessment practices. Qualitative research methods have a long history in the social sciences. The development of explanations of social phenomena is its principal aim. It allows for exploring and understanding common experiences of individuals or meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem in order to develop a theory (Creswell, 2012; 2014). For instance, it attempts to broaden and deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world. It provides an avenue to explore research questions concerning human experiences, opinions and looking at real-life context, or even a sensitive topic that needs flexibility to avoid

causing distress. Hence, it seeks to answer questions about social aspects of our world such as: 1) why people behave the way they do; 2) how opinions and attitudes are formed; 3) how people are affected by events that go on around them; and (4) how and why cultures and practices have developed in the way they have.

A qualitative approach is one in which the researcher makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives or both (Creswell, 2003). It employs strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies that incorporate collecting open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2003). However, the current study adopted a qualitative interpretive approach, because it was found appropriate for the researcher to establish the meaning of the studied area from the views of the participants. This method helps to understand social phenomena in a natural setting, giving due importance to meanings, experiences, and views of participants. As a result, it is particularly fitting for this study as it provides a platform to understanding teachers' creation of subjective theory of assessment that supports student learning within the context of the EFL classroom. The methods employed to collect data were semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom observation, document analysis and the researcher's diary.

According to Pope and Mayes (1995) qualitative research studies allow the researcher to seek answers to questions such as what, how and why and to allow him or her to connect with the inner experiences of the participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than to test variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative research also allows the researcher to connect with participants on a more personal level as it is concerned with the subjective assessment of a person's life, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, opinions, emotions, feelings, and also about organizational functioning, social

movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations. Therefore, it is felt that this method will help answer the questions posed in this study.

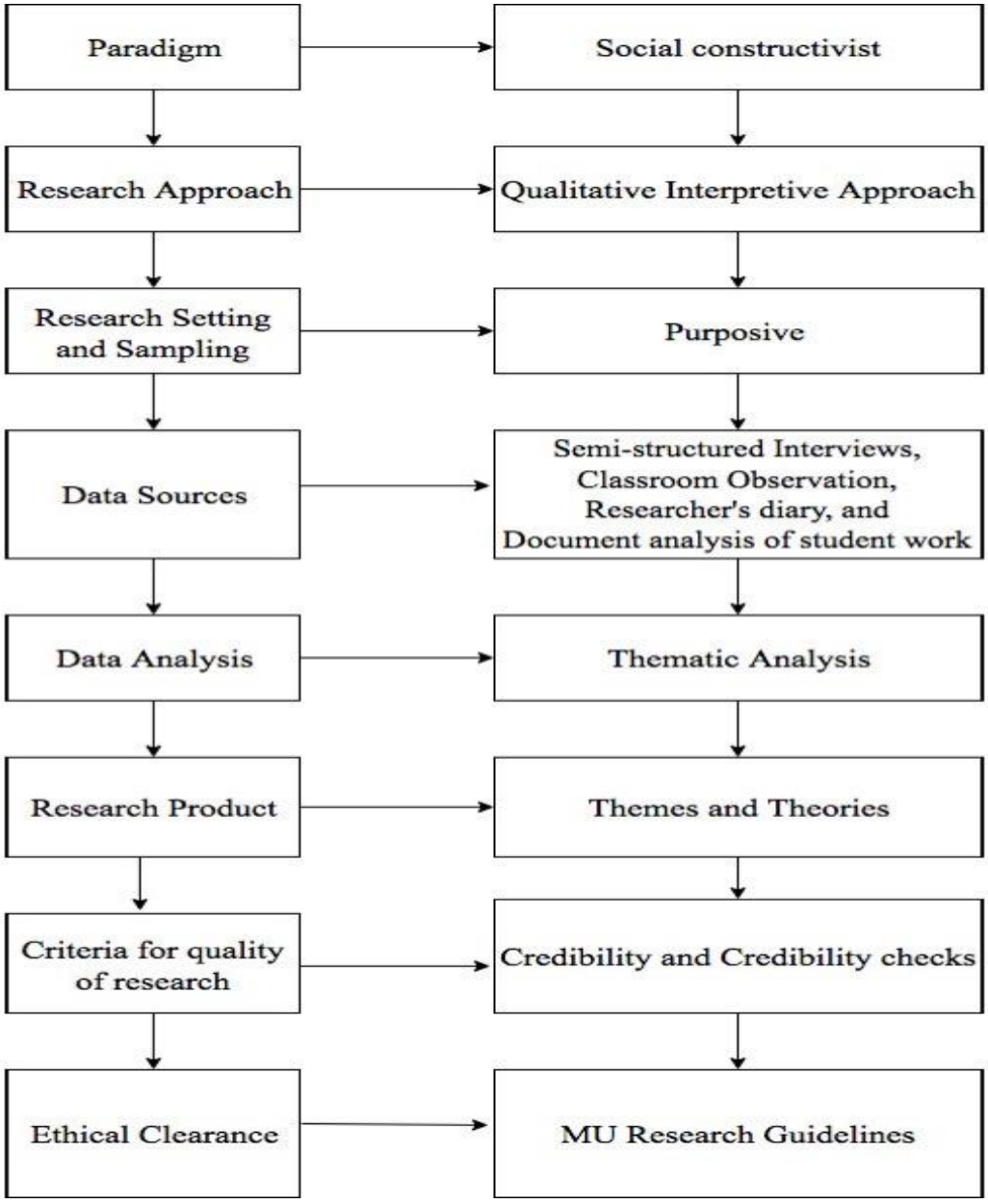


Figure 1. Illustrates the overview of the plan for the research study

The above research plan and design focused on answering the two research questions as follows: first, assessing how teachers process their thoughts in creating subjective theory of assessment with regard to improving teaching and learning using semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, the researcher's field notes and document analysis; and second,

assessing factors/critical incidences contributing to the development of teacher subjective theory of assessment using semi-structured interviews and classroom observation.

3.3 Constructivist and Interpretative research approach

This study supports multiple methods that are designed to obtain rich data analysed from an interpretivist view. The interpretive approach has been chosen for this study because the researcher sets out with the belief that access to reality is only possible through social constructions mediated by language, consciousness and shared meanings (Creswell, 2009). Hence, the interpretive researcher seeks to understand values, beliefs and meanings of social phenomena, thereby obtaining a deeper understanding of human cultural activities and experiences (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Generally, in the interpretivist approach, the aim of the research is to make sense of meanings others have about the world (Richardson, 1997).

Creswell (2003) stresses that the research collection take place in a natural setting, allowing the researcher to be highly involved in the actual experiences of the participants; multiple methods are interactive and humanistic; the data is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, meaning that the data collection and even the research questions may be adjusted to new information that surfaces; and finally, it is fundamentally interpretive, meaning that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. Interpretive studies usually attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people bring to the forefront and targets the production of an understanding of the context of the information system, and the process through which the information system influences and is influenced by the context (Walsham, 1993). Thus, this approach is suitable for finding out more about certain structures of experience and the meaning insights of the research participants, and the specific interrelationship between them and their environment. One of the objectives of interpretive research, according to Erickson (1996) is to find out the specific ways in which local and non-local forms of social organization and culture relate to the activities of specific persons in making choices and conducting social action together. In doing so, the researcher needs

to relate and interact with research participants in an attempt to understand what they have experienced and what these experiences mean to them. In order to do this, the researcher needs to focus on the participant's descriptions and explanations of their experiences. The researcher needs to carefully listen in an attempt to explain the data communicated by the participants in an inter-subjective relationship (Grant & Giddings, 2002). In this study, the researcher seeks to ascertain teachers' experiences regarding their classroom assessment planning and implementation.

Interpretive research seeks to understand reality from the insiders' point of view and contexts in order to unravel the multiple layers of meaning represented by human actions using tools such as interviews, observations, and the review of documents to gather data (Creswell, 2009). Hence, one can achieve an understanding of the situation by closely following and documenting the particulars of a given setting (Erickson, 1996). In addition, an interpretive approach provides a deep insight into "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118).

Since interpretation is the process of moving beyond a mere description of a phenomenon, on the question of how we know, the interpretative perspective takes the position that results are tentative and focus on collective meaning-making as they are independent from the research participants (Bergstrom, 2000). Knowledge will be produced based on the findings that have been created in the process of interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mingers, 2001; Guba, 1990). Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Walsham, 1995a; Walsham, 1995b). To sum up, interpretive research makes it possible to present the researcher's own constructions as well as those of all the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 1997; Walsham, 1995a). In this study, the researcher will reconstruct teachers' subjective theories of assessment without manipulating or changing teachers' actual knowledge of the subject.

3.4 Research Setting and Sampling

According to Bernard (1995) it becomes imperative to select the manner in which and from whom the data will be acquired and these processes need to be obtained properly with good judgment, principally because no amount of analysis can make up for improperly collected data. This research study was conducted in 2016 with the population of 10 EFL teachers of Grades 7-9 from 7 lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic. The teaching experiences of these teachers ranged from 6 months to twenty years. The participants consist of mixed genders (6 males and 4 females). The following table provides the information of the research participants.

	Teachers	Teaching Experience (Years)	Gender
1	Debbie	.5	Female
2	John	2	Male
3	Taylor	2	Male
4	Smith	4	Male
5	Pat	13	Male
6	Martha	14	Female
7	Terry	15	Male
8	Tom	15	Male
9	Jen	20	Female
10	Carla	20	Female

Table 1. Participants' Information

The teachers taught two types of classes i.e., classes comprising of academically strong students and another consisting of average or poor students. These divisions were created from the beginning of academic year with the intention to provide the required academic guidance and attention.

The purposeful sampling strategy was employed in the beginning to select the participants and research sites in order to elicit maximum informative responses (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) and this was followed by the snowball sampling method. The purposive sampling is also referred to as judgmental sampling in which the participants are deliberately chosen due to the qualities the informant possesses (Bernard, 2011). It involves the selection of individuals or a group of individuals that are proficient and familiar with a phenomenon of interest (Bernard, 2002; 2011) and allows the researcher to look for people who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). Purposive sampling takes place when the researcher selects a sample from which the most can be learned (Merrian, 1998). As a result, this technique would help the researcher in identifying subjects which are most likely to satisfy the needs of the study, and this would also allow for flexibility and convenience for the research process.

According to Descombe (2014), purposive sampling works well when the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events in question and deliberately selects them because they are seen as individuals which may produce the most valuable data by virtue of their knowledge and experience. The purposeful sampling strategy can also be employed to elicit rich and in-depth information of an expert sample (Creswell, 2009; 2011). Considering all these advantages, this sampling procedure was deemed most appropriate for this study.

The snowball sampling method is a commonly used approach to locate, access, and involve people from specific populations in cases where the researcher anticipates difficulties in creating a representative sample of the research population (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). After locating the first few teachers, the technique of snowball sampling method was exercised as it assists the researcher in accessing new research participants and social groups when other contact avenues have withered (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). It was taken into

consideration as a sample recruitment method as it allows the researcher to overcome many of the challenges associated with soliciting participants from difficult-to-reach and hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2011). Through its sampling technique of "contact tracing" one individual names all other individuals who were associated with a specific event, thus offering a means to arrive at the hard-to-reach target group in a more pragmatic and culturally competent way.

3.5 Data Collection

Data gathering is crucial in research, as the data is meant to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework (Bernard, 2002). The data collection for the study was drawn from multiple sources, mainly using semi-structured interviews with the teachers to collect their views and opinions on assessment practices. Further, one of the aims of this study was to examine whether the teacher's assessment practices supported learning, and so to evaluate this part of the study, one of the data sources was review of student work and/or assignments assigned by the teachers. In addition, to garner thicker data on the study, other qualitative data sources such as classroom observation, and the researcher's diary were employed.

The data sources were accessed over a four-month period. Data interpretation was ongoing which led to the formulation of a set of theories by the end of the study. The overview of the research plan is depicted below followed by a detailed explanation of each data collection source employed in the study.

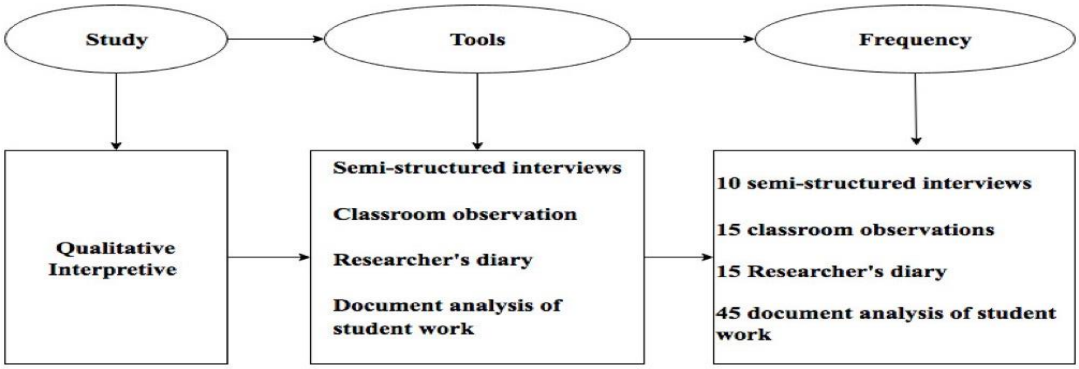


Figure 2. Overview of research plan

3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews with teachers

Qualitative interviewing has become a key method in the human and social sciences, and also in many other scientific fields, such as education and health sciences. It is a process of seeing the world and learning from it (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Rapley (2001) communicates that some people have even argued that the interview has become a central resource through which social sciences and society engage with the issues that concern them. Thus, people talk with other people in order to obtain richer data with regard to how they experience the world, how they think, act, feel and develop as individuals and in groups and this kind of knowledge processing interaction has been refined and discussed as interviews (Brinkmann, 2013). Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) defined the interview as "a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (p. 449). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) the interview is an interchange of views between two persons, conversing about a subject of mutual interest.

Interviews are currently widely used tools of qualitative research data collection and is treated as one of the most efficient techniques to collect qualitative data. There are various forms of interview design that can be developed to obtain thick, rich data utilizing a qualitative

investigational perspective (Creswell, 2007) and depending on the need and design, interviews can be structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Rowley, 2012). Structured interviews involve asking a few questions, the expected answers are generally short, and questions are posed in the same order with every interviewee. Unstructured interviews are based on a limited number of topics or issues or prompts, with the emphasis being very much on encouraging the respondent to talk around the theme; the interviewer adapts his or her questions and their order in accordance with what the interviewee says (Bryman, 2016; Rowley, 2012). To conduct this type of interview, appropriate skill and experience are necessary, and may generate a series of interview transcripts that are difficult to compare and integrate. The most common type of interview is the semi-structured interview. It has features of both structured and unstructured interviews and therefore, they are extensively used. It takes on a variety of different forms, with varying numbers of questions, and varying degrees of adaptation of questions and question order to accommodate the interviewee (Rowley, 2012).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most often used interviewing format for qualitative research. This study employed semi-structured interviews with the teachers mainly to elicit in-depth contextual information to understand teachers' subjective theory of assessment. Interviews were mainly used to understand teachers' subjective theory of assessment. For example, instances such as using the local dialect, unusual exchange of words (argument), teachers' movement from student to the next, etc. were recorded in my diary through classroom observation and required further exploration. Such vague instances were clarified through interviews. This way, interviews helped supplement the data gathered from other sources, and so the researcher can present a well-rounded collection of information for analysis. The purpose of the interview then is to obtain as much and as specific as possible information that is also useful, about events and facts and emotions, experiences, attitudes about the world around them.

According to Turner (2010) interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to the participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic. Thus, interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind each participant's experiences.

The interviewer has some freedom in pursuing in-depth information on the topic from the participants. Punch (2013) explains that an interview is an effective way of accessing people's perspectives, values, motives, opinions, definitions of situations and constructs, and it remains the most the most powerful way to understand others. It facilitates people to convey and convince others about a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. Interviews help in extending the researcher's intellectual and emotional scope by listening to others (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Patton (1987); Powney and Watts (1987) ascertain that semi-structured interviews allow issues that need to be addressed to be specified prior to the interview. As the conversation proceeds, the sequencing and wording of the interview questions may change and/or evolve. Hence, this phenomenon leads to a more inclusive coverage on the issue that is being studied and, at the same time, provides flexibility to be able to probe for more clarification and in-depth discussions on those issues and other relevant concerns that emerge during the session (Patton, 1990). While a structured interview has a formalized, limited set of questions, a semi-structured interview in contrast is more flexible; it allows new questions to emerge during the process of interviewing as a result of what the interviewee says (Descombe, 2010). The interviewer generally has a flexible framework of themes to be explored in a semi-structured interview (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002).

The topic areas of interview questions are: teachers' subjective theory of assessment and assessment planning and practices. However, the specific topic or topics that the interviewer wants to explore during the interview should be carefully considered well in advance. It is generally beneficial for interviewers to have an interview guide prepared, which includes the "grouping of topics and questions that the interviewer can ask in different ways

for different participants" (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002, P. 195). The guide will help researchers to focus an interview on the topics at hand without constraining them to a particular format. This freedom can help interviewers tailor their questions to the interview context, and to the people they are interviewing (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information. Unlike the questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulated ahead of time, semi-structured interviewing starts with more general questions. Not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of uptake questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to delve into details or discuss issues. In this study, all interviews were conducted after scheduling appropriate time slots with the teachers without disturbing their teaching time.

There are, however, potential challenges to both the researcher and participants during semi-structured interviews may be encountered. Some of the strengths of using this interview technique include the provision of rich, original voices which are used to construct high-quality research descriptions (Gomm, 2004). Semi-structured interviews are appropriate in my study where depth of meaning is important and the research is focused on gaining insight and understanding (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) of the ways and manners in which teachers develop and explain their subjective theory of assessment in order to support learning. Secondly, the trust and mutual respect that my participants and I shared ultimately helped to legitimise the argument of the study which Gomm (2004) describes as a "fact producing interaction". The argument is that unless an intimate, trusting and empathetic relationship is developed, the participants will not disclose the truth.

For teacher interviews (N=10), a set of predetermined questions was prepared, but they were subject to the possibility of change, explanation and interpretation in the process of

interviewing. In this way, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were used with teachers. In the seven respective schools, teachers are interviewed when it is convenient for them and without affecting their class schedules. Interviews with each teacher lasted from 50 minutes to 90 minutes, and each teacher was interviewed only once during the whole process of the study.

3.5.2 Classroom Observation

In everyday life, observation is used to gain information or knowledge so appropriate action may be taken in the world around us. It also provides us with information, and enables us to test our common-sense theories about the social world (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

Classroom observation proves to be a valuable tool for improving the quality of teaching if skilfully done, though if badly handled, it can be a menace. Classroom observation is now gaining more popularity than in the past. It represents a frequently used form of data collection, with which the researcher is able to assume different roles in the process (Spradley, 1980).

Observation has been defined as the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2012). Systematic observation is especially useful in studying quality issues as it offers researchers the chance to uncover everyday behaviour rather than only relying on accounts. It can be applied in studying organizational settings, team behaviour, and interactions (Pop, van Royen & Baker, 2002). According to Sapsford and Jupp (2006) the purpose of observation in research is the production of public knowledge (empirical and theoretical) about specific issues, which can be used by others in a variety of ways. Observational methods have the advantage of directly evaluating the teaching and learning process. Yin (2011) argues that observing can be “an invaluable way of collecting data because what you see with your own eyes and perceive with your own senses is not filtered by what others might have reported to you or what the author of some document

might have seen" (p. 143).

Through classroom observation, the researcher can explore how classroom interaction takes place, how teachers carry out their teaching, how students learn, how teaching and learning are assessed, what a teacher does when students struggle to make sense out of learning, when students err, when students do not understand the material, and so on.

In this study, 15 classroom observations were made to observe the teaching and learning process, and to take note if some interesting, unusual, and unexpected incidences take place in the classroom setting, especially with regard to classroom assessment practices. Classroom observation allows the researcher to take notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site. In the researcher's diary, the researcher can record the ways and the manners in which the activities are carried out at the research site. The qualitative observer can also take on the role of a non-participant or even a complete participant. In this study, the notes were kept by the researcher, and so these notes can act as a probe or supplement later on during the interview with the teachers, and at the same time can capture further insights and clarification on some of the interesting and unexpected activities that took place in the lesson.

Using observation as a data source has its own advantages. Firstly, it allows the researcher to collect information about the physical environment and about human behaviour directly without having to rely on the anticipatory accounts of others. Secondly, the observer can see what the participants cannot see. Finally, data from observation can be a useful safeguard for, and supplement to, information collected from other sources (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

Sapsford and Jupp (2006) also argue that observation also has some limitations such as the environment, event or behaviour of the participants may be inaccessible, and observation may simply be impossible. Further, the behaviour of the person being observed may

consciously or unconsciously change, thus, observational accounts may be inaccurate representations of how they behave naturally. In addition, observations are filtered through the interpretive lens of the observer, hence, it may not provide the reader with a direct representation of the reality. Finally, observation is time consuming, and therefore costly. In this study, these limitations will be addressed by data collected from other sources employed in the study such as document analysis, the researcher's diary and semi-structured interviews.

3.5.3 Researcher's Diary

Although diaries are popular for personal reasons, diaries seem to be nonetheless a neglected source even in areas where one would anticipate they would be a key resource (Alaszewski, 2006). The term diary may also refer to recording examples of writing that are conducted by teachers and pupils; however, it may vary in different contexts (Burgess, 1994).

Bartlett and Milligan (2015) distinguished two types of diaries: a) unsolicited and b) solicited. Diaries that people choose to keep voluntarily are an example of an unsolicited diary and have been published for centuries. Solicited diaries are those diaries that people have been requested to keep for a particular reason, especially for research purposes.

The purposes of a diary may vary. Some people keep diaries to be used as a reminder of events or appointments, while some people use themes for recording personal accounts such as feelings and thoughts at that time and so may choose to keep it private. There are others who record events for publications. Some people even provide frequent reports on the events and experiences of their daily lives (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). It is also a form of data collection in which the researcher will document the particulars of life.

According to Wheeler and Reis (1991) diaries are designed to capture the "little experiences of everyday life that fill most of our working time and occupy the vast majority of our conscious attention" (p. 340). Alaszewski (2006) describes a diary as a document created

by an individual who has maintained a regular, personal, and contemporaneous record. Hence, Alaszewski (2006) claims the characteristics of diaries include:

1) Regularity: A diary that is organized around a sequence of regular or date entries over a period of time.

2) Personal: The entries made by an individual who control access to it while he or she records it.

3) Contemporaneous: The entries are made at the time of the occurrence of the events so that the record is not distorted by the shortcomings of memory.

4) A record: The entries that describe events that an individual feels are important and relevant such as social events, activities, interactions, impressions, and feelings.

As Alaszewski (2006) explained, a diary can be used for recording important events and personal accounts on a regular basis, and so, these features were also found useful for this study as it would allow the researcher to capture her own personal thoughts and feeling around the sequence of classroom activities that she felt was worth capturing. Hence, as proposed by Alaszewski (2006), diary was used for a similar purpose in this study.

Further, Holy (1884) reports that a diary includes all three kinds of writing. Firstly, it captures a log of all the activities and decisions in which the researcher has been engaged. Secondly, a diary involves a free-flowing account where the writer reflects on some aspects of the log at the end of a busy day by writing them up in more detail. Finally, it includes a record of a particular situation or event in which the writer has been actively involved and wishes to describe.

Reis (1994) argues that one benefit of the diary method is that it permits the examination of reported events and experiences in their natural, spontaneous context, providing information complementary to that obtainable by more traditional designs. Reis and Gable (2000) through

their comprehensive reviews of diary methods assert that diaries can be used in studying multiple domains.

In this study, in order to accomplish in-depth data on some of the accounts observed during the classroom observation, it was used for the purpose outlined above. Furthermore, those activities that needed more explanation and understanding were marked and recorded, and so the clarification can be sought during the subsequent semi-structured interview process with the teachers. Hence, it was used as a supplement to the semi-structured interview to seek in-depth data from the interview process with the teachers.

As reported by Burgess (1988), it was also used to capture teachers' classroom assessment practices in particular, the interaction between teacher and students, and also some unique and interesting events that took place during the lessons. Simultaneously, it also encouraged reflection on the observed classroom events and helped to plan accordingly to discover details that required further probing during the interview with the teacher. Thus, it served as another reliable instrument for this study.

3.5.4 Document Analysis

Documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research. Bowen (2009) defined document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (Computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. According to Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese and Schneider (2008) a document maybe portrayed as any symbolic representation that can be recorded and retrieved for description and analysis. Document analysis is a form of qualitative analysis that involves readers to locate, interpret, analyse and draw conclusions about the evidence presented (Briggs & Coleman, 2007). Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that document analysis occurs when the data is examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.

Documents are explained as written texts and images that serve as a record or piece of evidence of an event or a fact (Wolff, 2004). A major chunk of the reality that is relevant to the members of society is accessible to them in the form of documents (Smith, 1978 in Wolff, 2004).

Documents are standardized artefacts and may typically appear in particular formats such as notes, contracts, drafts, death certificates, case reports, remarks, diaries, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgments, and letters or expert opinions. Documents include national and international newspapers, academic publications, government publications and parliamentary debates (Rapley, 2007). In general, researchers can work on a range of documents dealing with both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are historically contemporary, having first-hand accounts, while secondary sources are historically or spatially distant or the types where you combine second-hand experience (Rapley, 2007).

During the process of research, the researcher may collect documents. Thus, document analyses are a collection of documents that the researcher made during his/her visit to the research site through classroom observation and interviews. There are two types: public documents that consists of newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports etc., and second, private documents that include personal journals and diaries, letters, emails etc. This study collected student assignments, test materials, essays, and portfolios to examine the impact of teacher assessment on student learning. In this study, photographs of the students' work were taken where needed after seeking permission from the students and teachers concerned.

One of the advantages of documentary research is that documents have been produced and preserved as a record of past; but documents, in general, are not produced specifically for the purposes of social research. Documents are no less easy to handle than data from interviews, classroom observation, questionnaires or a focus group. It also requires considerable skill to

locate elusive documents and considerable interpretative talents to uncover the essence of the contents (Briggs & Coleman, 2007).

In this study the researcher examined student work, such as assignments given by the teacher by asking critical questions to seek further explanation and clarification on student work, as proposed by Briggs and Coleman (2007) in order to gather accurate and rich data. The data collected from the document were used to highlight a range of perspectives on that particular event or activity. It also provided insights specifically on what the teacher actually did with regard to assessing student work, and more broadly, what actually happens in the classroom. The data was also used to uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem. Further, as advised by Denzin (1978), document analysis was employed in this study as a complement to other qualitative research sources as a means of triangulation in the study of the same phenomenon. This was executed in order to bring more credibility to the study and also to corroborate findings across data sets in an attempt to reduce the impact of potential biases that can crop up in a single study.

Documents can serve a variety of purposes as part of a research study. Bowen (2009) suggests several applications of documents in the study of a research phenomenon. First, documents can provide data on the context within which the research participants operate. Hence, it helps the researchers to gather information and insights in order to understand the historical roots of specific issues. The researcher can use the data drawn from documents to contextualize data collected during interviews. In this study, data drawn from documents such as student's essays, classroom tasks, homework, portfolio, test materials were used. Further explanation and clarification on these documents could be gathered during the interview with the teachers, if needed. Second, information contained in the document might suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research. In this study, wherever necessary, questions seeking further clarification on student work was

asked during the interview with the teachers. Third, information procured from the document provided supplementary research data. In the same way, document analysis was used in combination with other sources such as the researcher's diary, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Finally, documents can help verify findings from other sources. Likewise, it was used to validate findings from other sources employed in this study. Thus, in this way, document analysis was an important part of this study.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

Data analysis is the central step in qualitative research. According to Flick (2013) qualitative data analysis has been defined as the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. It is also applied to discover and describe issues in the field, or structures and processes in routines and practices. Flick (2013) also argues that qualitative data analysis often connects approaches of a rough analysis of the material (overviews, condensation, summaries) with approaches of a detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, hermeneutic interpretations or identified structures). The final step is to arrive at generalizable statements by comparing various materials or various texts or several cases with each other.

Flick (2013) identified three purposes to qualitative data analysis. The first purpose is to describe the phenomenon in some or greater detail. The second purpose is to identify the conditions on which such differences are based and, finally, to develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material.

The study followed a thematic analysis. This was used because thematic analyses seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes.

Creswell (2003; 2007) asserts that in this process, the researcher must make "sense" out of what was just discovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes. In order to do this, interview recordings were transcribed as the research progressed. After completing the transcription, the interview transcripts were read word by word, line by line, paragraph by paragraph, and incident by incident in order to form emerging essential codes on teacher subjective theory of assessment. The codes or the sub themes were developed without diverting from the original ideas of the research participants. Charmaz (2006) also named this processes as coding, whereby it is described as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p.43).

At this point the second step in handling the data is the process of forming descriptive themes. Accordingly, the codes were read several times to decipher the codes that emerged repeatedly, consistently and those which made a significant impact. These codes were then structured and labelled to form descriptive themes. Following the codes, as proposed by (Glaser, 2005), one core category was pursued, which was the most significant and frequent code that can also be related to as many other codes as possible and more than other candidates for the core category. They were identified and chosen as the core category to act as a guide for further data gathering and coding.

Finally, as proposed by Glaser (1978), the categorization was examined several times, and then looked for themes that were relevant to the research questions were sought. To achieve this integration, consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants were tracked (Kvale, 2007). These consistent and common codes were then inspected, chosen and used as analytical tools to organize and conceptualize meanings in order to develop a relevant assessment theory. Links between the main themes to support theoretical

development on assessment were established. This was done in order to illustrate the key findings in the data.

However, many researchers express the need to employ a third party consultant who can review the codes or themes in order to determine the quality and effectiveness based on their evaluation of the interview transcripts (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the themes were formed after several rounds of coding. Finally, the common and repetitive themes that emerged from the participants' interview transcriptions were considered as final. This was done in regular consultation with an expert in order to prevent researcher bias or potentially eliminate instances where over-analysing of data has occurred.

3.7 Quality of Research

Although many rigorous techniques exist for increasing the quality of the data collected, questions nevertheless arise with regard to the initial findings of such research owing to the nature of its analysis. Several researchers, notably Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Patton (1999); Tracy (2010), have demonstrated how qualitative researchers can address the issues of reliability and validity. Over the last decade a number of authors have addressed and debated the issue of what sort of criteria are appropriate for guiding and evaluating qualitative research (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001; Yardley, 2000; Creswell, 1998).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) proposed four criteria to be considered by qualitative researchers. These four criteria are 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. Following Guba and Lincoln (1989), Tracy (2010) offered eight other criteria of qualitative quality. They are: 1) worthy topic, 2) rich rigor, 3) sincerity, 4) credibility, 5) resonance, 6) significant contribution, 7) ethics, and 8) meaningful coherence.

As proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Tracy (2010), the criteria of credibility was used followed by a selected number of "credibility checks" proposed by Elliott, Fischer and Rennie,

(1999); Miles and Huberman, (1994); Stiles, (1993); Tracy, (2010), and ethics (Tracy, 2010) to uphold the rigour and robustness of the data.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility and confirmability are also considered to be foundation components of trustworthiness (Clayton & Thorne, 2000). It is one of the criteria for ensuring the rigor of qualitative research and thus, the researcher must undertake procedures to check the trustworthiness, or believability, of his or her research findings, i.e., that the interpretations made do not simply reflect the researcher's own flight of fancy. Tracy (2010) refers credibility to the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings while Guba and Lincoln (1989) states that credibility must ask the question: "how congruent are the findings with reality?" A number of "credibility checks" have been proposed Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, (1999); Miles & Huberman, (1994); Stiles, (1993); Golafshani, (2003) and the underlying principles are described below.

3.7.1.1 Consensus

Consensus requires a joint team to analyse the data rather than relying on a single analyst. Hill, Thompson, and William (1997) relay that this approach involves members of the team independently analysing some or all of the data, and then coming together to compare notes and to debate different conceptualizations, eventually reaching a consensus on the best way of representing the data. In this study, the data transcriptions were done by the researcher herself. However, the transcriptions were cross-checked by re-reading them and by carefully listening to the audio recordings to confirm that all the information was clearly captured. Likewise, where some portions were not clear, the researcher emailed the transcriptions to the participants to validate the accuracy of the information shared by them. Data coding and analysis was done in consultation with an expert to ensure consistency and coherence.

3.7.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis tools to investigate the same phenomenon which helps in eliminating biases and detecting anomalies in the findings (Patton, 1999; Anderson, 1998). It moves from description to verification with the use of four basic types of triangulation: data, investigative, theoretical and methodological (Denzi, 1978). Data and theoretical triangulation are incorporated into this study. Since each method reveal different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of data collection and analysis thus provide more grist for the research mill. In addition, Patton (1990) argues that studies that use only one method will be more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method; for example, an interview can lead to biased or untrue responses more often than in those studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks.

In this study, to reduce the risk of false interpretation and to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, multiple data sources were used in confirming and corroborating the results of the study. For example, the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were triangulated with and checked by the data generated from classroom observations, the researcher's field notes, and document analysis. Additionally, data gathered from classroom observation, the researcher's diary and document analysis of student work were clarified and confirmed by teachers to collect rich and deeper understandings of teachers' creation of subjective theory of assessment that support student learning during the semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, to ensure effective analysis, review and evaluation of the gathered data, multiple theoretical perspectives were also used to interpret the results of the study. Furthermore, data collected from different sources were triangulated in consideration of Denzin's (2017) proposition regarding the importance of verifying results through checking

findings against other sources and perspectives to reduce systematic bias that crops up in single-method, single-observer, and single-theory studies.

3.7. 2 Research Ethics

Ethics are of great concern in research, particularly when human subjects are involved. Researchers must always be conscious of the problems their study can create and make every effort to minimize or eliminate any harm to their research participants (Hughes & Helling, 1991).

In social science, research ethics is a grouping of ethical principles and rules which is determined in a more or less binding and a relatively consensual way, how the relationships between researchers on the one hand and those involved on the other hand are to be handled (Hopf, 2004). Therefore, it is vital to respect the setting in which the research takes place. This should be shown by gaining prior permission and by causing minimal disturbances (Creswell, 2012).

According to Tracy (2010), ethics are of four types: 1) procedural, 2) situational, 3) relational, and 4) exiting. Depending on the goals of the research, the researcher can use any of the criteria to ensure the quality of the research. This study will use three of the criteria in ensuring the robustness of the research.

Relational ethics involve an ethical self-consciousness in which researchers are mindful of their character, actions, and consequences on others. Relational ethics are related to an ethic of care that "recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). In this study, the research participants were asked to participate voluntarily. They were also informed of the option to refuse or withdraw their participation if they did not wish to participate or refused to answer a question if they felt it was inappropriate or if they felt uncomfortable with answering them. Interviews were recorded after seeking

permission from each participant. To maintain anonymity and to safeguard the participants, all participants were guaranteed that their identity would not be disclosed and pseudonyms were used to represent them. In this way, the relational ethics was ensured. The exiting ethics expects the researcher to consider ethics beyond the data collection phase to how researchers leave the scene and share the results (Tracy, 2010). In accordance to the exiting ethics, the participants were informed that the findings of the research will be shared with them if they requested.

As a part of procedural ethics, researchers are expected to safeguard participants from undue exposure by securing all personal data (Tracy, 2010). Considering the procedural ethics, all data resources from this study, including the researcher's diary, interview transcriptions and interpretive documents were stored in password protected databases in the researcher's office where only the researcher had access. These data will be destroyed following the five-year time frame limit set by the MU.

In addition, ethical clearance to conduct this research was solicited from Masaryk University (MU). The ethics guidelines were prepared respecting the fundamental ethics principles outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union Horizon 2020 (H2020), especially in respect to the freedom of research and the need to protect the physical and moral integrity of individuals, the welfare of animals, environmental protection, malevolent use of research results, and clinical research. The research is conducted following the European Doctorate in Teacher Education (EDiTE) project that are based on national legal regulations, code of ethics, as well as good practices.

The research ethics were obtained and submitted following the instruments, norms and practices set for Masaryk University researchers. Details on the procedures and criteria used for recruiting research participants, and copies of ethics approval were solicited from the concerned authority prior to the start of the research.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive design. Multiple data collection tools (e.g., classroom observation, document analysis, interviews, and researcher's diary) were used to acquire data during the study. The participants for the study consisted of 10 EFL teachers from 7 lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic.

This study design was suitable as multiple data from the perspective of an insider being in their class, observing and interacting over the span of 4 months could be collected. The researcher kept a diary to take notes on the classroom proceedings. The teachers were interviewed to obtain their viewpoint regarding planning and implementation of assessment practices.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was applied to analyse and triangulate the findings. The interviews and findings from other sources were coded, themes were formed and finally the data were described, explained and interpreted.

To uphold the quality of the study, the criteria of credibility and ethics were utilized to uphold the rigour and validity of the research. The following chapter (Chapter 4) will describe the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study which is focused on teachers' subjective theory of assessment. The findings are presented starting with the types of assessment practices in relation to the assessment themes and what they were thinking when they were performed. The second section of the findings elaborates on teacher learning of the assessment, particularly referring to how they reform or transform their assessment practices owing to various learning factors or critical incidences. Factors that obstructed teachers' formation of subjective theories of assessment is also discussed. In the final section of this chapter, how teachers learn about assessment and how they handle problems when they are caught in conflicting situations are discussed. It concludes with summarisation and interpretation of the data examined.

4.2 Assessment types in relation to assessment themes

This section deals with teachers' types of assessment and their understanding and explanations regarding these practices. The findings conclude that teachers' subjective theories regarding planning and execution of assessment tasks is elicited through the major roles teachers' place on the five dominant themes that are: 1) assessment for student accountability, 2) assessment for certification, and, 3) assessment for improving teaching and learning, 4) assessment for managing behaviour, and, 5) assessment for motivation purposes. These themes and their purposes underlying the practice of assessment for each of these are explained in detail in the in the subheadings hereafter. The table below depicts the synopsis of the findings of the assessment types in relation to the assessment themes. This outline was developed following the explanation made under each assessment theme.

Assessment Themes	Assessment Types	Purposes
Accountability	Self-peer-teacher	Delivers 3 rounds of feedback Receives 3 rounds of reworking
	Assessment Rubrics	Students can identify their levels of learning
	Student involvement	Develops their meta-cognition and assessing skills
	I-Set/We-Set goals	Modify learning based on the set goals
	Portfolio	Revisit, reflect, compare, and revise their work
	Homework	Provides platform for reflection/revision
Certification	Grading Testing Small marks Every exercised assessment options (projects, portfolio, presentation, essays, roleplay, homework, group work)	Grades adjustment made for educational/institutional/social/cultural purposes
Improvement	Verbal Feedback (whole class/one-to-one basis)	Motivates students to work harder
	Written Feedback	Enhances learning as specific and focused feedback on writing is provided
	Questioning (Critical and analytical)	Develops meta-cognition and questioning skills
	Reading/writing tracked based on mark schemes	Contributes to theory building
	Non-verbal feedback	Alerts students' mistakes
	Practiced-based assessment (Imitation of intonation)	Corrects students' pronunciation
	Differentiated assessment approaches (coloured points/points/targeted tasks/think-pair-share activities)	Caters to students' learning differentiation and multiple learning styles
	Targeted tasks	Offers students' to work on the topic each student is good at
Motivation	Class/teach/smiley/short videos	Keeps the class alert, active and highly engaged
	Choice-based assessment (projects, presentations, essay, book talk, weekly reading)	Develops interest, works hard and raises levels of learning Provides first-hand experience
	Smileys/stickers/Pictures	Promotes competition/ Makes students happy and works hard to get them
	Positive comments	As reinforcement offered
	Fun-based assessment (games, game-like activity/pair work/group work/songs)	Promotes openness, amiability, and interest Develops positive learning ambiance
Behaviour	Black dots, pluses	Provided on undesirable activities or anything objectionable
	Punitive measures	Cautions students about their efforts
	Positive and negative emotions/ short videos	Keeps students' attentive in the class Prevents noises Promotes conducive learning environment

Table 2. The Czech lower secondary teachers' appropriation of assessment types in relation to the assessment themes

4.2.1 Assessment for teacher and student accountability

In the context of this study, accountability refers to assessment methods created and used by teachers for the purposes of making teachers and students accountable or responsible for their teaching and learning. According to the teachers in this study, accountability is crucial to enhancing learning and in this regard, teachers were found to be using various assessment practices to support accountability. The use of these methods and the benefits underlying them as expressed by the teachers are outlined hereafter.

According to the teachers, one of the most prominent methods of sustaining student accountability was use of the formative nature of assessment practices. Teachers upheld that assessment is beneficial when it is formative in nature. They illuminated further that it serves the purpose of making students accountable towards their learning as they focus on the process rather than the end results. Hence, teachers admitted that they modify their instruction according to the needs of the students to further their learning. In connection to it, the observation as well as researcher's diary and interview showed teachers carrying out three rounds of assessment to meet the desired learning goals. The teachers practiced self-, peer-, and teacher assessment which, according to the teachers, meant students went through three levels of reworking their activities before the final versions were submitted to the teacher. Teachers describes that since formative assessment is process-based, such assessment delivers more feedback to students (self-feedback, peer-feedback and teacher-feedback) and more time for revision, which made students' writing and learning progress clearly visible. In addition, there are also the benefits of self-learning wherein students learn to associate their learning gaps and those of their peers, hence, making them more responsible for their learning:

> *In case of written work like an essay, I usually give like 3 or 4 days in class concentrated to a formative feedback loop. So, we, peer, self and me, 3 levels of feedback. So, they will do self-assessment first, peer assessment and then teacher assessment. And then,*

they submit their final copy and they get three levels of assessment to get through there. **(Debbie)**

Drawing on the above view, teachers affirmed peer assessment to be very important because students were of the same age, and they could see the others' strengths and assess them in a different way than the teacher. Teachers also pointed out the benefits of self-feedback. They said, "self-feedback develops self-confidence as they get to know themselves in a different way". As a result, they learn to take responsibility for their own learning. Also, as observed, as a means to ensure responsibility and to build their assessing skills, students were made to do a self-assessment report, where they recorded their strengths, weaknesses and progress made, which was later turned into a report card by the teacher.

Additionally, teachers also expressed their subjective theories regarding the importance of taking learning forward and in this manner, they explained that if the purpose of assessment is to improve learning, then, in that case students need to know the learning intentions and success criteria to understand why they are learning and where the learning is advancing. Students also need feedback on their learning that helps them to improve. In connection to this, the finding showed that teachers created their own assessment rubrics to assess and guide students' written tasks (see Appendix 3). Since the rubrics were more specific and focused, it allowed the teachers to focus on the specific areas that required specific attention from the teacher and also endorses students to focus on their strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, it helps the teachers and students in attaining their learning goals. As perceived by the teachers, such practice sanctions the teachers to integrate assessment into teaching and learning.

According to the teachers, involving students in the assessment process has a significant impact on performance as it makes students more responsible and liable towards their own learning. One of the premises that supports students' involvement in the assessment process is whereby students were made to do self- and peer-assessment of their work following these

rubrics. Additionally, peer feedback was also encouraged as teachers perceived peer feedback as useful and stated that if the students were able to provide each other feedback, it means they were learning and at the same time, they were responsible. Such assessment according to the teachers ensured learner autonomy and responsibility. Moreover, learning evolved from passive to active. This meant a profound departure from the normal classroom setting to a more process-based approach wherein student involvement in assessment was viewed essential to teaching and learning.

Turning to the assessment rubrics, students also needed to justify why they gave that choice for themselves and for their peers. This technique, according to the teachers worked well as it assisted the teacher as well as students' in identifying their own learning gaps and levels of progress and also of their peers, thereby, building students' capacity to assess. When teachers were asked whether the students are able to use the rubric in self- and peer-assessment, the teachers insisted that the learners must be showed how to use them, otherwise, it may not serve the purpose. Hence, teachers claimed that they went through the rubrics together with the students and made them aware of the rubrics and its components as apparent in the following excerpt:

> *I do a kind of guided peer or self-assessment as students are in grade 7-9. So, we work with one general written rubric that we use all the time. In the rubrics, we focus on specific areas that our students struggle with like certain things such as making connection, making connection between texts, between words or ideas like that. So, what I do is I take this and then, I put a blue comment on this that explains how it precisely applies to the assignments. So, I actually found a lot of success with it. I actually get them to take a rubric and have them highlight it with orange colour and they have to demonstrate why they select that category for e.g., if they select level 3 then, they have to show their assignments where they found that or where they found that in their peer assessment that fits there or here. So, that's what the peer assessment usually looks like.* **(Debbie)**

Apparently, this was done to ensure fairness, transparency and clarity when defining learning intentions and also to substantiate student accountability. However, teachers did mention that sometimes students' feedback can be rather harsh and forceful wherein the teacher needs to intervene to facilitate things out for the students.

> *Peer assessment is helpful because sometimes it's better for students to hear for e.g., negative comments from their friends or class mates than from the teacher. But usually the teacher should say something in the end, because you know, the kids can be harsh to each other. You know, just like smooth it and make kids relaxed.* **(Carla)**

Teachers' also changed their subjective theories based on the roles they assume while involving students in the assessment tasks. The above excerpt is an indication of change in teacher's role, from being a teacher to becoming a mediator during student involvement in the assessment tasks. As elicited by the teachers, it became necessary to mediate when students grew insensitive to each other. Hence, teachers' roles came in handy as they could intervene and negotiate for them by offering their final say. This very fact depicted the critical role of a teacher in balancing learning.

Furthermore, teachers also ensured accountability through the set goals especially for written work. These goals were set either individually or together. Teachers then communicated these learning goals for written work through self-assessment based on I-Set or We-Set goals as a means to self-regulate, to check and compare students' progress based on the set goals before the final write up was submitted to the teacher. Students could also check the progress of their work following the set goals. Further, this sort of practice helped in the reflection process of teachers and students whereby teachers and students could constantly

reflect on the learning and accordingly, teachers could offer feedback to nurture their writing and students could use that feedback to better their work:

> *Self-assessment is based more on I-Set or We-Set writing goals every month they do in the class in their written assignments and then, based on that I set personal goals whether it be sentence development or sentence structure or something as simple as having enough sentences in a paragraph. Then, I get them to go through their personal goals and see how they are doing, where they have not improved and where they are, and then, I just give them teacher assessment feedback before the final copy is handed in.* **(Debbie)**

The above stated excerpt signifies that these set goals are helpful in identifying students' weaknesses, strengths and strategies for boosting their writing work. In this way, teachers constructed their subjective theories regarding teaching and learning by reflecting on the teaching and learning processes.

Almost all teachers claim testing is a nightmarish experience for students and that grades as not important. Testing and marks only promote and prove reproduction ability of knowledge. Assessment should allow students to think out of the box and make students constantly reflect and revise, as they are crucial to enhancing learning. This aspect of learning was promoted in this study through portfolio-based assessment as they inculcate positive and responsible attitude in the students. Therefore, teachers claim portfolio-based assessment as beneficial as it made students hardworking and accountable for their work. The teachers' philosophy behind the use of this approach was that it builds students' reflection, communication and writing skills as they could continuously revisit, revise and compare. Furthermore, they were visible, transferable and can carry on from one class to another which allows students to compare their mates' work in the future. As such, teachers viewed such

assessment as effective in enhancing learning. A sample of student's portfolio is attached below:

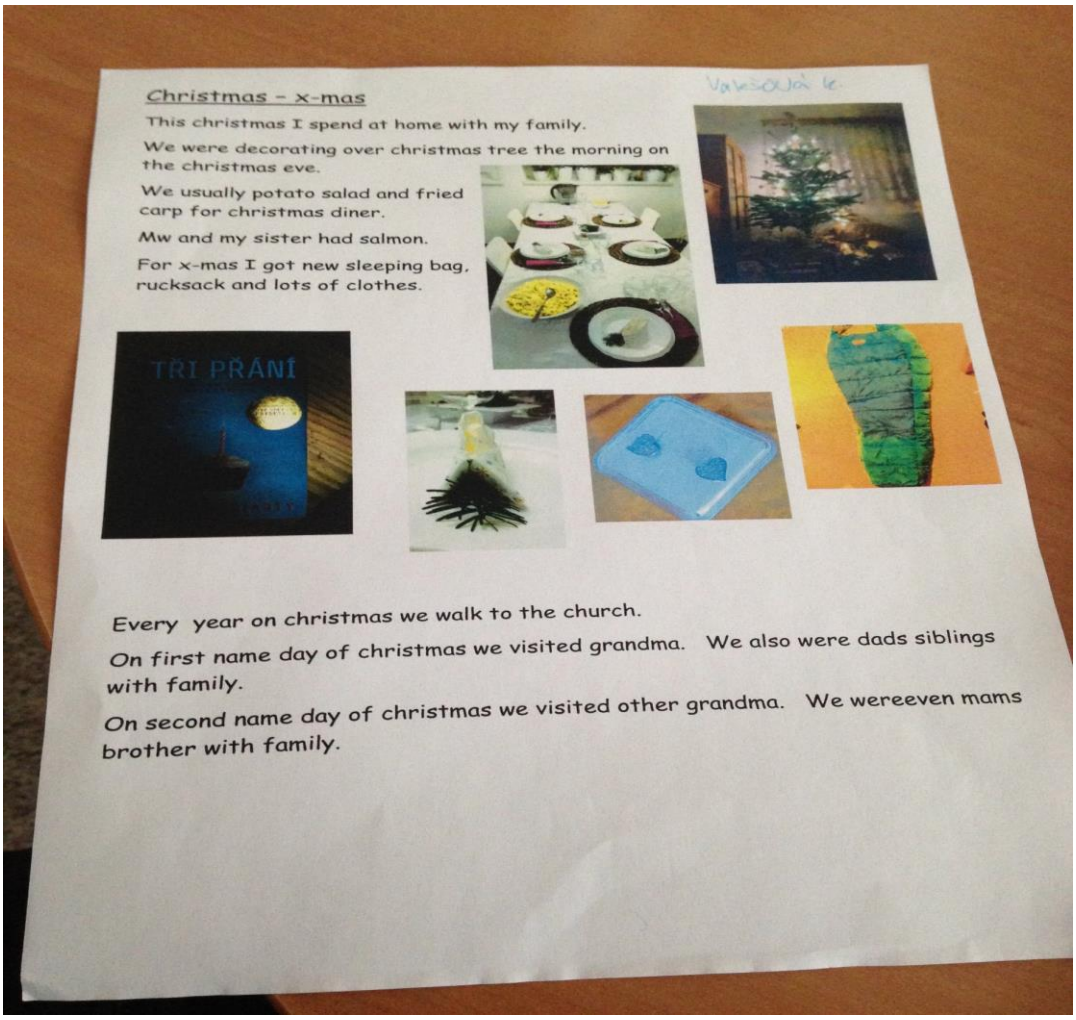


Figure 3*. Evidence of student portfolio*

Hence, teachers constantly practiced portfolio-based assessment to instil the sense of responsibility in the students.

Besides the above assessment practices, teachers also gave homework in order to enhance learner autonomy and responsibility. However, teachers held assorted perceptions regarding homework. Some teachers viewed homework as useful as it allows students to reflect, do something extra and revise further what was discussed and learnt during class making them responsible for their own learning. Some teachers, on the other hand, perceived it as dangerous, as students do not receive any guidance while doing it, and so there is a risk

that students could keep committing the same mistakes repetitively. Henceforth, homework was given based on the interest of the class and students and thus were not obligatory.

> *If you do something extra at home, it helps you a lot because you expose yourself to language. That's the most important thing for me and if you expose yourself to language every single day for 5 minutes, it will help you a lot.* **(Smith)**

In short, the outcome of the study revealed that teachers practiced these assessment means to corroborate student accountability fitting to the need of the policy.

4.2.2 Assessment for certification

In this study, certification is explained as assessment techniques used by the teacher for certifying student performance. The study results depict the use of various forms of assessment for the purpose of ensuring certification. One of the most extensively practiced methods is grading. Grading is a method that is mostly associated with a traditional approach to learning. Despite its conventional nature, it is practiced extensively by teachers as they understand that grading learners' performance is a dominant means to substantiate the purpose of certification and to comply with the policy requirement. Therefore, the practice of grading scales as feedback is central and common owing to the policy regulations. Following such a norm, grades have been given undue importance.

> *There are the legal reasons I also need to evaluate them by in marks. Therefore, I give marks if they do well or not and the marks are. 1-5. 1 is excellent and 5 means a fail and so this is what most students and their parents are interested in, and because this is the objective expression of how well they do at school.* **(Tom)**

As far as the practice of giving marks is concerned, teachers seem to use marks everywhere. For example, teachers used marks to connect learning with hard work and practice.

They also used grades to indicate to students what they know and do not. For instance, if they work hard they will get better marks and if they don't they get lower marks. Teachers justification regarding the frequent use of marks was that scales have their own purposes which is to cater to learning differences and specify learning based on their mettle. The teachers stressed that grading learners' performance is a dominant means to substantiate the accountability of students, teachers and schools, but not necessarily for improving teaching and learning as is evident in the statement below:

> *I just use grades but I don't believe that when you give marks it will somehow form the children. No, it won't. It will just give them the information that you know this and you don't know that, so you should learn this.* **(Terry)**

Simultaneously, marks were also used to track student's learning progress as apparent in the statement:

> *I find out their improvement through the assessment. I have a spread sheet. After I give them assignments, I record the marks in the spread sheet and over the process, September, October, and November. So, every month, I record marks and with this, I can find out the growth or progression and that's how I try to attend to afterwards through observing the marks.* **(Pat)**

Furthermore, marks in the form of percentages were also used to grade student learning. This was mainly used for the purpose of certification as grades needs to be shown at the end. According to the teachers, these percentages were set from the beginning of the academic year, so that it is easier for the students to calculate their achievement on the grading scales by calculating the score point based on their performance in the test by the end of the academic year or term. Moreover, each time a test was conducted, teachers as well as students were

expected to record the marks as well as the percentages in their notebook. These recorded marks served as a basis for students to figure out their final scoring point and allows the students to calculate and associate percentage with grading scales as was evident in the following statement:

> *I use the percentage so that everybody knows how many percent they need to get 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and with each test they get of course a mark but together with that they get the percentage. So, they know how many percent to get from each test and they can have a look because we write that down every time in the notebooks so that they know how many percent they got from every test. They can see and they can compare their papers so that they know I got 77 percent so it means mark 2. This is the way we do that.* **(John)**

In this way, the percentage score was applied for the purpose of certification. In addition, teachers were also found administering regular small tests and various other alternative activities including projects, portfolios, extempore speeches, grammar bytes and role plays. Grade adjustments were made on these activities to serve the objective of fulfilling the requirement. For example, teachers awarded small marks when students were able to improvise on the spot without any home preparation and students were graded and given small marks when they took the test seriously and when they do prior preparation as indicated by the teacher:

> *If they manage to do well in the class when they don't have home preparation and so on and still, they are able to improvise and do well in the lesson., Then, I give them small marks because they are usually good and so it's very positive.* **(Carla)**

Grammar bytes were organized to test and enhance students' grammar knowledge and skills and based on their performance, they were graded as expressed by a teacher.

We do or what I like doing is, we have grammar bytes on Friday and it's essentially on that day. I write a sentence up on the board which has a variety of grammatical errors: things like punctuations errors, spelling and things like that and it gets graded and it gets harder as we go higher up. **(Debbie)**

In addition to those above practices, teachers conducted regular tests in the class. The test materials consisted mostly of gap filling, matching, multiple choice questions and short sentence correction and as well as translation exercises. These tests were conducted on weekly and monthly bases or at the end of the unit. Following the tests, the teachers marked and graded them as grades needs to be exhibited in the end.

Teacher hands out test materials based on A5 format having 5 sentences. The sentences were in Czech. The students were required to translate those sentences into English. (Class observation, Dec 12, 2018)

As reported by the teachers, they conducted these tests while considering the circumstances of the students. Teachers perceived such tests as mild, positive, and humanistic in nature, as they made adjustments depending on the situation. Teachers said the purpose was to provide students with ample time so, they can obtain better grades as was evident in the extract:

I always try to assess with heart and with understanding of the concrete situation. For example, there can be a situation that you prepare a test and somebody is not prepared for writing it. I discuss it with him and if I understand that he is not ready to write it, I try to be sensitive to the feelings of the pupil. **(Terry)**

These activities were carried out to meet the passing requirement by the end of the term, as teachers were expected to show the students' accumulated marks before the final marks were added. In this way teachers were found using various channels to substantiate assessment for certification. Although marks are associated with the teacher-centred approach, they are nonetheless dominant in the assessment practices of teachers in these schools as they were required in the educational as well as in the school policies. Teachers therefore organized these different activities to meet the marking requirement for the purpose of certification and to a larger extent to accommodate the needs of the society, as there is a strong inclination judge schools and a child's performance based on the grades they achieve. This reflects the supremacy of grading in the assessment practices of the teachers.

4.2.3 Assessment for improving Teaching and learning

In the context of the study, assessment for improving teaching and learning refers to activities carried out to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning process with the aim to improve teaching and learning. In this regard, teachers perceived assessment as important as it allows one to orient to both teaching and learning and provides a platform for the teacher to represent the learner's progress. As is revealed from the teachers' perception, the context of student assessment can bring improvement into their learning and widen the students' perspective of work management. This was followed by an observation in which the results showed how teachers used various assessment approaches and techniques as a means to improve teaching and learning.

In my observation, teachers' subjective theories were connected with their classroom practices, such as classroom questioning, written evidence and ongoing tests and quizzes. Some of these were practices used by the teachers in establishing what students know and can do. Further, the following statement by a teacher confirmed this:

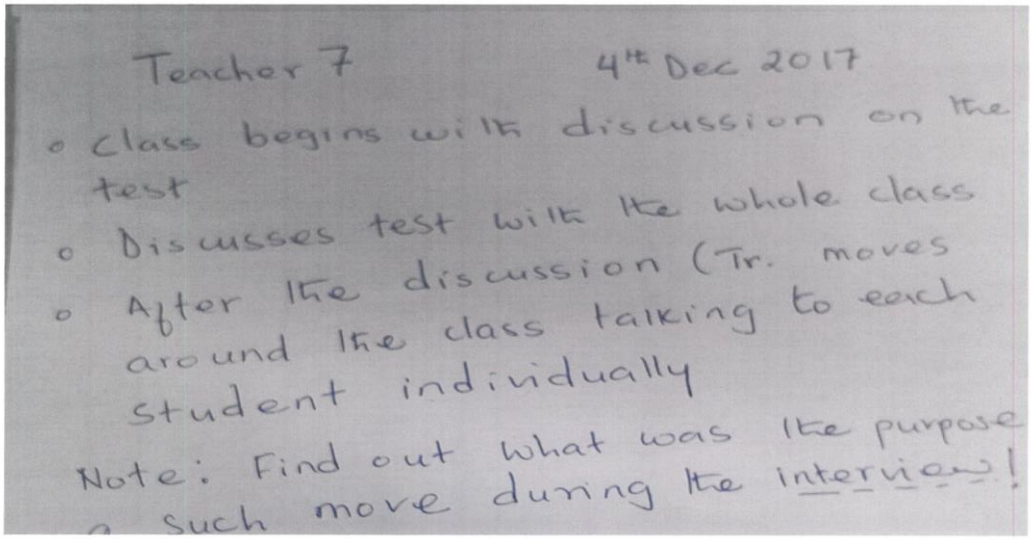
I usually find out what students are good at from the test, from their performance in the class. When they concentrate on the most common mistakes or when they have a written assignment, and you know there are some things that most of the students don't do well on or should, I tell them you did this well, but this wasn't good. **(Carla)**

Teachers expressed that these methods allowed him or her to comprehend certain things that required critical attention or not, and based on these points, teachers could communicate their strengths and weaknesses to the students. What is more, teachers viewed testing, observing students' performance in the class and their written work as an important basis to learn about what students know and can do as a result of teachers' activities and what can teachers' further do to attend to these learning needs.

In order for teaching and learning to be effective, teachers must find ways to communicate how students learn and one of the techniques of communicating learning progress was through teacher feedback. Although, teacher assessment did vary in its power, teachers nevertheless expressed that the power and purpose underlying assessment practices depended on how each teacher executed these methods in the classroom. For example, teachers conveyed that if the teachers asked a lot of critical and analytical questions, it caused the students to apply knowledge critically. With regard to this, in the underlying excerpt, the teacher expressed in her class and with her students, formative feedback is more influential in its effect on improving learning:

All assessments are useful in their own ways. Questioning depends on the teacher and on the kind of questions they ask. If they ask lot of critical and analytical questions, it makes the students critical consumers of knowledge but for me I would have to say formative teacher feedback has been the most concrete in helping them improve. **(Debbie)**

Regarding the power of assessment, in general, the teachers were quite aware of this and, as seen from observed lessons, from the researcher's notes and from teacher interviews, the teachers generally and most often offered feedback in a 'whole class situation' as well as on a one-to-one basis. A sample form the researcher's note is seen below:


Teacher 7 4th Dec 2017
- Class begins with discussion on the test
- Discusses test with the whole class
- After the discussion (Tr. moves around the class talking to each student individually

Note: Find out what was the purpose of such move during the interview!

Figure 4. A sample of the researcher's note

The teachers perceived whole class feedback as an effective method to address common mistakes made by the students, while they also provided individual feedback mostly to address specific mistakes made by the individual students. It was found during the interview that the purpose of the teacher moving from individual to individual was to attend to specific mistakes, while common mistakes were discussed together as a whole class. Teachers also mentioned that sometimes they handle specific mistakes by calling the individual to their office room. The following comments illustrate this:

> *Mostly, I depend on a kind of one-on-one based conversation, asking them what they understand, what they don't understand and if I think they know the answer or anything of that sort.* **(Debbie)**

The emphasis on one-on-one feedback was a recurring idea amongst the teachers. Teachers implied that this form of feedback was useful as it allowed the teachers to offer individual attention to students. It is also the fastest medium to attend to students' mistakes and strengths as it gives them the forum to explain things in detail and clearly, thereby, allowing them to reward students' efforts and initiatives. Such feedback motivates students to work even harder. In this way, teachers constructed their subjective theories by considering the students' learning needs and addressing the feedback as per their requirement and importance. Concurrently, teachers considered giving effective written feedback to be vital as they noted this kind of feedback is useful in honing the learning process. Therefore, they specifically wrote small notes that reflect students' weaknesses (What went wrong), strengths (What they did right) and solutions (What needs to be done) as observed in students' work.

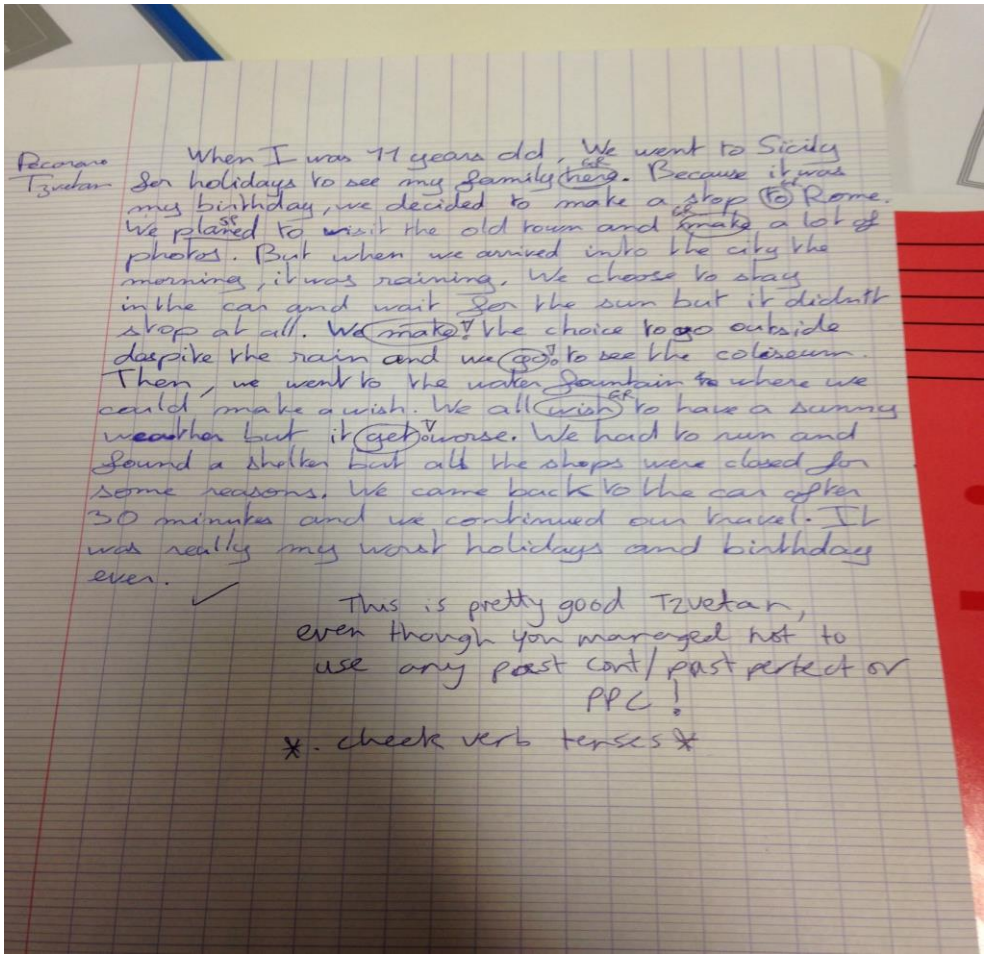


Figure 5. An example of teacher's written feedback on a student's essay writing

And I think that personally for students the word assessment is little bit better as I can explain to them what they are good at and where they need to work at. I think most of them appreciated it. **(Tom)**

Although written feedback is appreciated by the students and provided teachers with avenue to express what they want, focused on the specific needs of students, teachers nevertheless expressed that they rarely use written feedback, as they considered giving detailed and focused written feedback to each individual student as a daunting task, as was expressed in the statement below:

Written assessment takes a long time. So, it means for example when you have to teach a lot of lessons and if you have to assess 100 to 200 students, it takes a lot of time especially when you have to write down comments, and unfortunately you don't have time to do that after school for that. I really wish we had more time and if we had more time, we can do it. **(Tom)**

Connected to feedback, another premise that supported the purpose of improving teaching and learning were writing and reading tracking assessment tools which were used by teachers to polish students' language skills. Students' writing was tracked using a writing tracker based on marking schemes. At the same time, teachers also implemented an accelerated reader to track students' reading progress. These assessment strategies were executed to monitor the student's learning growth which the teachers referred to as theory of growth as it contributes to building theory, thereby, leading to growth in their learning. Additionally, teachers claim that tracking writing through reading gives students opportunities to show what they understood from that particular reading, even though marking writing can be laborious.

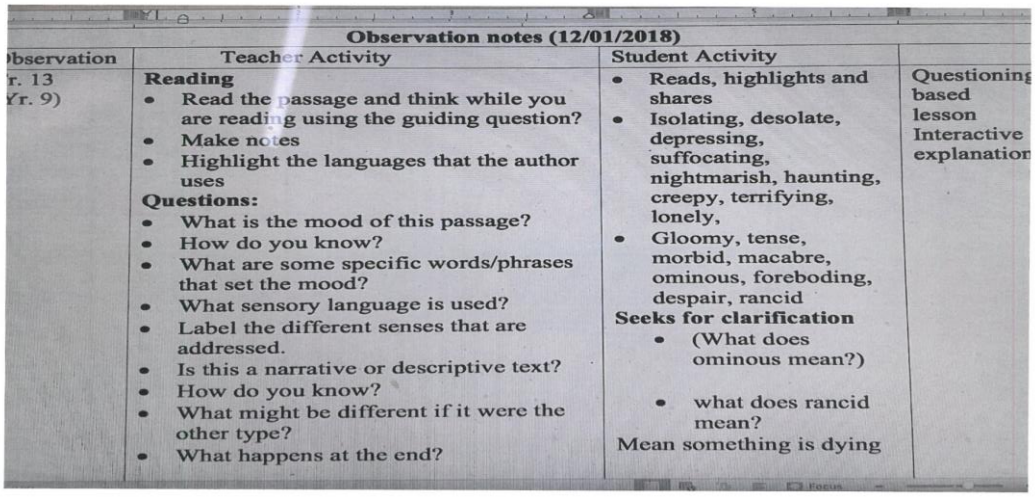
Teachers also began to recognized students' needs based on cultural differences and personal characteristics. As was evident from the observed lessons, culture and student characteristics were found to inhibit learning.

Cultural differences in this study refer to students from different nationalities, different levels of learning, age differences, different second languages and the nature of students. In order to do away with this barrier, teachers needed to go beyond what they normally do and the classroom observation and researcher's note showed that teachers changed their subjective theories of assessment and began to plan and execute the role of assessment while taking into consideration the cultural differences and personal characteristics.

In this respect, teachers initiated interactive-based lessons built around reading to deter cultural differences and to enhance learning. These lessons were facilitated to persuade the quieter students to start talking. In order for these lessons to operate effectively, teachers divided students into small groups and directed specific focused questions to the individual students.

The logic behind this was that when students were categorised into small groups, students started to talk, collaborated and shared their ideas as they became more comfortable with each other. Hence, both their intra- and interpersonal skills were enhanced. Also, teachers perceived the specific focused questions directed to individual students that acted as an 'ice-breaker', encouraging students to talk and contribute ideas. The questions directed by the teachers were mostly found to be analytical and critical in nature which were used to guide students in the reading-based writing task.

The researcher's observation note showing the teacher's sample questions is attached below:



Observation notes (12/01/2018)

Observation	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	
r. 13 Yr. 9)	**Reading** • Read the passage and think while you are reading using the guiding question? • Make notes • Highlight the languages that the author uses **Questions:** • What is the mood of this passage? • How do you know? • What are some specific words/phrases that set the mood? • What sensory language is used? • Label the different senses that are addressed. • Is this a narrative or descriptive text? • How do you know? • What might be different if it were the other type? • What happens at the end?	• Reads, highlights and shares • Isolating, desolate, depressing, suffocating, nightmarish, haunting, creepy, terrifying, lonely, • Gloomy, tense, morbid, macabre, ominous, foreboding, despair, rancid **Seeks for clarification** • (What does ominous mean?) • what does rancid mean? Mean something is dying	Questioning based lesson Interactive explanation

Figure 6. The researcher's note showing sample questions

In addition, teachers also encouraged peer to peer, peer to teacher and teacher to whole class higher level questioning in order to get them speaking. Students were also provoked to argue and defend themselves. This was done to develop analytical, critical thinking and questioning skills in the students.

> *We do a lot of questioning because we want to test how analytical they are and also, we want them to think critically. So, it's mandatory for us to come up with higher order level questions. You know sometimes, they can even put you in hot spot. They are quite good at it. I encourage them to ask questions to each other because I want the class to be more interactive-based than just one way and my students as you saw were quite critical and vocal. I like that about them.* **(Pat)**

Additionally, teachers also discuss their practice in ways suggesting that they also adopt a communicative approach in their general teaching. This perception was confirmed by the observation of teachers' classroom sessions. As observed, teachers organized a lot of speaking activities and encouraged students to speak even when they made mistakes as teachers' reasoning behind such an approach is that mistakes expand learning. However, teachers also mentioned that they need to pay closer attention to what they were saying to get a better idea

of what their strengths and weaknesses were in order for the teachers to come up with a way forward. Simultaneously, teachers also commented that such a practice allows students and teachers to collaborate to spot mistakes and to do on-the-spot correction. Furthermore, asking questions helps the shy learners to speak, especially when they were encouraged by the teacher.

> *Yes, I ask a lot of questions. I am sure because some of them are very shy and you know if you give them a question in front of the other people, they are afraid of making mistake but on the other hand, I always encourage them to speak and to make mistakes because that's how you learn and make mistakes and, then, we speak our way to perfect English or perfect grammar let's say. So, I do, I encourage them, I am not going to stop if they are afraid. So, it helps the shy ones to talk especially when you encourage them to speak.* **(Terry)**

Another assessment practices that clarified student mistakes was the use of non-verbal feedback, including a change in tone, hand gestures, and facial expressions because it acted as a tool for them to alert students to their mistakes as the following statement illustrates:

> *I let them think about their mistakes or the sentence once more. For example, saying is it really like that or are you sure or I repeat some sentence with different intonation to make them think about the sentence once more and I think it's enough because they notice it by themselves.* **(Martha)**

As indicated by the teachers, the observation data and classroom notes revealed teachers implementing such practices in their class and this was evident from the teacher's hand gestures, eye movement, smile, tone of voice change and body movement. Furthermore, the observation data also discovered students engaging and reacting to such practices to improve their learning. Hence, such non-verbal reinforcement by teachers helped improve students' mistakes. Additionally, in support of this, teachers also used practice-based

assessment approach wherein students were made to imitate intonation while carrying out reading exercises. This was administered with the notion to improve student's pronunciation. The classroom observation data showed students exercising such drills with the teacher.

> *For pronunciation, I try to sometime listen to their reading and stop them every after sentence. They have to repeat it. So, they try to imitate the intonation and everything.* **(Martha)**

Teachers need to be sensitive to their students' learning needs and capabilities. Therefore, teachers must know their students fairly well. In line with this, teachers constructed their subjective theories by reflecting on the differences that existed within the students. In this study, teachers were found to be using differentiated assessment approaches as a means to attend to these differences and as well as to improve the teaching and learning process. In the context of study, a differentiated approach refers to assessment approaches applied to cater to learning differentiation based on students' capabilities. Differentiated approaches such as coloured pens, points, targeted tasks and think-pair-share were employed to attend to learning differentiation. The philosophy behind such practice is that it enables the teachers to pay more attention to students depending on their need and zone of proximal development and on this basis, teachers could scaffold students' learning. And, in this way, through such activities teachers ensured that students' abilities and differences are met.

> *It depends on the children. If they are intelligent students, I underline the mistakes and they understand it but if they are poor students, then, I have to write something about the mistakes, words or correct the version or something like that.* **(Martha)**

In addition, teachers echo that this type of practice allows them to identify the students' language level and simultaneously in identifying solutions for raising their levels of learning.

This practice was deemed effective by the teachers as it assists the teachers to reflect and formulate strategies to handle students' learning issues by taking into consideration their learning styles.

Another activity that recognized teachers' sensitivity and responsiveness to students' needs and differences is reflected through the variety of changes incorporated in their pedagogical practice. For example, one such pedagogical change is the implementation of targeted tasks within the groups based on similar language skills level. This was carried out to ensure student autonomy and accountability and, generally, was executed by attending to a specific focused area within the groups as was discovered during classroom observation. As explained by the teachers, this assessment allows the students to work on things they are good at and as a result, they were able to help each other as indicated in the example below:

> *With my 9th grade class, we do a lot of targeted tasks by splitting the class into 4 different groups but based on similar domains of area. We might be working on a text. I might get one group to work on identifying literary devices and with this group, I will be working on identifying word associations, and understanding what is this word, what it means and stuffs like that, that's normally how that works.* **(Debbie)**

Teachers' confirmed that this activity was useful as it caters to learning differentiation and students' various learning styles. Furthermore, the teacher implies that such techniques allows the teachers to attend to specific requirements of students considering their zone of proximal development. Teachers further specified that organizing this sort of activity based on their specific needs can result in students' showing interest towards learning, thereby, leading to improved results. Affiliating to this, Think-Pair-Share activities supported interaction within the group. This was executed to ensure that individual students have a chance to express their thoughts. What is more, such tasks permit the teacher to assess students' language knowledge and skills. Hence, as a means to foster interpersonal skills, teachers made sure to shuffle the

groups wisely to ensure that students were not always sitting in the same group and to get them away from their comfort zone in order to encourage students to take ownership of their own learning.

A significant exposure of the results from this sub-section showed that teachers employed various forms of assessment methods and techniques to enhance teaching and learning because they consider the integration of teaching, learning and assessment tasks to be essential in enhancing effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, teachers' general subjective theories about students' learning as elicited by the teachers is that they designed assessment tasks based on their learning needs.

4.2.4. Assessment for motivation purposes

In the context of this study, assessment for motivation is understood as assessment methods used by the teacher to steer the learner's attitude towards learning.

In regard to this, teachers explained that assessment influences the teacher-student relationship as they have to assess and pass judgement on their work. As noted, on the opposing side, it also made teachers dread assessment as most often it is viewed as criticism and learners are not receptive to it. Hence, most teachers used assessment as a strategy to motivate and engage students actively in the teaching and learning process. This can be seen as we procced with the explanation.

Although teachers used the grades 1 to 5 to assess student progress, the teachers regarded motivation as a crucial element in supporting student learning. Teachers used various unique assessment methods that were connected to motivating and improving learning. In connection to this, teachers expressed they have their own standpoint in applying these tactics.

The classroom observations proved that the learners in the observed EFL classes were active and highly motivated. This was apparent as teachers had their own unique subjective theories for motivating their classes. One of the superior motivation approaches was the

constant practice of connected use of class, teach, smileys, and short videos as a strategy to motivate students. For instance, each time a teacher calls “class”, students need to react immediately and depending on their reaction, the smileys were awarded. When the teacher calls “teach”, the students need to react immediately to it and then, start teaching or repeating to their pairs whatever was explained to them by the teacher. Depending on their reaction, again the smileys were given. Each time the students collect a positive emoji, they were rewarded with a short video of two minutes. Teachers held the opinion that the use of these techniques during class kept the class alert, attentive and highly engaged as they needed to react quickly to the teachers’ commands and instruction. Hence, this method motivated students to work hard. As a result, it led to improvement in their academic attainment.

> *One is class and when you say class, the class is to react immediately yes, and they have to look at me and stop doing whatever they are doing. Second is teach. You explain something, then, you say teach, they work in pairs and they have to explain again, say what you just explained in their own words, and the third one is the smileys. They are interconnected, if they work or if they react quickly. So, they get good smiley and if they don’t react quickly or don’t react at all, they get the bad smiley and they get bad one. In some classes they easily get bored, so they get one minute short lesson for each good smiley and in some classes, they get short videos for one good smiley and on Friday, for e.g., for every good smiley, they get 2 minutes of short videos. This keeps them motivated and they really work hard.* **(Terry)**

Open and choice-based assessment (alternative assessment) promotes learning through interaction and collaboration. Additionally, they (choice theory) facilitate students’ participation and engages students in the classroom activities. Consequently, they are seen as the positive signifier of motivation. A review of student documents and classroom observation revealed teachers’ offering open and choice-based assessment in the form of essays, presentations, book talk, weekly reading, and projects topics to allow students to demonstrate

their understanding of a task. The teachers claim that assessment was provided with the possibility to create diversity in the activities as well as to motivate students. Related to this, teachers expressed that such activities allow connections with the real world and provides authenticity. In addition, teachers claim such assessment motivated students as these assessment tasks were designed to cater to their needs and interests. Hence, students were provided with first-hand experience of learning. A sample of student's project can be found below:

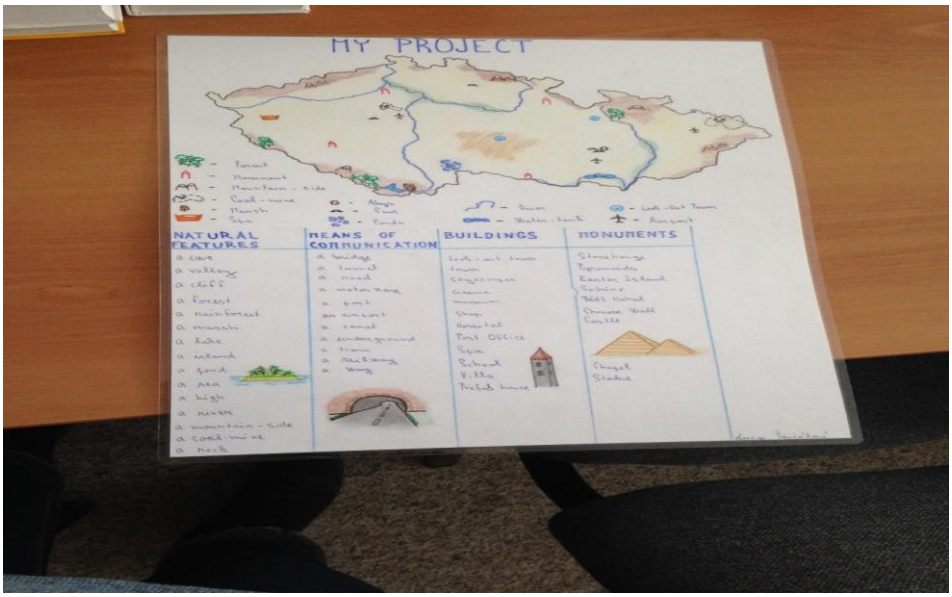


Figure 7. A sample displaying a student's project work

Experts discern feedback that elicit positive and negative activating and deactivating washback effects. These emotions will influence learning in anticipated ways. In general, positive feedback evokes positive washback effect and negative feedback negative ones. As revealed in the results, activities that produced positive washback in the class comprised of rewarding students with positive comments in order to motivate students towards learning. Negative comments, on the other hand, can demotivate the learner from doing better.

Yes, for example, what usually does not work is just negative assessment. So, even if the assessment has to be negative, because the person really did not perform well, I try to find something positive. **(Tom)**

In connection to this, the teachers commended that the theory of positive comments is effective, since they perceive negative ones as demotivating for students and that such feedback would discourage them from learning. Although in certain cases exist where minus points or constructive negative remarks could also help develop a learner's attitude for improving his/her work, in this situation, the teachers in this situation considered the usage of positive remarks as much more helpful in fostering the student's motivation and engaging them in their work in a positive manner. Accordingly, in various situations as opposed to negative remarks, teachers appreciated the use of more positive ones as they were seen helpful in reinforcing students' motivation towards learning. Hence, teachers made frequent use of positive reinforcement to encourage students to work harder. This can be seen in the following statement:

For example, I try to be positive. I don't like it when somebody says you have this many mistakes. It's better to say you have been good at something because it's the best motivation for students, but then, I must pay attention to their mistakes as well. **(Jen)**

The emphasis on general written and verbal feedback as a way to motivate students towards learning was also evident in every teacher's practices. In support of this, students' documents and the researcher's notes from the classroom observation uncovered teachers' written comments as being rather vague in nature, often representing spelling corrections, error corrections, ticking, crossing out, verifying responses, and no suggestions were made by the teachers to further learning. In the class as well as in written work, the teachers' comments were mostly encouraging and general in nature, such as *well done, good, good job, excellent, work hard, great, you are getting there, interesting view, not bad, try harder, you guys are on*

fire today, etc. Although they are not constructive in nature, teachers expressed this kind of feedback as resourceful in motivating students to work harder. The following statement is an example of such nonspecific feedback given by one teacher:

> *When I check their exercise book and I tell them, yes, this is very nice, use colours which is nice, makes it neat and everything, but if a pupil's handwriting is not neat, I tell them to do it more neatly the next time.* **(Martha)**

Accordingly, teachers also perceived the use of praise after small successes to support learning as important. For instance, the teachers observed that when a student performed a task correctly, the teachers believed that praises like *well done, you guys are on fire, you got the preposition, right*, etc., actually motivates the learner to do better. Hence, they regarded it to be useful especially if the praises were related to the task and not to the person. This was also apparent in most observed classes and observation notes whereby students reacted actively and quickly in the class discussion when teachers made those small praises. The praises offered in this study seem to be mostly nonspecific. However, teachers stated that they render students with general praises when they performed well in the context of the whole class scenario but avoided commenting when the performance was bad. This was done to avoid embarrassment and demotivation. Hence, anything negative was communicated to students on a one-to-one basis:

> *I have learnt that if their performance is good, I can praise them in front of the whole class and if it is bad, it's better to say so on a one on one basis.* **(Taylor)**

Pictures having comments were also used by the teachers as a means to motivate students. Amidst students, such practice promoted the spirit of competition. They also worked

hard to get those pictures. Teachers claim such strategy as helpful in motivating students as it retains students' attention in the class.

> *No, I have only special stickers but I used to use them but students were disappointed that they didn't get it. It was a kind of motivation for them.* **(Jen)**

Alongside these methods, another premise that supports assessment for motivation was the fun-based assessment approaches in the form of games or game-like activities, dialogue, pair work, group work, and songs related to listening, reading, writing, and speaking, not just from the textbook, but also from other sources, such as magazines and the internet to motivate students. These activities raised students' interest and they became receptive to them. In addition, these assessments facilitate peer learning, promotes interpersonal skills and cultivates positive learning ambiance.

> *I try to make lessons fun. I try to play games or game-like activities with them even if the topic is not like what they might think is interesting normally.* **(Pat)**

The results of this subsection revealed that the teachers created various motivation theories to support learning. Subsequently, it brings to the forefront the strong link between assessment, motivation, and student learning.

4.2.5. Assessment for managing behaviour

In this study context, assessment for managing behaviour refers to assessment techniques used by the teacher to modify a student's behaviour for the purpose of learning. Assessment that can modify student behaviour is crucial in enhancing learning. Many of these assessment methods that could improve student behaviour were practiced by the teachers.

Teacher regulated the behaviour of the learners by using various forms of disciplinary methods, including black dots, small marks, pluses and smileys. For example, these teachers applied black dots while assessing students. The black dots and pluses were used to signify offenses students had committed in class. This was done to express something negative and discourage those learners and others from doing undesirable activities. The following statement makes this clear:

> *I just give them little dots, but it's mostly to express when something negative happens, like when they don't have their homework, so they get one small black dot. When they get three of these, then they get a 5 in their grade book, which you know means a fail.* **(Taylor)**

In addition, student documents as well as the interviews revealed teachers allocating small marks and pluses for managing behaviour. Teachers also mentioned that awarding small marks for small activities and initiatives students make work quite well. They perceived such strategies as useful in keeping students alert and involved in the class. Furthermore, these teachers also believed such a strategy contributed in stimulating the spirit of competition amongst the students, as reported by a teacher:

> *A great example is that I do exercises in the class and if they do well, they get a small mark. So, they really like this competition and they really work hard.* **(Jen)**

In short, a penalty in the form of black dots and small marks were used to caution learners to be careful and to discourage them from doing anything objectionable. Additionally, the class observation data also exposed the teachers' instant authoritative action on the bad behaviour of the student wherein the teacher said, *"Tony, you have lot of circles in your sentences, so, write down the sentences in your notebook, you bad boy."* This reprimand was

seen by the teachers as having positive effect in the sense that it informed the children that they need to put extra effort to further their learning. It was also a warning to the offending learner that the teacher was aware of his misdoings.

The observational data also revealed additional practices in classroom behaviour management. For example, teachers implemented active learning strategies like positive and negative emotions, exercises, banging on the table, and making funny facial expressions to gain their attention. Teachers were seen awarding positive emoji for good behaviour and negative emoji for bad behaviour. For each positive emoji the class was awarded with a short two-minute video or a short lesson of one minute. Teachers also granted learners one minute to make noises freely. This was permitted to prevent students from making noise throughout the lesson. The teachers claimed that random application of such strategies after 20 minutes made the class tremendously effective. Additionally, the teachers stated that these activities allow the students to move around physically and, as a result, the brain benefits from increased oxygen and increased brain functioning. It also eases peer pressure as they support and push each other to work hard, thus, promoting a conducive learning environment. As a consequence of this, the teachers claim their learning results improved.

> *Nowadays, I use this system and my students have become hardworking and so, there is no need to give them the small marks or anything like that. Yes, I just use two smileys, one good one and one bad one. If the class behaves well, they get the good smiley and if they behave badly, they get the bad one. Moreover, it eases the peer pressure, because other students pressed those who would not work otherwise or behave badly to perform, to work and their results get better as a result of this system.* **(Terry)**

Hence, the above mentioned are some of the punitive measures practiced by teachers to manage classroom behaviour.

Short summary of this section

The conceptual understanding of assessment of the teachers in this study appeared clear-cut. The findings conclude that the teachers' subjective theories regarding planning and execution of assessment tasks is elicited through the major roles teachers' places on the five dominant themes and they further revealed that the teachers used assessment for the purposes of accountability, certification, improving teaching and learning, managing behaviour and for the purpose of motivating students.

Furthermore, although, some useful and effective practices were used around the assessment themes, generally, to a large extent as observed during observation and as was evident from the student document analysis. After looking at teachers' questioning methods and written assessment, it was discovered that both were very generic in nature. In regard to it, teachers need to improve their strategies of questioning and giving constructive and suggestive written assessment that would enhance learning. Rather than asking closed questions and offering general praises as written and verbal feedback, as most teachers do, it was expressed that students learn when they are asked analytical and critical questions, as well as when given specific, detail and focused written and verbal feedback. This, of course, is also necessary, but a more effective learning-oriented pointer should also be supported. In conclusion, these subjective theories will be useful in transforming teachers' assessment practices for the purpose of better teaching and student learning.

4.3 Teacher learning about assessment

Teachers learning from each other and talking together about planning, and implementation has proven to be very important. There are host of blended factors and specific critical incidences that influence their learning. The teachers in this study based their assessment conceptions from a variety of sources. In the context of this study, these sources are referred to

as conditions or factors that modified or hampered teacher's formation of subjective theories of assessment. Exploring these factors are crucial in understanding and explaining teachers' subjective theories regarding their thought processes while planning their assessment practices. Within this study, these factors include cooperation, consultation (discussions), and collaboration with colleagues within their departments, observing colleagues' classroom practices, peer feedback, reflection. Policy regulations, workload and ineffective professional development thwarted teachers' learning. Although a wide range of factors have contributed to teachers' construction of subjective theories of assessment, the primary source for most of these teachers were the 3 C's (consulting, cooperating and collaborating) with colleagues in the department. Thus, teachers' experiences and construction of learning within the area of the 3 C's will be explained hereafter.

4.3.1 Cooperation

Cooperation in the context of the study means learning within their interest groups. As part of teacher learning, cooperating within the department colleagues was seen as an effective strategy to process information and skills related to assessment, as it offers teachers a view to assessment content and relevant issues from multiple perspectives. The general perception is that teachers' assessment practices are restructured when they work cooperatively with their colleagues, as teachers flourish within their interest groups. Such environment results in positive and active learning. This, according to the teachers, was all possible because of the positive vibe and attitude each teacher brings with them. Furthermore, it brought to the picture the notion of learning through peer observation and hence, learning through observation became an additional activity for the teachers. In regard to this study, teachers pointed out that through cooperation they took advantage of the opportunity to observe their colleagues' lessons and, based on these observations, they could change their subjective theories regarding the

practice and purpose of assessment. Following such observation, teachers conveyed that they learnt about some new practices from their colleagues and this contributed to a positive change in some of their practices. For example, giving small marks to their students was one good practice that teachers got to learn from their peers. Teachers admitted that they found this practice interesting and decided to use it with their students. Connecting to this practice, teachers reported positive benefits especially stressing that such practice made teachers attend to students' considering their learning differences. In this way, peer observation helped reform teachers' practices as was imparted below:

> *When I like something or some part of assessment [my colleagues] carry out, I try to somehow adjust and develop mine. For instance, a colleague of mine had this practice of giving small grades for various activities students do. I found that interesting and I tried this with my students too, and it worked very well as it caters to learning differentiation.* **(Tom)**

Drawing on the above views, cooperation was seen as a useful activity by which the teachers developed their subjective theories of assessment, as such a practice created opportunities for teachers to observe the creative practices of other teachers. As was highlighted earlier, teachers felt learning in harmony and focus strengthens their skills and capacities as it leads to new ideas, which the teachers modified further, personalizing it and in this way, it was easier for them to overcome difficult situations collectively. This also helped in germinating ideas and lifting innovative aspects of their work. At this juncture, cooperation was a turning point for teachers to confront assessment issues, and this way it became an essential part of their work through which problems related to teaching and learning was tackled.

4.3.2 Consultation

Teachers felt making assessment dynamic and effective needed regular consultation as it exposes one to learning and experiences. Additionally, it also allows one to express and articulate one's knowing and understanding. In this study, teachers regularly consulted each other to address issues related to assessment. That way, consultation became a supporting pillar for teacher learning. The idea was that consultation helps teachers to process information as this engages teachers in interactive discussion and deliberates the exchange of ideas among teachers. In this context, consultation offers opportunities whereby teachers initiate conversation to discuss issues related to teaching and learning, including assessment. Owing to it, teachers expressed that these initiated conversations led them to reflect in the process of self-expressing and learning. Likewise, reflection became another lifeline through which they could construct their subjective theories of assessment. In this way, they became important bases in building their theoretical as well as the pedagogical base. Teaching and learning issues were also discussed through this platform. In regard to this study, this included; what assessment components should be followed, how they should follow them, and why they needed to follow them. Furthermore, through review and reflection, teachers could refine as well as form new strategies that supports teaching and learning.

More importantly, this practice promoted learning through active engagement, interaction and reflection. On this basis, it can be argued that constructive learning does not happen in isolation, but rather a stimulating active learning forum is required for learning to occur, which was promoted in this study by consultation. Resulting evidence of such active consultation was the construction of common standardised framework for the department:

> *Well, first at the university and once you start working and teaching, so, basically the school management tells you, the head of the English department and you consult with your colleagues because usually, the schools have some kind of assessment policy for*

e.g., we use same grading within English department. So, we need to talk about this in the department. **(Carla)**

Simultaneously, teachers could also amend their practices half way through their career after consulting with their teacher colleagues and carrying out peer testing with them. This led to observations of lessons, and seeing how their colleagues prepared their test materials, how they tested their students and how they evaluated their students' performances. These crucial events have further helped transform their learning as explained in the statement below:

If I remember I think it will be like half way through my career somewhere when I have been teaching for 7 to 8 years. Yes, that would probably be the time of change. And the factors would be talking to my colleagues and testing with my colleagues like I don't know what to call it maybe peer testing, so, that I could see other people do their testing, how they did this and how they evaluated the students' performances. **(Carla)**

Hereafter, consultation became a significant contributor to teacher learning.

4.3.3 Collaboration

Collaboration is another modus operandi taken up by the teachers to develop their subjective theories of their role as teachers, who are responsible for transforming teaching for bettering student learning. This was guided by their collaborative attitudes which then became central to their learning. Putting it into practice, collaborative learning implies collective learning that relies on harmony and teamwork. Furthermore, the functionality of collective learning also depended on each individual's personal and professional outlook. In regard to this, collaborative learning situations provided teachers opportunities to voice their opinions, to learn to listen and express and to come to common agreements. For example, teachers expressed that discussions related to teaching and learning, including assessment, happens within the department. This not only indicated their togetherness but also displayed their

positive personal and professional attitude towards their work. By and large, it brought to the forefront that each teacher participated in the learning with utmost dedication, responsibility and commitment. Accordingly, the essentiality of these qualities when learning in an environment is based largely on collaboration. The general perception is collaboration solves the problem of working in isolation. One example of collaborative learning was the creation of common assessment rubrics, and a reading and writing tracker. Teachers were appreciative of how collaboration assisted them in their learning and revealed that this was all possible due to strong support and partnership among themselves. Teachers were also appreciative of the encouragement and motivation they received during their learning from collaborating. Therefore, teachers assert that this is a positive system and has led to the fruitful creation of assessment rubrics and check list (see appendix 3) as is evident below:

> *Discussing and learning from each other. We do a lot of discussion together. For example, we could come up with assessment rubrics in our group discussion, so, learning from colleagues, working in collaboration with them and cooperating with each other helps a lot.* **(Pat)**

The change in assessment practice through collective effort was visible in this study and as noted above, this transformation was seen in the creation of assessment rubrics and checklist for assessing and guiding students' written tasks. Additionally, teachers correlated this transformation with the practice of trial and error method that each teacher had to undergo while trying out the rubrics with their students. Teachers felt that this platform provided them with opportunities to collect peer feedback. In this way, feedback became an additional assistance for teacher learning which further assisted in reforming and improving the rubrics. Owing to feedback, teachers could also reflect on this practice. In this way, reflection determined their learning. As collaboration generated multiple benefits, teachers felt this

needed to be done on a regular basis as it leads to the establishment of exemplary practices for other teachers and schools to see and embrace:

> *Like I said in the beginning of year, Pat, Carla and I, we are working together to implement the Accelerated reader program about reading tool. We also met to develop a rubric for writing which can used across secondary year 7, 8, and 9. I met with Adam a lot. Adam actually did most of the work. We met and talked about it and we split up and implement in the class and come back and talk about how it worked, what worked and what needs changes and we change that. But Adam did most of the work. We just helped him and gave our feedback. And then, we also discuss little informal things to handle stuffs like asking each other for ideas and what one is doing and how it went.* **(Smith)**

Teachers justified that the objective of such practice makes the assessment more focused, offers the same style of evaluation for students making assessment fair and reliable for the students. Additionally, specific and focused writing rubrics helps students to focus on their strength and weakness. In short, this innovation enables students to practice self-and peer-assessment thereby evolving their ability to assess their own work and the work of their peers. Surely, it regulates students' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning, which are essential elements of assessment for learning or assessment as learning. These were some factors that assisted teachers with their assessment construction. In addition to the enabling conditions, there were also some factors that prevented a teacher's assessment planning and implementation. These factors needed to be discussed and presented as this would inform the policy makers regarding the constraints faced by teachers during planning and processing information regarding assessment. There were three critical factors that needed to be brought to light, as they were appearing over and over during interviews with teachers as conditions that greatly affected their learning. These included policy regulations, workload and a lack of

professional development courses. The details of how these factors prohibited the planning of assessment practices are discussed hereafter.

4.4.4 Policy

Policy refers to obligatory assessment tasks proposed by an organization or institution. Teachers claim policy affects their learning as policy dictates mandatory assessment practices though there were situations when teachers may not agree with the policy recommended practices. However, teachers admitted applying them due to their obligatory nature which, according to the teachers, hindered effective assessment creation as was evident in the following quotation.

> *School policy obstructs assessment creation because at times it demands assessment practices that you may not agree with.* **(Carla)**

In support of the above view, the empirical data showed teachers conducting regular tests for the purpose of grading.

> *I have to do testing even though I am not convinced that testing helps the process, but I do it.* **(Terry)**

Although, teachers expressed testing with grades does not contribute to learning, they nonetheless continue to do that as the policy demands them to show grades in the end of term or year to judge and categorise students' performances. Subsequently, compulsory compliance in a substantial way inhibited teachers' planning and implementation of effective assessment practices as it restricts teachers to think beyond summative ways of assessment.

4.4.5 Workload

Another factor that inhibited assessment planning was teachers' the workload. Workload refers to excess working hours outside of their required teaching load. Teachers expressed that heavy a workload consisted of teaching hours, student numbers, number of test materials and assignments. All of these burdened teachers' time for assessment planning as most of teachers' time was consumed by attending to these tasks, such as teaching more hours than required, correcting tests and assignments. Some classes had more number of students than others and more students meant more work. Hence, teachers could not allot time for creating effective assessment practices. It was evident from the observation that each teacher started their class with test discussion and, during the interview, teachers revealed that they needed to conduct regular short tests for the purpose of grading. Although the tests are short, however, teachers emphasised that these tests consumed a lot of time correcting. Added to these were the administrative tasks. Hence, teachers elaborated that these tasks did not leave enough time and room for assessment innovation as effective assessment planning requires a lot of planning and coordination.

> *Lot of work, little time and then, we are made to concentrate on different things all the time. This is something more important in the school than assessment practices. Also, I have not seen any training in assessment. So, these are obstacles.* **(Martha)**

4.4.6 Professional development

There is a widespread belief that classroom practices transform when teachers are engaged more frequently in professional development courses. Such transformation is mostly attributed to learner accountability and lack of teacher control in the sense that learning processes become more open, challenging, interactive and collaborative-based. Teachers pointed out that the lack of targeted and effective professional development courses thwarted assessment creation.

Teachers also expressed resistance, frustration, doubt and a general negative attitude towards professional development. The problem appears to be that the courses were theory-oriented rather than practice-based and that there were few opportunities to attend courses due to their heavy workloads and time thresholds. Therefore, teachers perceived professional development courses as being ineffective and fruitless as is apparent in the statement:

> *To be honest, the courses are not beneficial. Ninety percent of the courses I've attended were useless; it's a waste of time.* **(Terry)**

Teachers also expressed owing to the theoretical nature of professional development, it was difficult for them to materialise or implement information in the class. Apparently, such courses did not help teachers with their assessment construction.

> *I would also appreciate some courses on assessment which are really based on practice like as I said less theory and more practice which means probably conferences might be a bit better where we can discuss with other teachers and professionals in persons.* **(Tom)**

As indicated in the expression above, in short supply of aligned and effective professional development, teachers genuinely expressed the need for teacher-led workshops, specifically by forming learning communities among the teachers and schools, like a teacher-led workshops around current practices and insights in teaching and learning. In this way, teachers' demand for more focused and effective professional development courses were substituted as well as supported. For example, forming of book club revolving around assessment is an innovative aspect of teacher learning. More of similar practice should commence as they were found by the teachers to be more effective than those professional courses:

Yes, last year we did that. What we call that? We met over lunch and they were optional and we had only about 2 over the course of year. Teachers met at lunch like you bring your lunch and one of the teacher will be leading the workshop over a lunch. This year we started the concept based workshops and we have done a couple of those this year like we are also doing book clubs where small groups of 4 to 5 reads books about assessment or about concept learning and etc. **(Smith)**

In summary, the data analysed revealed that these factors inhibited teachers' assessment planning as in most instances, they have to comply with these assessment practices that they may not agree with to meet the desired policy requirement. Additionally, though teachers looked forward to professional courses, they were not happy with the theoretical nature of the them.

Short summary of the section

In short, it can be deduced that some diagnostic incidents have made teachers change their personal theories of assessment. What these findings seem to indicate is that with regard to teachers' construction of assessment theories, the 3 C's (consultation, collaboration and cooperation) among the teachers have significantly orchestrated the planning and practice of assessment while policy, workload and ineffective professional development has prevented their assessment construction. What is more, critical incidences including peer observation, feedback, and reflection has proven decisive in teachers' lives in modernising their assessment practices.

4.4 Teachers' subjective theory of assessment

This section deals with teachers' articulation of subjective theories of assessment since subjective theories are useful in understanding and explaining classroom assessment issues.

For the purposes of this study, subjective theory is understood as teachers' understanding and explanation of assessment processes and practices. What emerges is a collective belief that teachers' subjective theories of assessment are constructed and influenced mostly by policy, practice and their own individual beliefs. In section 4.2, teachers' appropriation of assessment and the purpose underlying each of those practices were explained in detail. This section deals with how teachers handle situations where they are trapped between two forms of assessment and when there are contradictions underlying the two within the teachers. Teachers clearly explained the distinction between the two and their reasons for practicing them. The teachers' feelings, beliefs, understandings and subjectification about assessment in relation to cognition and practice combine to divulge what these teachers consider to be essential, realistic and desirable in the EFL context.

The data suggests that there are similar general patterns in the cognitions about assessment of the 10 teachers, and these are associated with certain features of policy, practice and beliefs. The analysis has revealed, for instance, that among these 10 teachers, assessment is seen as an important tool to enhance learning. However, it has been revealed that assessment seems to be focused mostly on testing and grading. The teachers' ideas about such assessment is that they do not help in the process of learning. Despite such notions, teachers explained that they conduct these assessment tasks so they can collect grades throughout the course, as the final grade average is the ultimate goal. These expressions may be related at least in part to the conventional classroom practices employed by most of the teachers in their EFL teaching, learning and assessment practices. All of the lower secondary teachers in the group adopt an 'established' approach to EFL assessment, following a customary 'test-discussion-grading' pattern. Typically, their style of test discussion is brief, and their practice of test activities is mostly summative in nature. Teachers expressed that their assessment is guided by the educational and institutional policy. Some examples are epitomised here in this respect. In

particular, the interview data revealed that the grading and testing methods they use are motivated by educational policy. As far as institutional policy is concerned, teachers reflected that they use a common form of assessment within the department with the purpose to standardise the assessment framework as was justified in section 4.2. Therefore, teachers claim that policy enormously contributes and controls teachers' formation of subjective theories as well of assessment.

Additionally, teachers also expressed that although they may not agree with some of the assessment practices suggested by the policy, they nevertheless practice them, as they believe that students are motivated more by grades than by formative assessment of learning. Adding to this assertion, teachers explained that culture and society enhance this belief, as grades are the way in which the learner's performance is judged. Furthermore, the accountability of teachers and the school is also perceived through the lens of the grade.

This fact revealed that some features of the traditional approach to assessment do nevertheless seem to have been absorbed into current pedagogical practice, if not necessarily into the belief system. Hence, all these contextual factors bind them to give significance to summative assessment and in this way, teachers were compelled to follow this pattern owing to the rigid policy implication, a tightly controlled environment and the demands of society.

On the other hand, teachers were also aware of the formative function of the assessment. The general perception is that it is useful in honing learning. Moreover, research verifies the benefit of such assessment. Hence, teachers also developed their subjective theories of assessment in regard to improving learning. They were guided by their own beliefs and their motivation regarding these practices were mostly connected to supporting learning. For instance, one specific example of such an influence as revealed from the observation and observation notes was the carrying out of three rounds of assessment to meet the desired learning goals. Teachers practiced self-, peer-, and teacher assessment which, according to the

teachers, meant students went through three levels of reworking their activities before the final versions were submitted to the teacher. Accordingly, this practice led to the formation of subjective theories of assessment wherein teachers strongly upheld that assessment should be formative in nature for it to serve the purpose of learning and therefore, they modify their instruction according to the needs of the students.

Alongside those above examples, the teacher's own beliefs have influenced the formation of subjective theories of assessment. One specific example of such an influence is the use of dots, colours and verbal feedback while assessing students. The black dots and colours were used to signify offenses students had committed in class as well as to cater to learning differentiation. This was done to express something negative and to discourage learners from doing undesirable activities. Additionally, such methods also attended to students' learning needs based on their aptitude. Regarding verbal feedback, teachers said such assessment offers them the opportunity to explain things clearly and on a timely basis, and so they also use it as part of their own belief, as seen in the following quotation.

> *I have to confer to the law, so, I have to use the marks. I am also trying to use verbal assessment as my own belief.* **(Tom)**

This is how their beliefs shaped their practice of assessment. However, on the whole, teachers admitted that most of their assessment practices were carried out for the purposes of certifying learner performance since, as mentioned earlier, all accomplishments need to be graded, as asserted in the excerpts below:

> *Well, actually, policy does not influence my beliefs but it influences the practice of assessment because when everything has to be graded, so, even if you have oral assessment but somehow when you have to show the grades, you have to create a*

number from 1 to 5. And regardless of what you tell your students or write them, you have to come with these grades. **(Carla)**

Hence, the analysis of this section points out that teachers' construction of subjective theories and their practice and appropriation has been simultaneously influenced, shaped, mediated and executed largely by policy, partly by their practice and by their own individual beliefs. Furthermore, by and large, teachers indicated that although they prefer formative assessment they nevertheless need to comply with the summative nature of assessment owing to policy requirement. This situation reveals that although teachers attach importance to both forms of assessment, however, in practice, the focus seems to be more on the summative side. What is more, this phenomenon further brought to attention teachers' mixed experiences and controversy in their thinking while processing and implementing assessment, as they are trapped between policy implementation and their own beliefs underlying these two forms of assessment. Summative assessment, which is largely numerical and judgemental, does not support learning. Despite their conservative nature, teachers continue to use them as they are obliged to do so. On the other hand, formative assessment focuses more on progress feedback and is considered to be the backbone for supporting learning. However, a lesser use of this medium was seen and this was attributed to various factors including institutional policy, heavy workload, student numbers, and time constraints. In addition, teachers also associated this practice with marks and indicated that students are actually motivated more by marks and grades than by other forms of assessment.

Within such a conflicting environment, there is also an understanding among teachers, for instance, that teachers need assessment for both judging and learning purposes, and that such assessment practices should embrace both forms of assessment. Teachers need to adhere to the functions of both the forms of assessment consistently. In doing this, as observed from

the empirical data, teachers endorse the following way forwards (interventions) to mitigate these conflicting situations:

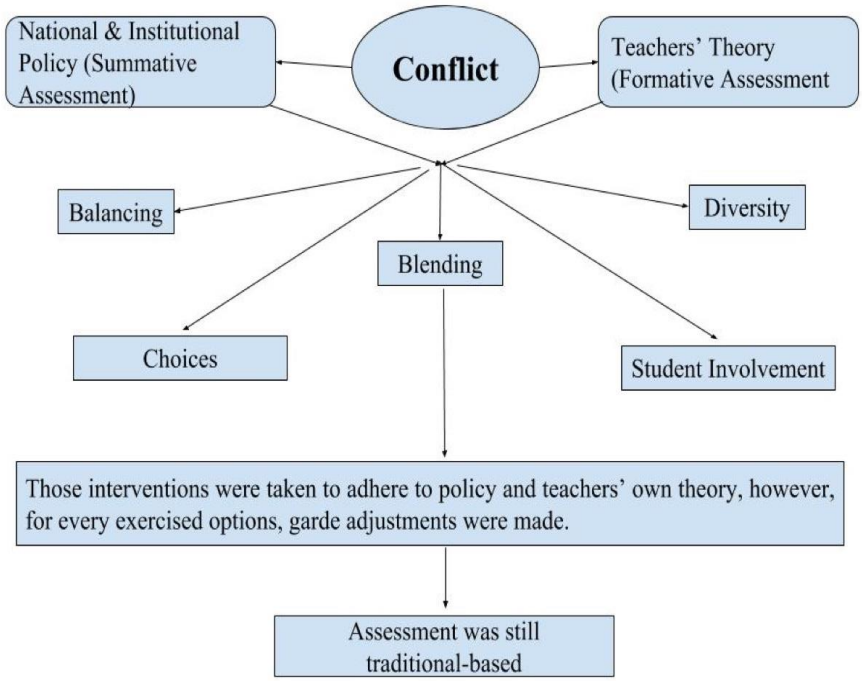


Figure 8. Interventions to resolve teacher's assessment conflict

4.4.1 Balancing

In ensuring the purposes of both forms of assessment, one of the crucial roles teachers' hold is to find a balanced assessment between summative and formative ways of assessment. In doing so, teachers used both forms of assessment in equal portion to strike and maintain balance between summative and formative aspects as well as to concentrate on their goals. In this regard, teachers expressed that this option allowed them to picture students' progress and adjust assessment practices according to their levels of learning. In this way, teachers could also anticipate students' learning outcome and adjust assessment practices accordingly. This approach was adopted to validate the requirement of policy and their beliefs.

4.4.2 Blending

Apart from this balancing act, teachers also felt the necessity to use a blended approach to assessment in order to fulfil the aims underlying summative and formative assessment. Therefore, in regard to it, teachers used and merged the various forms of differentiated assessment such as use of colours, targeted tasks within similar ability groups, differentiated tests and such. Regarding practice, teachers justified that such techniques are useful in honing learning as well as for the certifying purpose. For example, teachers expressed the use of colours and small marks were helpful in motivating learners as it allowed the teachers to attend to students' individual needs. Additionally, it allowed teachers to make grade adjustments based on their levels of learning, thus, fulfilling the policy onus as well as the learning requirement. Drawing on their blended approach, teachers highlight that this method assures teachers that each student's unique needs and characteristics are realised. Furthermore, teachers also changed their subjective theories of assessment based on the student types. As per the teachers, there appears to be three groups of students whose ways of learning differed in terms of their learning styles:

> *Students can be especially divided into two basic groups. Experience who are interested in English also out of school which means they use their English when they are watching movies, series, or use it for internet etc. The other of group of students who read English at school and use them while studying English at the school. And there is also some small percentage who are really doing nothing. But that's exception*. (**Tom**)

This excerpt reveals teachers' recognition of students on a more general level. This categorization was done based on the activities they undertook. The groups were: first, the experienced or explorative group who engage in extra activities besides the ones given in the classroom; second, the obligatory group who fulfils the demands of the teacher and finally, the least interested group, who do not practise English inside the classroom nor outside of the class.

In this way, teachers held the idea that students learn differently and hence, their consideration of student's innate quality and behavioural characteristics was reflected through the assessment tasks executed. This process allows the teachers to conform to the formalities of policy and their own beliefs about assessment.

4.4.3 Diversity

Allowing learners to make their own choices in their learning is viewed as one of the most engaging strategies a teacher can use, as it provides students with the opportunity to voice their decisions. Hence, in order to comply with the requirement of summative and formative assessment, teachers supported this procedure by creating a diversity of assessment options in the form of projects, portfolio, essays, role plays and presentations as diversity motivates students towards learning. As indicated by the teachers, due to such diversity, students could take ownership of their learning and represent their work in the way they wish. Besides, it also allows students to explore, express and exhibit ideas in the subject of their interest. Building on to this, teachers can also make grade adjustments based on students' representation of their work. As they were encouraged and motivated, the learners were found to be exhibiting more effort, hard work, dedication and commitment. In this way, students' performances were improved.

4.4.4 Choices

Giving students choices is regarded as crucial to keeping them engaged. Drawing on the theory of engagement, teachers in this study explicitly expressed the value of giving choices, as far as assessment is concerned, as such a strategy was hugely successful in keeping students involved in their learning. The general perceptions were that such an assessment approach encouraged students to be more open, amiable and interested as they were given choices and based on the choices, they could choose what they like to do.

Choice is a big thing especially with 9's being able to have the opportunities to choose the kind of presentations and projects they want to show their knowledge. They are very open and amicable and very interested to this kind of activity. With my 9's I am doing a guided choice novels because they are several reluctant readers in the class and giving them the novel that they have to read would be a worst thing ever, So, we are doing guided choice novel for them and things like that to help them and I also give them opportunities to choose what they are interested in and yes, that's fun like I said we are doing like advertisement, so, they can utilize their skills and opportunities to play with simple things. **(Debbie)**

Owing to such a practice and the prevalence of choices, students were encouraged which further motivated them to work hard. In this way, students were kept engaged in their learning and, at the same time, provided teachers with avenues to award grades for the purposes of certification based on the student's interest and learning styles. Furthermore, most teachers during the interviews expressed that choices are well received by the students. Thus, teachers regarded giving choices as important as they exhibited positive learning benefits amongst students.

4.4.5 Student involvement

Involving students in the assessment process was viewed by the teachers as key to serving the purposes of both summative and formative types of assessment. Hence, as was seen from the observation and observation notes, teachers involved the students in the assessment processes especially in self-, peer-, and teacher assessment by following a set of rubrics. The views of such practice as heard from the teachers during the interviews was that they serve the purpose of both summative and formative assessment. In regard to summative purposes, teachers expressed that students were required to score their writing based on the rubrics and accordingly, they need to justify their scoring process with the teacher. Based on these

discussions, teachers then determine students' grades depending on their level of justification. In line with formative assessment, teachers expressed that when students are involved in the assessment process, they are activated to take ownership of their learning. Further, such a program enables the students to identify their strengths, weaknesses and at the same time, allows them to think of strategies to progress even further. However, teachers held mixed perceptions regarding student involvement in the assessment. Although, teachers conveyed the positive benefit of it, teachers generally confirmed such practice doesn't always work because it relies heavily on the individual student's characteristics. The reason, as is explained by the teachers, was the students' inability to assess accurately and consistently. Teachers expressed that involving the student in the assessment activity required expertise in cognition, application and processing assessment skills; however, most students lacked these skills. As a result, it was beyond their capacity mark their own work as well as that of the others adequately and appropriately.

> *Self-assessment means they should evaluate their work on the basis of what they know. And, they should evaluate and assess their knowledge, but it doesn't work. More than half of the students are completely wrong and I think it's logical because if you don't get the feedback you need, you cannot know where your mistakes are, how good or how bad you are. You have no measure to know. So, self-assessment simply doesn't work.* **(Terry)**

Adding to this, teachers further supplemented that students were not able to offer constructive and effective feedback that can aid learning and in most instances, they were not able to identify learning gaps and were rather brutal when giving feedback. Such practice, though considered effective in enhancing learning did not seem feasible with their students. Thus, they were the least exercised options as was revealed below.

In this group, specifically the peer evaluation doesn't work for them well because they are sometimes not able to recognize the mistakes of their peers. So, this is a problem. **(John)**

In short, as outlined, teachers considered the benefit of formative assessment in enhancing learning, though generally teachers' classroom assessment practices have been revealed to be more on the traditional side. Such predominance of summative assessment prevailed owing to policy, social and cultural factors. As observed from the empirical data, for every exercised assessment option under the five distinct themes, teachers acknowledged that they made grade adjustments for the purpose of certification, as in the end, the grade awarded represented the teacher's, the school's and the student's performance. Thus, teachers expressed that they conduct all these assessment tasks purely to accumulate grades which indicated the dominance of traditional ways of assessing within the teachers' jurisdiction, despite theories pointing to the prominence of formative assessment in enhancing effective teaching and learning as reflected in the excerpt below:

With the class, after each unit we do, I give them two tests, one is based on grammar and a skill in reading, listening or use of English. And the other test based on vocabulary and they get 2 marks for these tests. Then, they are usually given one or two written assignments for each unit. I correct these assignments with some comments and mark them as well. So, they get another mark as well. And usually they also do a kind of presentation on the assignments they have written. And if they do well, I mark them because they want to get good marks. **(Carla)**

I of course evaluate the essay for some marks. If they have homework like prepare something. So, then we reconnect in the lesson and they get some marks. If someone did not prepare homework, I evaluate that negatively for example I give them bad marks. On the other hand, if someone has not prepared at home but if they perform well

on the spot I give them good marks because even if they have not prepared they were able to show something. **(Tom)**

Moreover, the above two excerpts and the analysis of this section points the undue emphasis given on certification owing to policy, cultural and social priorities.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter describes the importance of teacher learning in relation to improving and supporting student learning. It also explored teachers' assessment practices and teachers' perspectives on these practices. The findings revealed that teachers planned and implemented assessment for various reasons such as for accountability, certification, improving teaching and learning, and for behavioural and motivational purposes.

The second section reviewed teachers' ways of learning regarding assessment. The analysis revealed the significant role of 3 C's in their learning. It also revealed factors that disrupted teacher assessment creation.

The final section stressed the teachers' formation of subjective theories of assessment with regard to the purpose of assessment. Based on the analysis of the findings, it can be concluded that although conflicting situations prevail, teachers used various mediations to handle such situations. The findings also revealed that grade adjustments were made on every implemented assessment option. This indicated the importance of assessment for certification and the traditional practice of assessment for the teachers. In short, the nature of their assessment was found to be largely archaic which also leads one to question the validity, credibility and reliability of their practices.

The chapter concludes by emphasizing the understanding of teachers' subjective theories of assessment practices in relation to student learning and how these practices may influence these subjective theories and vice versa. Valuable insights can be contributed and

clues to the reform of their own assessment practices and classroom teaching and learning processes can also be gained.

The results lend support to the conclusion that teachers' assessment, if given appropriately and honestly, improves teacher instruction and student learning. In addition, it makes students, teachers and schools accountable (Brown, 2004). In addition, the finding indicates the need for greater assessment balance, blending, diversity, choices, and student involvement while practising assessment as these qualities are needed in appropriating functions of both forms of assessment. Furthermore, it was disclosed that the results of such assessment can be reliable and trustworthy. In this way, the problems underlying assessment was brought to the notice of the policy makers. Hence, they can contemplate this critical issue while reforming policies related to assessment.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the empirical findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical interpretation of the research findings that were the outcome of chapter 4. These results are discussed in light of the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 together with a few additional texts from current research that are a particular theoretical reference to a few of the findings of this study. The findings are discussed in response to the research questions and the results are mostly about EFL teachers' subjective theories regarding planning and implementation of assessment practices.

5.1.1 Interpretations

In the following sections, interpretations of the research findings are offered in connections to the assessment literature and to the theoretical framework of the study. In addition, the section that follows includes a summary of the chapter.

5.2 Discussion on assessment types in relation to the themes

While planning and implementing assessment practices, five themes repetitively occurred that affected teachers' thought process regarding planning and implementation of assessment practices. These five themes were a recurring idea and continued to be prominent while triangulating the data. These themes were using assessment for the purpose of student accountability, certification, improving teaching and learning, motivation and managing behaviour. Discussing and distinguishing teacher's perception of assessment on the basis of these five diverse themes was a frequent topic among the participants of this study.

5.2.1 Interpretation

The theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 on teachers' conceptions points to the

fact that teachers' conceptions of assessment can be understood in terms of their agreement or disagreement with the four purposes to which assessment may be put, specifically, (a) improvement of teaching and learning, (b) school accountability, (c) student accountability, or (d) treating assessment as irrelevant. This study reinforced three of Brown's (2008) conceptions of assessment. Furthermore, the findings revealed two more assessment themes i.e. assessment for motivation and behaviour management purposes.

In this study, teachers were found to be using most assessment tasks for the purpose of certification. Some effective assessment practices were also promoted with the aim to improve teaching and learning and also for schools and students' accountability. There were a few others assessment methods practiced solely for the purpose of motivation and managing behaviour. The discussion on each theme is presented hereafter.

Brown (2008) defines assessment for accountability in relation to achieving learning outcome or standards. For example, results are used to demonstrate that the teachers are doing their job well and to emphasise improvement in the quality of instruction and also for making students accountable for learning. Supporting this, the study results showed various forms of assessment tasks implemented by teachers to serve the purpose of ensuring teacher and student accountability. One of the best examples found from the study results in support of accountability was engaging students' roles in the assessment process. Sadler (1989) regards students' roles in the assessment as important. In support of this, Black and Wiliam (1998) assert self- and peer-assessments by and between students as a crucial feature of student involvement in the assessment process. Furthermore, Boud and Falchikov (2005) viewed such involvement in assessment as a learning activity that may produce learning benefits for students. Involving students in their assessment can also help in breaking the chain of lecture-dominated classes thereby promoting active and meaningful learning. In this regard, teachers

in this study were seen carrying out three rounds of assessment with the aim to involve students and also to meet the desired learning goals by making students take responsibility for their own learning which in turn supported Biggs (1996) "constructive" aspect that emphasises the core idea of students constructing meaning through relevant learning opportunities and activities. Such activities, according to Torrance (2007), also lead to the development of higher order skills as students are involved in the assessment.

In setting out to promote assessment for the purpose of accountability and for appropriate engagement of students in self and peer-assessment, teachers carried out three rounds of assessment. The teachers practiced self-, peer, and teacher assessment, which meant students reworked their activities three times and also received three rounds of feedback before the final versions were submitted to the teacher. In this way the structure of the guide, together with the conversations, served as an important means of prompting and focusing effective self-evaluation and reflection (Boud & Walker, 1998) as well as to make students accountable for their own learning and in ensuring learner autonomy. Parr and Hawe (2017) indicate that this is a useful activity in confirming and validating what they had been thinking, as cueing or surfacing existing knowledge or as prompting reflection. In addition, Black and Wiliam (1998); Hill (2011) assert that these activities allow students to think, discuss and reflect on their own learning as well as those of their peers and to articulate their reflections and to provide feedback to each other.

Furthermore, developing the learner's ability to self-assess contributes to an understanding of themselves and their learning in a fundamental way, which is rarely possible through other assessment practices (Bourke, 2016). Talking from the perspective of process, the findings of this study reflect a similar stress as the teachers prioritised these assessment aspects with the purpose to build students' capacity to reflect and assess their own learning as well as those of their peers. Likewise, Tierney (2014) adds that assessment rubric criteria needs

to be made transparent to students by involving them in the assessment process which he sees as a multifaceted quality of classroom fairness assessment. In connection to this, many studies proposed a number of critical factors, though amongst these studies, Panadero (2011) proposed two crucial factors for appropriate self-assessment to occur, namely: 1) using adequate assessment criteria, and 2) using them at the right time. In this study, teachers understood these factors in connection to assessment transparency as the findings of the study indicated that the assessment rubric was firstly discussed with the students and then they were shown how to use it. As such, the primary goal is to support students by pointing out the need to communicate criteria to students. These activities, according to the teachers, developed meta-cognitive skills in both teachers and students. In this way, assessment was discussed with students and they were shown how to use the criteria at the right time.

Moving to the certification aspect, Brown (2008) understood assessment for certification as evaluating a student's progress or achievement or ability and implementing consequences, and then, assigning grades/scores, checking of student performance against criteria, placing students into classes and groups based on their performance. In agreement with this, grading and testing, although influenced by contextual factors, was used mainly for the purpose of certification, as grades needs to be shown at the end, as was revealed by the empirical data. In support of this, the classroom observation data also found teachers conducting regular small tests and various other alternative activities including projects, portfolios, extempore speeches, grammar bytes and role plays. Grade adjustments were made on these activities to serve the objective of passing requirement which in turn validates findings by Black, et al. (2003) that indicated that parents assume grades are the only forum through which they can find out how their children are faring at school.

Although teachers conducted regular tests, testing formats were mostly found to be based on rhetorical and close-ended or low-level questions. They were mostly gap filling,

matching, and short answer connected to the recollection of facts or what had been done during the lesson, as revealed by the review of student document. Such types of questions and testing format according to Duschl and Gitomer (1997) will discourage students from engaging in risky cognitive activities. However, the results revealed that teachers conducted most of these assessments for the purpose of certification as grades needs to be accumulated, so that they can be reported at the end of the term or year. This kind of practices may undermine teaching for the purpose of improving learning and may not fulfil Brown's objective of using assessment for improving teaching and learning. Furthermore, the continued emphasis on it may leave little room for Biggs' constructive alignment, as teaching will be done solely to meet the grading requirement. Biggs, in his constructive alignment framework argues that for students to learn as result of assessment, teachers should be able to set up an appropriate learning environment whereby teachers bring about a proper connection between teaching, learning and assessment to meet the intended learning outcomes. However, as teachers are needed to carry out assessment for certification, these restrictions in general may prohibit teachers from implementing effective assessment practices.

In line with assessment for improving teaching and learning, Popham (2000) claims assessment must make students learn, understand and do more than before. Brown (2008) describes assessment for improving teaching and learning must include diagnoses of the nature of student performance and it must provide valid and accurate information to describe student performance. Biggs (1996) posits that in order to enhance learning, the teacher must be able to decide on assessment tasks that will convey how well individual students have attained these outcomes. In regard to this, the findings from the classroom observation revealed teachers facilitating various kinds of interactive and discussion-based lessons through effective questioning routines. For instance, the observational data indicated teachers making extensive use of questioning and tests to review and test student understanding of the topic and, at the

same time, clarify and trigger more discussion of the topic during instruction, to keep students attentive and, at the end, to check whether the students had followed the lesson, as teacher questioning has a direct impact on students' cognitive processes (Chin, 2006 & Morge, 2005). Teachers' questions consist of both summative and formative types. In general, as observed, the questions were mostly of low level, focusing less on reflection, though the observational data also revealed that in certain instances, teachers constructed some thought-provoking or open-ended questions to achieve student understanding, initiate interactions, develop students' critical thinking skills and understanding of reading and guide their reading-based writing and listening tasks to promote further learning. Most of these questions were found to be analytical and critical in nature, which fostered meta-cognitive questioning skills in the students which further corroborated findings by Lemke (1990) that asserts teacher questioning should elicit student thought and encourage students to elaborate on their ideas. Gonzalez (2010) points out that developing effective questioning skills requires careful planning and practice, which in turn supports findings of this study whereby teachers claimed that good assessment planning requires timing and coordination. Additionally, the observation data also showed teachers grouping the class into smaller groups and specific focused questions were asked to get the individuals talking. Such a strategy according to the teachers allows the quieter students to think and contribute ideas. Additionally, teachers could pay more attention to quieter students which replicated findings by Blatchford, Bassett, and Brown (2011) that claim low attaining pupils benefit from smaller classes at secondary level in terms of more individual attention and facilitating engagement in learning.

Furthermore, teachers considered giving effective written feedback to be vital as they noted this kind of feedback is useful in honing the learning process. In line to this, Shute (2008) notes that feedback has to be specific in nature and Black and Wiliam (1998a) state that feedback needs to give each pupil specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses, preferably

without any overall marks. As observed from students' documents, teachers rendered both formative and summative types of feedback. In connection to formative feedback, teachers specifically wrote small notes that reflected students' weaknesses (What went wrong), strengths (What they did right) and solutions (What needs to be done). This finding is in agreement with other research supporting the notion that feedback leads to learning gains only when it includes guidance on how to improve (Black & William, 1998, Black et al., 2004; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger and DeNisi 1996). Furthermore, the interview data pointed out teachers involving students in self-, peer- and teacher assessment offered students with three rounds of feedback, feedback from self, feedback from peers and finally, feedback from the teachers which allowed students to modify and improve their work based on the three levels of feedback. This was consistent with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) findings wherein they categorized feedback into four types: feedback task, feedback process, feedback self-regulation, and feedback-self. It can be understood that feedback can be effective if the first three types are given regularly rather than the feedback-self. The results of this study supported the idea of catering feedback based on tasks, process and for self-regulation as seen in the above example whereby teachers engaged students in self- and peer-assessment with the aim to regulate students towards learning by involving them in the assessment tasks. This activity of the teacher was successful in decreasing gaps between current understandings and performance and goals as the students were receiving three levels of feedback and reworking on their tasks which in turn reinforced Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Sadler (1989) where the purpose of feedback which is to reduce discrepancies between current understandings and performance, and the intended goal.

However, the study results indicated a lesser use of such a medium. In general, as was seen from the classroom observation data and review of student documents, teachers' feedback was mostly found to be rather vague and too general, often representing spelling corrections,

error corrections, ticking, crossing out, verifying responses, and in the class as well as in written work, teachers' comments were mostly encouraging and wide-ranging in nature, such as *well done, good, good job, excellent, work hard, great, you are getting there, interesting view, not bad, try harder, you guys are on fire today*, etc. All these are in contradiction to current research finding of Pla-Campas, Arumi-Prat, Senye-Mir, and Ramirez (2018) that claim students who have been assessed using formative feedback practices achieve higher marks than those who had not been assessed in this way. Hence, Gamlem and Munthe (2013) declared that giving feedback merely in terms of encouragement is futile and may in fact bring negative impact on learning (Wiliam, 2010). Further studies reveal that feedback should suggest the effects it can have on learning. Although teachers were found practicing various assessment methods as discussed in chapter 4 under 4.1 to improve teaching and learning, their feedback execution was found in general to be ineffective. This finding confirmed Butler's (1988) finding wherein she advocates that not all types of feedback promote student learning and the power of feedback differs in its effect (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Furthermore, teachers' questions and testing designs were mostly found mostly to be based on rhetorical and close-ended or low-level questions, and tests were mostly gap filling, matching, short answer- all of which are coupled with the recollection of facts or what had been done during the previous lesson. In regard to this, CERI (2008) illustrates such type of poorly designed questions and testing materials without alignment nor a clear connection between them and the curriculum can inhibit innovation. Besides, such mediocre designed questions and tests did not support Biggs (1996) "alignment" aspect in which teachers need to create a situation whereby teaching and learning activities, and the assessment tasks, are aligned to the Intended Learning Outcomes. More specifically, the teacher's job is to establish a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. These questions and tests failed to create an appropriate learning situation

for the students. Furthermore, based on Bloom's taxonomy which is further reinforced by reinforced Kira, Komba, Kafanabo, and Tilya's (2013) study, such a situation corresponds to the teachers' incapability in handling the use of open-ended and closed-ended questions in class as well as the convergent and divergent questions. Although, teachers used the above practices to improve teaching and learning, they nevertheless failed to set up an appropriate learning environment to support learning.

Regarding assessment for motivation, teachers in this study applied various unique assessment tasks to motivate and engage students, as motivation is seen as crucial to learning. Black and Wiliam (1998) concluded, "The provision of challenging assignments and extensive feedback lead to greater student engagement and higher achievement" (p. 13). In addition, providing a choice supports the learner's experience of autonomy. With regard to this, self-determination theory holds that choice should result in positive motivation and performance outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In other words, a person will be motivated until the teachers offer choices and provides opportunities to make those choices.

Additionally, one of the key purposes of this research was to respond to the assessment construction and alignment by Biggs (1996) and to explore the dynamic relationship between teachers' assessment planning and implementation. Zhao (2018) states that students learn best when engaged in relevant, authentic, and challenging experiences. Consistent to this, the interview data and student document review provided additional support when it found teachers giving students challenging and diverse choice-based assessment tasks including projects, essays, presentations, and portfolios to motivate and to draw students' attention towards teaching and learning. Teachers also provided choice in terms of tests and homework. These activities were designed based on students' needs, styles and preferences as well as to sustain interest and promote freedom which is coherent with Black and Wiliam's (1998) finding regarding students' success in providing diversity in class activities. This finding is further

supported Patall, Cooper, and Robinson's (2008) whose findings that claim that individuals affirm their sense of autonomy through the choice they experience and these choices further enhance in students' their motivation, persistence, perseverance, performance, and production. Biggs (1996) theory of constructive alignment implies that if students are engaged in active learning, then lower performing students are more likely to succeed. Supporting this concept, in this study, teachers offered choices in their assessment tasks purely to motivate and engage students in their learning. Choice-based assessment surely integrates teaching, learning and assessment tasks. This type of activity puts students at the core of learning which in turn supports the principle of social constructivism whereby learners construct knowledge for themselves which is also one of the core essentialities of (Biggs, 1996) constructive alignment. Teachers in this study also often used *class* and *teach* commands, and smileys, short videos, stickers, and pictures with comments as reward strategies to motivate students. These ideas originated from the concept of whole brain teaching. Whole Brain Teaching is an approach designed toward maximizing student engagement, and focusing on the way the brain is really designed to learn (Biffle, 2013). The classroom observation data revealed students actively responding to teachers in classes whereby teachers implemented this strategy. Such a technique was found to be very effective in engaging students as disclosed from the interview data which further supports Biggs (1996), the "alignment" aspect which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes.

In the seminal paper by Black and Wiliam (1998) which indicated that the use of stickers, pictures with general comments, and smileys, (normative approach rather than criterion-based) as extrinsic motivation to enhance learning through competition as a method that does not enhance learning. Furthermore, the use of extrinsic motivation may be problematic, because such extrinsic motivation is closely related to reward (Crooks, 1988) which will only steer competition between the pupils and undermine the capacities of weak

students (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In spite of this, teachers in this study were still found to be using them as an approach to support learning. Research further points out that such practice may undermine efforts taken up by the students in the sense that students may exhibit their learning effort to domains that are rewarded and effort will decrease or disappear when the reward is no longer available (Crooks, 1988). Although teachers were aware of the challenges associated with this practice, teachers still practiced them for the purpose of motivating students.

For the purposes of behaviour management, the classroom observations, researcher's notes and the analysis of student work points to ample examples wherein teachers created an appropriate learning environment by providing differentiated and situation-based assessment methods. Among these methods, incorporating fun, giving freedom to express and explore, games, small marks and short videos appeared to meet the desired learning outcome. This finding lends support to Biggs (1996), the "alignment" aspect whereby teachers are expected to create appropriate and effective situations to align teaching, learning and assessment tasks to deliver intended learning outcomes. This further validated Tomlinson's (2014) findings on catering to differentiated instruction to meet the desired learning goals. Teachers also indicated that incorporating fun and praising students lead to learning, though this finding was in contrast to (Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Hattie & Timeperley, 2007; Wiliam, 2010) research findings. Both clearly indicate that incorporating fun in the lesson or offering praise related to the self may in fact have a negative impact on learning.

Additionally, the classroom observation and interview data revealed teachers' unique ways for managing classroom behaviour. One of the exemplary techniques discovered during classroom observation was the use of positive and negative emotions, exercises, banging on the table, and making funny facial expressions to gain and sustain their attention in the class. This finding supported Biffle's (2013) idea of whole brain teaching. Teachers revealed during

the interview that they found such an approach effective in sustaining and managing classroom behaviour as it allowed the teachers to integrate rules flexibly in keeping students alert, active and attentive. This finding corroborated findings of a few studies that stressed active learning situation as the significant contributor of academic achievement (Baepler, Walker & Driessen, 2014; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011). As revealed from the empirical data, teachers in this study were found practicing various forms of assessment to create an active learning environment.

Although teachers have taken their own initiative and made efforts to develop effective assessment theories, their practice of assessment appeared to be rather outdated which goes against current research findings on classroom assessment practices. Most of these practices were used for certification. As is evident from the empirical data, teachers' subjective theories in relation to assessment practices differed as per the assessment themes; however, most of their personal theories regarding assessment practices were influenced by the policies. Hence, if teachers' subjective theories are to be taken into consideration, then the policyholders should reconsider this crucial aspect, since teachers' subjective theories plays an important role in improving their own instruction and student learning as indicated by Brown & Remesal (2017). They assert that assessment practices are influenced by teachers' conceptions of what constitutes proper classroom assessment and therefore, their reasoning and subjectification about the purpose of assessment matter as to how assessment is implemented in the classroom setting. Thus, as pointed out by Brown and Remesal (2017), unless those constraining factors are considered to be more supportive of assessment for learning, teachers' current subjective theories in assessment will have little room to be more effective and productive. Furthermore, if the diverse range of different needs of students is to be met, then teachers need to depart from the traditional organization of assessment in which testing and grading is highly emphasised.

5.3 Discussion on teacher learning of assessment

Teachers learning from each other and talking together about planning and implementation has proven to be very important. The teachers in this study based their assessment conceptions on a variety of sources. In the context of this study, these sources are referred to conditions or factors that modified or hampered each teacher's formation of subjective theories of assessment. The study revealed that teachers used several measures to develop their subjective theories of assessment. Examples included discussions with colleagues within their departments, the internet, observing colleagues' classroom practices, their own experience, self-learning, self-reflection, observing students, student feedback. Through such efforts, teachers have evolved in transforming their assessment practices for better student learning. Although a wide range of factors have contributed to teachers' formation of subjective theories of assessment, the primary source for most of these teachers were consulting, cooperating and collaborating with colleagues in the department, observation, self-reflection and feedback as indicated by the empirical data.

5.3.1 Interpretation

The key to the successful creation of teachers' subjective theory of assessment were a set of factors including discussion with the colleagues, peer observation and a teacher's own experiences. The analysis of the empirical data from my study recognized several factors that affected teachers' construction of subjective theory of assessment thus reinforcing Barnes, Fives, and Dacey (2015); Fulmer, Lee, and Tan's (2015) social, historical, and cultural priorities involved in interpreting assessment practices and as well as personal factors including the nature of teachers' experience, background, and knowledge (Philipp, 2007; Philipp et al., 2007; Thompson, 1992).

Biggs Constructive alignment, which is the theoretical framework for this study, that is embedded in the principles of constructivism, which is a theory about knowledge and learning describing both what knowing is and how one comes to know (Fosnot, 2005). In this regard, following the analysis of interview data identified three key elements through which teachers learnt about assessment were identified. Within the 3 C's, there were more elements that supported their learning. These were i) consultation ii) cooperation iii) collaboration, and i) self-reflection and ii) peer-observation and iii) peer-feedback within the aspects of 3 C's (consultation, cooperation and collaboration). The presence of these 3 specific elements in the study contributed to teachers' effective planning and implementation of assessment practices to support learning. In addition, policy, teachers' workload and lack of effective professional development inhibited their assessment construction.

Fullan (2001) identifies conversation, collaboration and observation within teachers, as necessary elements for effective changes to professional practice. As echoed by Fullan (2001), the empirical findings indicated factors that assisted teachers' planning and implementation of effective assessment practices was consultation and collaboration within the department colleagues. Collaborative learning structures typically involve teachers meeting on a regular basis to develop shared responsibility for their students' school success (Chong & Kong, 2012). This became evident in this study as well. The finding showed teachers meeting regularly to discuss teaching, learning and assessment tasks fitting to the needs of their students. Such a network allowed teachers to discuss, examine and create effective assessment practices. As a result, in this study teachers managed to create uniform assessment tasks and format that can be followed within the department through shared consultation, cooperation and collaboration. Such a collaborative environment should be promoted as they reform the teaching and learning process.

In general, the key idea for discussing assessment within the department was to ensure

a standardised format within the department with the purpose to ensure clarity and transparency. Along with this, findings also confirmed the importance of key elements of 3 C's (consultation, cooperation and collaboration) in communicating the criticality of assessment as well as in building a strong culture of assessment within which teachers started to gain support from each other.

At the research site, it was evident that the bond and support among the teachers in the department contributed to building uniform assessment tasks and format, thus, promoting a strong assessment culture within the department. In nourishing the goal of creating effective and standardised assessment practices, Tierney (2014) called for conducting assessment with the aim to improve practice in the service of students. A highly effective teacher learning community and the regular use of 3 C's within the learning community are specific enabling factors that increased teachers' efficacy in realising their intended goals, as teachers freely shared their knowledge, ideas and feedback. This premise supported the idea that it is the collective capacity and efficacy of teachers that make a difference in student learning (Goddard & Skrla, 2006; Hattie, 2012). The teachers particularly mention 3 C's as the fastest and most effective way to attend to their learning issues and also proved essential for teachers to transform or reform their subjective theories of assessment with regard to its role in serving the purpose of improving teaching and learning processes.

Teachers' perceptions and actions about changing and developing assessment practices are highly influenced by what they believe, as well as by their knowledge. Biggs (1996) mentions knowledge construction and authentic learning tasks happen through cooperation and meta-cognition. The empirical data supported Biggs's idea of constructing knowledge and authentic learning tasks through cooperation and meta-cognition as dynamic beliefs within the teachers. Teachers admitted to planning assessment practices through cooperation. Teachers

further illuminated that it helped them to reflect and process their thoughts on how they can get better at their duties. The idea of cooperation, consultation and collaboration served to provide teachers with immediate assistance and as displayed in the interview data, teachers expressed that they consulted, collaborated and cooperated regularly with their colleagues with the intent to modify and reformulate assessment practices effectively to support learning. According to Biggs's constructive alignment, aspects like cooperative learning and meta-cognition are critical to teacher learning and teachers using Biggs's constructive alignment approach to learning may enhance teachers understanding and prevent the teachers from taking a superficial approach to learning.

Gutkin and Curtis (1999)) and Zins and Erchul (1995)) posit that the practice of consultation typically addresses both content and process issues. As noted by Gutkin and Curtis (1999) and Zins and Erchul (1995) the participants of this study also based their subject and pedagogical knowledge and skills formation from consultation. Linking to this, the data revealed teachers regularly consulted their colleagues for issues related to assessment. This way, teachers relied more on their colleagues to confront issues or any possible confusions related to assessment.

Peer observation is a useful endeavour as peer observation partnerships can help teachers improve their teaching practice, transform their educational perspectives and develop collegiality (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). This activity opens the door for teachers to learn from each other. The empirical data indicated these practices being followed by the teacher participants. For example, they constructed as well as changed their assessment theories by observing colleagues' classroom practices followed by peer feedback. Teachers were willing and happy to share their best practices with each other. Moreover, teachers generously provided peer feedback which further encouraged teachers to reflect on the received feedback. Teachers

were found to be receptive as well as reflective in their practices. Such practices, if observed with a clear in purpose and in a guided way, including analysing that practice and providing feedback are seen as very useful actions in professional learning that results in improved learning for students (Adey, 2004; Parr & Hawe, 2017).

It appears that parallel with Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) the teachers of this study also perceived factors such as consultation, collaboration, cooperation, feedback and reflection from discussion as useful in creating effective assessment theories. Several teachers in this study appeared to be receptive of feedback as they modified their assessment practices based on the feedback received from their peers. In regard to this, teachers collected regular feedback from their colleagues following peer observation. As shown, feedback was useful in improving their teaching for bettering student learning as it allows teachers to reflect and view their practices critically. It also provides teachers with an avenue to decide where to devote their time and effort and how to align teaching, learning and assessment tasks appropriate to the needs of the students. The results revealed feedback as one of the critical events that reformed and transformed teachers' assessment practices. This finding validates the premise that teachers value and view feedback as an essential element in transforming their practices. However, teachers also mentioned that one needs to be professional in order to offer constructive feedback and in several cases their lack of skills in giving effective feedback challenged them from offering feedback to their colleagues.

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) point out that collaborative teacher learning strategies or the professional learning community are a useful practice. Aligning to this, Butler, and Schnellert (2012) assert that this kind of activity facilitates the development of teacher reflection, self-regulation and collaborative inquiry. This was validated in our findings as teachers were seen working together. They also engaged in frequent dialogue aimed at

examining their practices with the purpose to develop and implement more effective assessment methods. One exemplary creation of teacher collaborative learning revealed from this study was the construction of assessment rubric and checklist that can guide students' reading-based writing exercises. The results also indicate that these teachers engaged themselves in trial process on which they reflect. Based on these trials, teachers gather feedback which is shared during the discussion which further contributed to revision and improvement. There is no doubt that reflection and peer feedback aided in making the rubrics better which proved to be a crucial factor in assessment planning. Therefore, if the purpose is to cater for better student learning, teachers should continually engage themselves in dialogue and more peer feedback should be offered in order to improve their teaching, learning and assessment practices. Research confirms that learners become more effective when they listen to externally provided feedback (Kulhavy & Stock, 1989). Also, feedback is seen as having the most influential effect on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). All these findings supported Lieberman's (1995); Weidemann's (2001) findings which indicated reflection, discussion and collaboration, commitment, and support and dialogue as critical factors in improving teachers' practice including assessment. And these very elements were used by the teachers of this study in reforming and transforming their assessment practices.

Moreover, research stressed the importance of professional development in teacher learning. Continuing professional development is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning, by engaging in an on-going reflection and action (Megginson & Whitaker, 2017). Research indicated the importance of changing teacher's minute-to minute and day-by-day assessment practices as the most powerful way to increase student achievement. However, the results of this study showed that professional development as a factor that inhibited their assessment construction as it has only helped in changing teachers' thinking, but not their practice, as teachers claim most of the professional development courses

were found to be more theory-based than practice-oriented. Hence, teachers expressed frustration, resistance and doubt towards it. These statements that reflect reservation, resistance, hesitation, frustration or doubt were similar to those expressed by the high school teachers in Chong and Kong's (2012) study. In support of Wei, Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2010), teachers of this study expressed their need for more effective practice-based professional development and a professional development and one that is ongoing and engaging. In absence of effective professional development, as suggested by Lieberman (1995) teachers should engage in learning from colleagues as such practice are seen to be more useful. This was visible in my finding as most teachers mentioned that they frequently consult, cooperate and collaborate with their colleagues in the case of assessment planning. Teachers also view such practice as effective as they could create some useful habits as a result of 3 C'S.

Although teachers have initiated some innovative practices, it can be concluded from the above discussion that in general, some critical factors have assisted and obstructed teachers' construction of effective subjective theories of assessment. Furthermore, although five distinct themes existed within the teachers, it can be summed up that teachers' learning environment seemed to be tightly controlled by the institutional, educational, social and cultural context. To allow teachers to create assessment theories fitting to current research that ties with transparency, student engagement in the assessment process and that develops the ability to self-assess, think, reflect, inquire and articulate their own learning to improve learning in the students, the controlled environment needs to be replaced by an open and free environment that would motivate teachers and allow them to produce innovative teaching, learning and assessment environment within the teachers as tightly controlled environment inhibits teacher innovation. Additionally, the present study argues that the increasing hunt for better and credible sources will profoundly transform the EFL classroom. Furthermore, as proposed by Schratz (2010), the teachers can take the role of a transformative teacher, a teacher that delves

more often into current research to pursue skills appropriate for the 21st century and become even more aware of social changes in order to broaden their perspectives of knowledge and skills as none of the teachers in this study spoke about research. Unless a teacher takes these initiatives, that is, advances their own learning, improvement in student learning may not be possible.

5.4 Discussion teacher subjective theory of assessment

Teachers' construct of assessment with regard to the purpose of assessment was shaped largely by educational policies and social and cultural norms, whereas some were formed because of the teachers' own theory. One such example is that there is a culture amongst parents and society to determine children's performance through the grades they achieve. This result connects with Goldstein's (2017) contention that constructs reflect social and cultural norms, meaning that different societies and cultures will generally assume different constructs and therefore use different assessments. In connection to Goldstein's (2017) claim, the participants of this study were observed allotting grades for every exercised assessment option to fulfil the requirement of policy, culture and society. This result further supported Harris & Brown's (2009) findings whereby they posit that teachers shape their subjective theory of assessment practices based on existing policies and social and cultural norms.

Continuing influence of policy on assessment may however prevent teachers from planning effective assessment practices which may result in insufficient learning on the part of the students. Research also shows that teachers' assessment practices are influenced by their principles in relation to their professional tasks (e.g., instruction, assessment) (Barnes, Fives, & Dacey, 2015; Fives & Buehl, 2012) or by their conceptions of what constitutes proper classroom assessment (Brown & Remesal, 2017; Remesal, 2011). This was evident in this study as the results found teachers planning and implementing assessment practices in

accordance to their beliefs regarding the purpose of assessment. This brings to light the need for teachers to consider their own theory as they serve the purpose of implementing assessment for the benefit of students. This reveals to a larger extent that teachers' construct of subjective theories of assessment have been simultaneously moulded by policy, practice and beliefs. A similar finding was reported in Breen, et al, (2001). In their analysis of teachers' principles and classroom practices, they shared that a principle might be implemented through a diverse range of practices, while a common practice may be justified by a variety of principles (Breen, et al, 2001).

The challenge then is to find a balance between assessments to meet the requirement of policy as well the teacher's own theory. The finding of this study revealed teachers using varying techniques to fulfil the requirement of policy, yet to remain true to their own theory as well as summative and formative purposes of assessment. Thus, in what follows, some of the intervention options taken up by the teachers will be highlighted. The finding showed teachers balancing their assessment practices to fulfil the purposes of summative and formative assessment which authenticated the finding by Garrison and Ehringhaus (2007) wherein they pointed out that teachers should do the same thing to gather information regarding student learning and to serve the functions of both summative and formative assessments (Sadler, 1998).

Garrison and Ehringhaus (2009) claim that when teachers effectively use formative and summative assessment practices, it allows students who typically perform at the lower level of achievement to show the greatest gains. Also, enthusiastic students take ownership of their learning and become the centre of their own success. This study embraced their finding whereby the results showed teachers applying differentiated methods and choice-based assessment while considering students' language level. Likewise, learners were involved in the learning and this fact further connects with the finding by Burke (2010) that stated when

students are unable to understand the standards, teachers must use corrective interventions and differentiated learning strategies to meet their students' diverse needs.

Studies have shown that involving students in assessment may help them develop long-term competencies and skills. Broadfoot (2000) claims that students should be involved in the assessment in the pursuit of developing their own reflective skills. Keith's 1996 (in Falchikov, 2005) study suggests that these types of assessment can have a positive influence in changing students' focus of learning from "what" to "how." This reflects the very essence of the connection between formative and summative assessment. Broadfoot (2000), Falchikov (2004) and Bourke (2016) describe student involvement as crucial to learning. Falchikov says student participation in assessment enhances learning. The idea has been reconstructed by authors such as Bourke when he stated that involving students in the assessment contributes to an understanding of themselves and their learning in a fundamental way. In this study, teachers involved students in the assessment process to attend to teachers' own theory and policy mandates, which in turn validated the finding by Broadfoot (2000), which stated that in addition to assessment serving the policy mandates, it should also serve the function of learning. Teachers explained that involving students in the assessment provides students with more learning benefits. A large number of teachers mentioned that such a process builds student's capacity to differentiate between learning strengths and problems. Owing to its positive benefits, students were involved in assessment through the process of self- and peer-assessment. In this regard, studies claim self- and peer-assessment can be used summatively and formatively. Linking to this fact, it was discovered from the data that teachers involved students in the assessment to meet the summative and formative purposes. However, teachers also expressed the challenges of such an idea due to students' incompetence to assess learning. Bourke (2016) claims that teachers' dilemma over policy and theory can be mitigated by following the path of self-assessment. Since the challenges facing policy and theory can be

lessened by involving students in the assessment, teachers should exercise more of self- and peer-assessment with their students.

Another aspect this study illuminates is the need to blend assessment in supporting teaching and learning as blending allows the teachers to submit to their own theory and to the policy mandates. The teachers in this study display a strong commitment to blended assessment approach. They persisted in spite of difficulties, and this approach makes the teachers to overcome challenges of teaching and learning. For example, the observation data showed teachers giving both written and verbal assessment to students. Although the written feedback was vague, the verbal feedback provided seems to be more specific and constructive in nature. Teachers also blended feedback offered to students by conducting self-, peer- and teacher assessment. This kind of step taken by the teacher initiates self-responsibility in the learners. Additionally, students receive blended feedback, i) feedback from self, ii) feedback from peers, and, iii) feedback from the teacher. This way teachers engaged students in the learning. Several teachers described that this approach supported them to cater to students' learning differences and motivated them as well their students in generating effective teaching and learning situation. Several studies have mentioned the benefits of blended approach in catering to learning. One such study is by Black and Wiliam (1998) that indicated that teachers' grading routine should be accompanied by comments to have more influential effects on student learning. This brings to the core that assessment be it tests, grading, feedback or questioning, must be blended well to serve the functions of assessment as, of and for learning.

Assessment as a learning domain involves serving students and helping students learn. Trasler (2002) argues that flexibility, variety and adaptability are key factors in attracting, retaining and motivating learners. In regard to this, teachers created diverse assessment choices and diversity. Although it had long-term positive benefits, teachers expressed the difficulty

associated with such diversity. One of the teachers said, “Although I create diversity in homework, one of the costs that comes with diversity is that students don’t take homework seriously.” However, other than travails, diversity fostered more long-term benefits. One of the teachers stated, “Diversity and choices makes students amicable, open and interested towards learning.” Another teacher said, “Diversity and choices allow students to explore learning within their capacity.” Hence, teachers created various forms of diversity to attend to students needs as well to fulfil teachers’ own theory and policy mandates. This finding aligns with Patall, Cooper, and Robinson's (2008) findings about choices that enhance in students their motivation, persistence, performance, and production in students. This kind of approach will also help overcome learning barriers that students face in a traditional classroom.

Although teachers described an evident struggle between their theory and policy mandates, they also offered solutions to overcome these challenges. Moreover, these conflicts made teachers think carefully about how to combine the formalities of summative and formative assessment as well as the policy mandates and their own theory regarding assessment.

5.5 Conclusion

My main argument in this study is that students should gain understanding and learning through the education they attend in order to prepare them for life and work and not just replicate what is in the curriculum. Therefore, assessment as introduced, used, mediated, and brokered by teachers who play a critical role in a student’s education and should serve the purpose of assessing *for* learning and not only assessing learning. It is essential to gain insights into how a teacher’s subjective theories and the interplay between teachers, learners, and assessment affects life in the classroom. In regard to this, Biesta (2009) points to the need to keep the question of purpose and the question of what constitutes good education central in our

educational discussions and wider endeavours. This is even proven more crucial in the everyday practice of schooling, as it is in these instances where we engage more explicitly with the assessment of our own educational practices and our students' achievements.

Such as in this study, the focus was on teachers' constructs of subjective theory of assessment with the purpose to improve teaching for better student learning. Biesta (2009) further proposes that the concern for good education rather than a concern for effective education or for learning as such, that is without any specification of the learning "of what" and "for what", should be central to our considerations. This is because once we have articulated what our views of good education is, then it is easy to measure the aims and ends of education. Thus, all the stakeholders involved should be accountable for their actions and decisions if the aim is to improve student learning and for accomplishing this goal. It is also important to understand the underlying subjective theories of teachers as they are the basis for understanding the relationship between subjective theories and student outcomes and for fetching insights into teachers' classroom practices and instruction (Bliem, & Davinroy, 1997; Muis & Foy, 2010; Opre, 2010).

Furthermore, following Biesta (2009), I make a point that the quality of teaching and learning can be enhanced through teacher learning in an innovative environment. The most important finding of this study was the types of factors that contributed to teacher learning. Amongst the different factors, teachers reported that the 3 C's (Consultation, cooperation and collaboration) with colleagues during the department meetings assisted their construction of assessment practices while school policy, workload and lack of professional development sessions prevented their creation of innovative assessment practices.

The study also makes three pertinent theoretical progresses in teacher learning. The first theoretical contribution made by this study is that it adapted a model on teachers' conceptions

of assessment based from previous research from Brown (2008) to understand and explain how EFL teachers are think to create subjective theory of assessment that support learning. Their model elucidates that teachers can use assessment for varied purposes. The findings of this study reinforced three of the four enabling factors i.e., EFL teachers uses assessment for making students accountable for learning, for the accountability of schools and teachers and also for improving teaching and learning. This study argues that besides the use of assessment for these purposes, teachers also made use of assessment for two other purposes. This study proposes two other enabling purposes that can impact the teaching and learning process. These two purposes are using assessment for managing behaviour and for motivation purposes.

The second theoretical contribution proposed by this study is that it articulates two facilitating conditions for improving teacher learning. The enabling conditions are the need for effective learning sources to support teacher learning, and the use of innovative learning environment, which can foster the construction of effective assessment practices by the teachers. My study points to the presence of relevant learning sources and an innovative learning environment which are both critical for the success of teacher innovation. Teachers have the reliable learning conditions or appropriate factors to enable their learning processes and as a result of it, students benefit immensely to make progress in their learning and not be demotivated by lack of teacher innovation.

The third theoretical contribution was to confirm Biggs (1996) constructive alignment theory. My study illustrates how teachers learn can impact how students learn. My study validates teachers learning when they collaborate with their colleagues. Additionally, the study also confirms that students learn when teachers create an appropriate learning environment. It also points to involving students in the assessment practices and providing challenging projects and tasks that trigger students to learn independently as indicated in the theoretical discussion chapter.

My study revealed that the type of factors that aids teacher learning authenticates teacher construction of assessment practices which in turn validates learning processes of both the teacher and students. For instance, there were examples where the students and teacher were involved in an interactive discussion on a reading-based writing exercises articulated by the teacher via construction of critical and analytical questions. Other activities such as the teacher carrying out three rounds of assessment based on teacher created assessment rubric also facilitated students to think and assess their tasks carefully before the final work was handed in. Additionally, such activities also activated students' thinking and judging ability by providing them three levels of reworking on their tasks and heeding feedback and finally, leading to successful accomplishment of the task.

Similarly, events such as providing challenging tasks and choices in projects, use of portfolio, self and peer-assessment supported learning while use of grades without comments and general comments on student work hampered student learning. Therefore, it is desirable for EFL and other subject teachers in general to trial those activities that support learning and avoid those activities that are harmful to the promotion of student learning.

Finally, the results of the study provide an understanding of the numerous contextual factors that affect the context of teaching-learning process of teachers in the Czech lower secondary schools. The whole context of policy making at the Macro and Meso levels affects the performance at the micro (classroom) and nano (individual teacher) levels. Therefore, since the multifaceted nature of those factors tends to affect both the process of teaching and learning and the performance of the teachers, cautious steps may be necessary when addressing large scale reform and structure.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

There are ample reasons for exploring teacher subjective theory of assessment. Although there are multiple factors that can be attributed to teacher learning, lack of relevant learning sources could be a major reason that could affect both teacher and student learning. One approach that offers hope for improving classroom learning issues is by considering teacher subjective theory of assessment as subjective theories are useful in explaining educational issues. This study investigated 10 EFL teachers' subjective theory of assessment from 7 lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic.

As discussed in Chapter 2 several studies have drawn their attention to teachers' beliefs or conception and these results points to teachers' conceptions as one of the key factors that influence classroom decisions (Griffiths, Gore, & Ladwig, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Subjective theories are people's explanation of phenomena present in their environment and in their own behaviour and they are considered helpful to improve academic teaching and learning as they are tightly linked to practice (Pajares, 1992). Subjective theories presume that human beings are autonomous and reflective beings, actively constructing the world around them (Hermes, 1999).

Studies by Rubie-Davies, Flint, and McDonald, (2012); Hoy, Davis and Pape, (2006); Wolf, Bixby, Iii, and Gardner, (1991) confirmed that the ideas teachers hold about educational process, teaching and learning, the nature of assessment tasks, and about evaluation criteria matter as they shape their understanding and practices of assessment and contributes meaningfully to actions that teachers take. Against this backdrop, the following research questions were investigated with 10 EFL teachers from 7 lower secondary school in the Czech Republic:

1) What thought processes occur when teachers plan assessment practices to support learning?
2) What factors/critical incidences support or obstruct teachers' learning of the assessment?
3) How do teachers' construct their subjective theories regarding the purpose of assessment?

In this final chapter, the results from the study are summarised in section 6.2 and the significance of the study is presented in Section 6.3. The implications of these outcomes are discussed in Section 6.4. This leads to the limitations of the study and an identification of recommendations of further research and finally, future directions for teacher education in the Czech Republic are proposed in Section 6.5.

6.2 Summary of the results

The thesis of this study points to teachers' subjective theories which are very important in bringing successful classroom reform. The study results point out that although teachers use a wide variety of sources to construct their subjective theories regarding assessment, there were many useful factors and critical incidents that have assisted in teachers' creation of subjective theory of assessment while there were also some crucial factors that have affected teachers' development of subjective theory of assessment.

Teachers also held many assessment subjective theories and these subjective theories regarding assessment were mostly influenced by contextual factors including policy, practice and their own beliefs. Despite being influenced by these contextual factors, five dominant themes of assessment existed within the teachers. Based on the findings, I propose it is necessary to consider teacher subjective theories in improving their assessment practices.

Additionally, those factors that prevented their assessment creation needs to be considered as they were also a critical lifeline of teacher learning.

6.3 Significance of the study

This study makes three significant contributions to the field of teacher subjective theory of assessment. Firstly, my study contributes to the field of teacher subjective theories of assessment practices by opening new windows into the effects of assessment practices in the context of teacher education. My study confirm the findings of Fulmer, Lee and Tan (2015); Goldstein (2017), that contextual factors shape assessment construction. In my study, factors such as educational, institutional, social and cultural norms have assisted planning and implementation of assessment practices. This extends our understanding of the factors that affect teacher construction of subjective theory of assessment that was developed in the previous studies.

The second contribution my study makes is that since this type of study is relatively an under-researched phenomenon in the Czech context, this study contributes to confronting this pitfall. This study also helps to address the issue of poor teacher learning as the study finding points to policy, lack of time and appropriate professional development courses as the factors that restrained their learning. The results confirm that some of the teachers' subjective theories of assessment practices are based on archaic routines and in contrast of current research findings. The responsibility of heading such a reform to transform teacher learning falls on the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports, Teacher Education Institutes, School Administration and teachers themselves. One way to improve teacher learning is to improve pedagogy at the teacher education institutes. As the teachers pointed out, the professional development courses were mostly theory-oriented; the pedagogy at the teacher education institutes should be made more practice-based as the teachers highly emphasized that they learn more in such a manner.

The educational institutes and policy makers should also rethink this pertinent issue from the perspective of teachers as well as of students, as learners benefit more from teacher learning in an innovative environment. Finally, as proposed by Jónsson, Smith, & Geirsdóttir (2018), it is essential for the primary stakeholders in education (students, teachers, principals, teacher educators, policy makers) to develop a shared language of assessment to raise the level of assessment practices.

The third contribution made by this study is that teacher learning shapes the learning process for both teacher and students and so it is fundamental for the teachers to acquire skills to find out the best assessment practices that help students learn better, so that the teachers can adjust their practices appropriately to the needs of the students. My study points out that the presence of relevant and effective sources is crucial for the success of effective teaching, so that the teacher has the support they need to progress their learning and not become frustrated by the lack of their learning sources.

This study generated teachers' construct of subjective theory of assessment with regard to the purpose of assessment. The teachers should share this knowledge with each other and within schools in order to better student learning. This can be executed in the form of teacher-led workshops, so a wider section of the teachers can benefit.

Finally, evidence illustrates that the subjective theories are useful in improving educational issues. Therefore, the teacher subjective theories generated from this study should be used by the policy makers in improving and reforming the assessment practices at the Macro and Meso levels as these influences what the teacher do at Micro (classroom) and Nano (individual) level. So, this critical issue needs to be considered as subjective theories matter considerably in improving both the teaching and learning process.

6.4 Implication for Teaching and Research

6.4.1 Implication for the teachers

Various contextual factors have aided the creation of subjective theory of assessment. Despite being influenced by these factors, five distinct subjective themes existed within the teachers as presented in the result chapter (Chapter 4). The consequence is that if these subjective theories are not considered while reforming policies, it may demotivate and inhibit teacher innovation and as a result, it impacts student learning. Furthermore, the teaching and learning environment will become too traditional thereby impeding the creativity as well as the meta-cognitive abilities of both the teacher and students.

Hence, the policy makers need to consider the teacher subjective theories generated in this study to uplift the teaching and learning process. The policy makers need to think of engaging teachers constructively by introducing innovative learning environments so that teachers' learning capacities are maximized. This study also saw a gap in terms of effective professional development. Hence, in absence of effective professional development, schools need to develop learning communities. In addition, schools should also prioritise the need for regular effective collegial interaction and collaboration within schools so that teachers can come up with assessment tools that are robust and flexible enough to sustained innovation and risk-taking and whereby teachers ensure informed theories are translated into practice-based activities, thus stimulating better teaching and learning environment.

6.4.2 Implication for Research

The strength of any institute lies in its research capacity. Research is important as it informs one's actions. It also contributes in fostering teaching and learning processes. Teachers in this study were highly burdened by heavy workload which in turn prohibited their learning

capacities. The policy makers should rethink this critical issue if their intention is to improve the teaching and learning process.

Since the study saw a gap in terms of teacher research activity, one possible way forward for improving the quality of teaching and learning is by building research culture in the schools. To do that, teachers' workload needs to be reduced. In doing so, teachers will be encouraged take up research to initiate the research culture amongst teachers in the schools. The school should also welcome the opportunities to collaborate on research projects initiated by the teacher education institutes and other research agencies as teachers benefit by engaging themselves in such activities. Schratz (2010) proposed that a teacher that delves more often into current research becomes more aware of social changes in order to broaden their perspectives of knowledge and skills.

Another way forward for promoting the quality of assessment is by strongly promoting the culture of evaluation wherein teachers and school leaders within schools and between schools are called to collaborate on using evidence gathered for further discussion and generation of new assessment tools within their capacities to address greater learning needs of the students. As pointed out by CERI (2008) such practices will not only guide students toward development of their own "learning to learn" skills but also enhance teachers' own "learning to learn" skills.

This study helped to gather multitudes of issues pertaining to teacher subjective theory of assessment. My study contributed to the growing body of knowledge on teacher subjective theory of assessment. It illuminated the importance of teacher subjective theory in relation to student learning. The findings from this study can be used by policy makers to improve educational issues at the macro level. The best assessment practices that were identified in this study should be replicated by all other teachers to improve their classroom practices and those that were not effective should be avoided or reformed.

6. 5 Limitation, Future studies and Recommendations

Developing teacher subjective theory of assessment is a study about how teachers process their thought regarding planning and implementation of assessment practices. It is also about what guides teachers' subjective formation of assessment. The qualitative interpretive approach was used to study the phenomenon. The study has aimed at capturing a multi-dimensional view of assessment appropriation processes. The classroom observations and observation notes have sought to capture teachers' appropriation of teaching, learning and assessment practices. The document analysis of student work further supplemented teachers' practice of assessment. The interviews have examined how subjective theories emerge from teachers' classroom practices and teachers' own beliefs. The multiple sources used in the present study serve to capture a richer image of the phenomenon, than an approach using a single method could have done.

This study has limitations in terms of research design, duration of data collection process and participants in exploring EFL teachers' self-expressed perceptions. This study argues that a comprehensive future study is recommended which can explore different typographies regarding teachers' subjective theory of assessment maybe using a case study or narrative inquiry or mixed method design. Additionally, the study also argues that an increase in the length of data collection process could have helped in soliciting a richer perspective on the phenomena.

The study further discusses that since the study had only 10 teacher participants and the focus was only on EFL teachers, this line of research merits closer and further studies to validate the results presented here by securing responses from a larger sampling of participants and from across other subject teachers. In addition, a study involving students understanding of teacher's assessment can also be carried out to understand teachers' practice of assessment in detail.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) talks about the importance of professional development series and how it can enhance teacher knowledge. The study results indicate that teachers had no time for such activities as they were overloaded with school work. Furthermore, teachers pointed out that professional development courses have apparently helped in expanding their theoretical knowledge but what is needed is to change teachers practice. Hence, what matters most is what teachers do in the class. Therefore, the following recommendations have been suggested.

Firstly, a targeted effective professional development course leading to innovative assessment practices that aligns with current assessment research findings needs to be introduced sooner to familiarize teachers on current assessment practices, and so it can help them in planning and implementing effective formative as well as summative classroom assessment practices to support and improve student learning. Secondly, the study recommends policy makers to reconsider this critical issue in order to support teacher learning, as teachers are considered crucial individuals in students' lives. Hence, schools should support teachers with teacher development options, so that it is possible to translate theory into practice and fulfil the rights of students in a way that benefits them. Thirdly, peer observation, peer feedback, collegial interaction, inquiry and reflection within the schools needs to be supported along with teacher-led workshops, whereby schools and teachers are encouraged to work in collaboration and share their best practices with each other to promote innovative teaching, learning and assessment practices as well as collective transformation are just few examples of teacher education. Fourthly, policy actions should also support the start of innovative learning environment within the schools to support teaching and learning. Finally, schools should support teachers to venture into research activities to broaden their knowledge horizon.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Publications

Seden, K. & Svaricek, R. (2018). Teacher Subjectivity Regarding Assessment: Exploring EFL teachers' beliefs about assessment that influence student learning. *Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 8(3), 119-139.

Seden, K. & Svaricek, R. (2018). English as a Foreign Language teachers' perception of feedback in relation to learning. *Journal of International Society for Teacher Education*, 22(2), 36-46.

Seden, K. (2019). English as Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers' Perceptions of Fair Assessment. *Education Sciences Journal*, (1).

Seden, K. (2018). Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment: A literature Review. MSMT, *Re-thinking Teacher Professional Education: Using Research Findings for Better Learning* (pp. 60-79). Brno: Masaryk University.

Appendix 2: Paper Presentations

Seden, K. (2017 June). Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment: A Literature Review. Paper presented at the 61st World Assembly International Council on Education and Teaching (ICET) conference, Masaryk University, Brno, The Czech Republic.

Seden, K. (2017 October). Developing Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment. Paper presented at 42nd Annual conference for Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), University of Osijek, Dubrovnik, Croatia.

Seden, K. (2018 May). Teacher Subjectivity of Assessment: Exploring EFL teachers' beliefs about assessment that influence student learning. Paper presented at 38th Annual Seminar of International Society for Teacher Education (ISfTE), Joetsu University of Education, Joetsu, Japan.

Seden, K. (2018 July). Teacher Subjective Theory of Assessment: A methodological Perspectives. Paper presented at European Educational Research Summer School (EERSS), Masaryk University, Brno, The Czech Republic

Appendix 3: Writing Rubric and Checklists

Table 3. Writing Rubric and Checklists

	Level 0	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**
	0 points	1-3 point	4-6 points	7-9 points
Content (Max 9 points)	The question is not answered.	The question is answered.	The question is **generally** answered and instructions were **generally** followed.	The question is answered and the instructions were **closely** followed.
	Content is **totally irrelevant**.	Irrelevancies and/or misinterpretations are present.	**Minor** irrelevancies and/or omissions **may** be present.	**All** content is relevant to the task.
	Does not suitably communicate straightforward ideas.	Communicates **straightforward** ideas but does not attempt to develop them. (e.g.the trees grow well)	Communicates **straightforward** ideas and **attempts** to develop them into more **complex** ones. (e.g.the trees grow well because…...)	Communicates **straightforward** and develops them into **complex** ideas, as appropriate. (e.g.the trees grow well because….., and this could be why....)
Organisation (Max 9 points) ** What features the reader expects to see in the text (e.g. 'Dear Mr. Smith' in a letter)*	Text is **not connected**.	Sentences connected using **basic** linking **words**. (e.g. and, or, but, firstly, lastly)	Sentences and paragraphs connected using linking **words and phrases**. (e.g. however, on the other hand, in addition)	Text uses a **variety** of linking **words and phrases** to generally good effect.
	Text is **not** coherent. Paragraphs are **not** used	Text is **somewhat** coherent at sentence **level**. Paragraphs are used, but **not very well**	Text is **generally well organised** and coherent, both at sentence and text **level**. Paragraphs are **generally** well used.	Text is very **well organised** and coherent with ideas presented **very logically**. Paragraphs are consistently well used.
	The norms of the written genre are **not** used to organise the text.*	Uses **some** of the norms of the written genre in **generally suitable** ways to organise the text.*	Uses **most** of the norms of the written genre to organise the text and hold the target reader's attention.*	Uses the norms of the written genre **effectively*** *(e.g. headings, sub-headings, bullets, numbering if/as appropriate)*
Language (Max 9 points) ** Does not include spelling errors* **2 From the reader's perspective*	Everyday vocabulary is **not generally used** appropriately. * Formality addressing the reader is not considered.	Uses everyday vocabulary **generally appropriately**, while occasionally **overusing** certain words.* Level of formality is inconsistent	Uses a **range** of everyday vocabulary **appropriately**, with **occasional inappropriate use** of less common/specialized words.* Level of formality is **generally** consistent.	Uses **a range** of vocabulary, **including** less common/specialized words, appropriately.* Level of formality is consistent.
	Simple grammatical structures are **not used** accurately. (e.g. Text in note form/no sentences)	Uses **simple** grammatical structures **well**.	Uses a **range** of **simple** grammatical forms **well and attempts some complex** grammatical forms with some success.	Uses a **range of simple and complex** grammatical forms accurately and with flexibility.
	Errors, including spelling, obstruct communication*2	Errors, including spelling, are **noticeable**, and meaning can be difficult to understand*2	Errors do not **generally** obstruct communication,*2 spelling is **generally** correct, with **a few** mistakes in **general and specialized** words. *(e.g. Spelling errors such as 'Their' not 'There')*	**Occasional** errors may be present but do not obstruct communication.*2 **May** contain **occasional** spelling **mistakes** with **specialized/ less common** words.
Writing goals				

Checklists		
		Yes/No
Content (Max 9 points)	I answered the question	
	I followed the instructions	
	What I wrote is relevant to the question	
	My ideas are clear	
Organisation (Max 9 points)	My text is connected using linking words and phrases	
	I used paragraphs	
	The sentences in the paragraph are logically organised	
	I used headings, bullet points, greetings or other features my teacher would expect to see	
Language (Max 9 points)	I tried to use a range of vocabulary, not only simple and common words	
	I tried to keep my writing formal/informal	
	I tried to use a mix of grammatical structures	
	I checked my work for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors	