Washback of the High-Stakes English Baccalaureate Exam: Empirical Investigation of 4th English Language Teachers' Attitudes and Practices in Tunisia

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study investigating the washback effect of the English Baccalaureate Exam, a high-stakes exit and admission exam for 4th form of secondary school students in Tunisia. The study aims at gaining preliminary understanding of the relationships between teacher-related factors and their teaching practices. A mixed methods research was used to examine four independent variables: teachers' attitudes towards the exam AE, their beliefs about the effective teaching methodology, their beliefs about exam preparation, and their self-efficacy beliefs and their teaching practices. SPSS version 23 was used to analyse the data collected from teachers' questionnaires. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and simple and multiple linear regression models were computed to test how strong the relationships between teacher-related factors and their teaching practices are. The findings revealed that the exam cannot, on its own, dictate what and how teachers teach. Hence, teacher-related factors are predictors of their teaching practices. The findings from quantitative and qualitative analyses were synthesised to cross-check the stated practices and real classroom practices. This study provides clear evidence how teachers' attitudes and beliefs are reflected and mirrored in their teaching behaviours. It is expected that the findings are likely to contribute in developing appropriate policies and procedures for implementing effective teaching practices in the context of high-stakes exam.

Keywords: Washback; attitude; belief; self-efficacy; exam preparation; teaching methodology

INTRODUCTION

Lying at the heart of language testing, Washback refers to the impact of testing on teaching and learning. Language testing can be approached from two perspectives: traditional and use-oriented testing (Shohamy, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2017). Originally, test designers and users focused on the design quality of the test to assure test utility and effectiveness (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brown, 2004; Messick, 1989, 1995; Weir, 2005). However, scholars have recently showed increased concerns regarding the use of tests in educational, social, and political contexts (Ahmed, 2018; Fulcher, 2007; 2009; Pan, 2013; Shohamy, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2017).

Researchers (Tsagari, 2011; Watanabe, 2004) argue that washback is frequently caused by the behaviour of several independent and mediating factors other than the test itself, such as teachers. Teachers play a critical role in educational reform and are a major contributor to the generating washback. Similarly, researchers (Ahmed, 2018; Copp, 2018, 2019; Gökhan, 2015; Farrell, & Ives, 2015; Gebril & Eid, 2017; Wisdom, 2018) have investigated the washback effects of high-stakes exams in various educational contexts, and identified some teacher-related factors, such as teachers' basic knowledge, social and educational context, background, and their understanding of the principles underlying the test, that are likely to influence the learning-teaching processes.

Context of the Study

English Baccalaureate Exam in Tunisia

Since the Independence, the Tunisian education system has made a significant progress when compared to other similar nations in the area. Despite having studied English for more than 8 years throughout elementary, basic, and secondary school, learners' English language proficiency has been assessed as inadequate. Students are generally required to take a high-stakes exam as an exit and entrance at each academic level. Primary Education Certificate (PEC), Basic Education Certificate (BEC), and Baccalaureate Certificate (BC) are three standardised national exams. The students who wish to enroll in pioneer middle and secondary schools must sit for and pass the PEC and BEC respectively. Yet, only the Baccalaureate Exam (BE) is of primary importance. Students take the exam at the end of each academic year in June. It is managed, administered and assessed by the education board, exams council, and regional examining boards to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates and to minimize nepotism and favouritism.

English is a required subject for all 4th form of secondary students who must take the BE. As the goal of EBE is to assess English teaching and learning in relation to the Teaching Syllabus, the EBE exam should reflect the Teaching Syllabus. The EBE comprises three parts. Questions 1-7 are on reading comprehension and are worth 15 marks. Part 2 is the writing component, which includes two assignments to assess students' writing skills and are worth 15 marks each. Part 3 is the language component; it consists of three tasks of 10 marks each. Yet, the test completely ignores assessing two crucial skills namely listening and speaking.

Teacher-related factors affect their teaching practices. Yet, no study has probed the information-seeking the relationship between teacher-related factors and their teaching practices within the context of the EBE in the Tunisian educational context.

While the washback phenomenon has been extensively researched in various educational contexts, it "has not been considered in the many developing countries such as the context" of Tunisia (Ahmed, 2018, p.13). Hence, the impact of EBE on classroom teaching practices remains under-researched. There is a significant gap in the current literature and research on how the factors of English language teachers (ELT) affect classroom instruction in 4th form of secondary schools in Tunisia.

Overall, the main objective of the present study is to explore teacher-related factors affecting their teaching practices. Hence, the present research addresses five research questions:

1. What are ELTs' attitudes towards the EBE?
2. What are ELTs' beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching methods?
3. What are ELTs' beliefs about Exam Preparation?
4. What are ELTs' self-efficacy beliefs?
5. Are there any corresponding relationships between ELTs' stated teaching practices and the actual classroom teaching practices?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Washback has been studied over the last two decades in various environments and from various perspectives. It is defined as the impact of testing on education. Although researchers agree that washback exists, they disagree on the nature, scope, and mechanism of washback. Various stakeholders are involved and concerned about this issue, because tests, particularly high-stakes tests, determine the future of many people, including students, teachers, and administrators. If a test is considered significant, all teaching and learning activities are impacted by extensive preparation for the exam (Hughes, 2003).

Various empirical studies (Wall & Alderson, 1993; Read & Hayes, 2003) have investigated the effects of tests on the process, product, and participants. Results reveal that the washback effects of tests vary depending on the test itself, the importance of the test, and the intended purposes of implementing the new examination in a specific educational, social, and political context.

A number of researchers identify several factors that influence the examination, including personal factors-teacher cognition-perception, view, understanding, knowledge, background, identity-, classroom conditions, teaching resources, test factors -the importance of the subject-, and the social and political context (Borg, 1998; Shohamy et al., 1996; Spratt, 2005; Wall, 2000; Watanabe, 2004).

Attitudes towards the High-Stakes Examinations

Researchers (Borg, 1998, 2003, 2005; Cheng, 2008; Chappell et al., 2015; Erfani, 2012; Farrell, & Ives, 2015; Hung, 2012; Li, 2009; Shohamy et al., 1996) report a significant relationship between teachers' attitudes and their teaching practices in terms of increased time spent on language activities, writing and reading skills,

and decreased time spent on listening and speaking.

A study by Binnahedh examined both students' and teachers' attitudes toward a new type of testing; e-tests, as well as students' washback effects of e-tests using two different versions of questionnaires for teachers and students in Riyadh Province, KSA. It explored the difficulties and challenges that might affect not only students and teachers but also the educational institution, infrastructure, and curriculum. The findings reveal that e-tests affected both teachers and students, their perceptions and the materials they used. The findings indicated that the excessive use of MCQ resulted in refraining students from being creative and innovative and "teachers tend to teach only the points similar to that of the exam" (2022, p.210). In a different context, Nguyen & Gu (2020) investigated the perceived impact of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) exam on teaching of English. No significant variability in how individual teachers react to the test was found.

Using a mixed methods approach, Pan conducted a research study to investigate the teaching practices of teachers of tertiary level from two different educational contexts in Taiwan schools with English Certification Exit Requirements (ECER) and schools without ECER (non-ECER). The findings revealed that teachers in schools with ECER pay more attention to test factors and engage in more related activities than their counterparts. They heavily relied on test preparation materials, taught test-taking skills rather than language learning activities and adopted a rote learning approach, in which students were encouraged to do mechanical drill practice and memorize a number of vocabulary items, phrases, and even model answers. Similarly, Gunn et al. (2016) using a mixed-methods approach investigated the washback effect of high-stakes exams on teachers' feelings and attitudes in a Midwestern state in USA. Their

findings show that teachers were under pressure and had negative attitudes toward the test.

Burrows (2004) used quantitative and qualitative research methods to conduct a longitudinal study on the impact of the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). She reports that, while teachers agreed that their teaching practices had changed to varying degrees, they disagreed about what caused these changes.

Ahmed (2018) conducted an exploratory study of the washback of the Secondary Education Certificate Examination (SECE) in Libya. The findings revealed that the participants believed that their goal was to ensure high exam scores and to teach English as a subject rather than to develop communication skills.

Beliefs about Exam Preparation

Exam preparation is referred as "any intervention procedure specifically undertaken to improve test scores, whether by improving the skills measured by the test or by improving the skills for taking the test, or both" (Mesick, 1982, p. 70). Exam preparation practices include narrowing the curriculum, using exam materials, using similar or identical exam items, placing emphasis on skills on the exam, and focusing mainly on what the exam measures. In other words, it is teaching and learning to the exam. Hence, it is one of the aspects of washback.

There were no definite conclusions reached regarding the existence of a relationship between teachers' beliefs about exam preparation and their teaching practices. The findings show that teachers typically focus on skills such as (i) test-taking strategies and (ii) knowledge of vocabulary and language structures from previous exam papers (Hamp-Lyons, 1998; Lam & Ki, 1995).

According to research on exam preparation beliefs and practices (Gebril & Eid, 2017; Lai & Waltman, 2008; Xie, 2013, 2015), teachers believe that exam preparation has some benefits, such as familiarizing students with the exam, decreasing anxiety, increasing scores, providing

exam-taking strategies, and boosting self-esteem. They also agree on disadvantages. Preparing students for the exam causes teachers to disregard teaching language for communication.

Using various research methods, Erfani (2012) conducted a study to investigate IELTS and iBT preparation courses in Iran. The findings show that teachers who teach IELTS preparation classes were much more affected by the test than those who teach iBT preparation courses. Similarly, Gebril and Eid (2017) conducted a mixed-methods approach to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices regarding test preparation for Thanaweya Amma in Egypt. They report that test has both negative and positive effects on beliefs and teaching practices.

In a different context, Wisdom (2018) investigated high school English and mathematics teachers' experiences and perceptions of preparing students for high-stakes testing. The results show that those teachers reported that it is their responsibility to prepare students for high-stakes tests and that they need appropriate professional development to boost their knowledge and train them to deal with specific test preparation practices to prepare students for high-stakes tests.

Beliefs about Effective Teaching Methodology

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationships between examinations and teachers' beliefs of what constitutes effective teaching methods to teach English. Researchers agreed that the washback on how teachers teach is uncertain and intricate in light of the reviewed literature on the impact of examinations on teaching methodology. According to the findings of qualitative research based primarily on classroom observations (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Read and Hayes, 2003; Shohamy, 1993; Watanabe, 1996; 1997), exams have influenced the methods teachers use to teach English. The observed teachers changed their methods as a result of the examination, incorporating the exam materials

and contents into their teaching practices. While other researchers (Wall & Alderson, 1993; Cheng, 1997, 1999, 2005) demonstrate that there is no relationship between the exam and how teachers teach.

Tsagari conducted an empirical study in Greek private language schools to investigate the relationship between the effects of the First Cambridge in English (FCE) exam and teachers' beliefs about the exam and their behaviour. Tsagari (2011) explains how teachers' beliefs and negative attitudes toward the test influenced their instructional practices.

Similarly, Farrell & Ives (2015) conducted a case study employing a variety of data collection methods to investigate the relationship between a trainee English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher's stated beliefs and observed classroom practices. As a result, there is a strong link between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. In other words, teachers' beliefs influence and drive classroom behaviour.

Aftab et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the nature and scope of the washback effect of Pakistan's Intermediate English Examination. The findings show that the examination had an impact on the teaching methodology, content, skills, and learning.

Likewise, Safa and Jafari (2016) investigated whether the national third grade final English examination of high school had any washback effect on three major aspects of the classroom. The findings show that the test had an impact on EFL teachers' attitudes, evaluation and assessment procedures, and teaching methodology.

Tayeb et al. (2014) investigated the General Secondary English Examination (GSEE) washback effect in Yemen. Thirty English teachers in Yemen completed a questionnaire, and three teachers were interviewed. The findings show that the GSEE had a significant impact on the learners and teachers, and on how and what the teachers taught and the learners learned.

Cheng (2004) conducted a longitudinal quantitative-qualitative study in Hong Kong to investigate whether the new test produced the intended benefits and changed teachers' instructional practices and other features of the classroom. The findings revealed that teachers had positive attitudes towards the new exam, but they were unwilling to change their teaching methods and match their teaching practices with the objectives of the test. Regardless of the communicative aspect of the test, the teachers continued to utilize the traditional teaching methods with much emphasis on language form and weighting components. Likewise, to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in the teaching of reading to advanced learners in Lithuania, Kuzborska (2011) used classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documents. The findings show that although there was a correlation between teachers' stated beliefs and classroom practices, their teaching behaviours in teaching and learning writing did not change.

Beliefs about Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, one of the self-belief systems, has a significant influence on how one deals with an issue, achieves a goal, or deals with a specific matter. It appeared to have an effect on the nature of the washback. Kagan 1990 admitted that "there is no evidence that teachers' sense of self-efficacy increases or decreases with experience". Yet, researchers (Bandura, 1986, 1994; Choi & Lee, 2017; Pajares, 1995) stated that the test influenced experienced teachers more than novice teachers. They claim that one of the key factors elucidating why washback is likely to have an impact on some teachers but not others is teaching experience (Cheng, 2005; Lam & Ki, 1995; Shohamy et al., 1996; Watanabe, 1996).

Through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis from a sample of teachers, students, and language inspectors in Israel, Shohamy et al., (1996) examined the impact of in Arabic as a second language (ASL) and English

as a foreign language (EFL) that have been used for several years. The findings revealed that there are substantial variations between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Unlike novice teachers, experienced teachers used the test as their primary source of guidance and used only material designed for the test. Equally, Lam & Ki (1995) conducted a study examining the effects of Revised Use of English (RUE) on the different aspects of the classroom teaching such as time devoted for the different skills, the use of textbooks, methodology used to prepare students for the RUE. They reported that experienced teachers used textbooks extensively more than inexperienced teachers. They compared experienced teachers to commercial book slaves and past exam papers. Unlike the novice teachers, the experienced teachers are not affected by the syllabus innovations of the RUE. Likewise, Jäger et al. (2012) conducted a longitudinal quasi-experimental study to explore the factors that are responsible for the teaching for the test apart from the exit exam itself in two German states. They examined teachers' experience and self-efficacy

and reported that teachers' self-efficacy may prevent them from minimizing content diversity. They focus on adjusting the curriculum to the exam content and, as a result, disregarding topics of importance. Previous knowledge and experience with statewide tests has no noticeable benefits.

Recently, Shahzad & Naureen (2017) conducted an exploratory quantitative study in Balochistan province of Pakistan to investigate the impact of teacher self-efficacy on their teaching practices and, as a result, on students' academic achievement.

Although several research studies have examined the effects of high-stakes exams, less is known about how teacher's cognition may influence their teaching practices in response to high-stakes exam pressure. Hence, four relationships were developed based on the proposed conceptual framework to achieve the research objectives of the current study. Figure 1 depicts an adapted conceptual framework which has been devised in the light of the previous related washback studies.
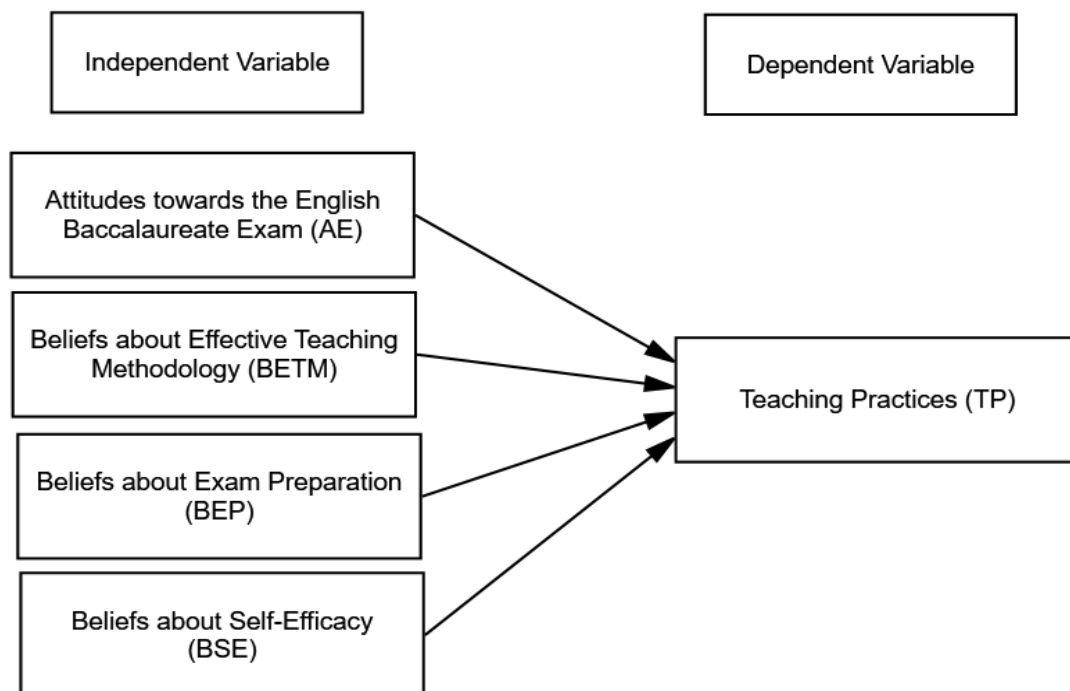

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework developed by the authors based on the literature (Gebril and Eid, 2017; Spratt, 2005; Tsagari, 2006)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section discusses the research approach, research instruments and the materials used to examine the four relationships between AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE and TP.

Research Approach

Exploratory in nature, this study aims at investigating teachers' perceptions and practices in the context of the washback effect of the EBE. A "mixed methods research" was used to "provide a way to harness strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell & Plano, 2018, p.53). It explores the influence of the teacher-related factors, namely their (i) attitudes toward the EBE (AE), (ii) beliefs about effective teaching methodology (BETM), (iii) beliefs about exam preparation (BEP), and (iv) beliefs about their self-efficacy (BSE) on their teaching practices (TP).

Research Method

Research on washback used different research methods-questionnaires, interviews, tests, classroom observations, and diaries - either separately or in combination. This research utilised sequential quantitative-qualitative, (Sequential QUAN → Qual Design) i.e., questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews. In the first phase, an adapted-adopted version of a questionnaire was used to examine the different relationships of teachers' attitudes and beliefs and their teaching practices (Cohen et al., 2018; Frost, 2020; Saunders et al., 2016). In phase II, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain more in-depth insights.

Data Collection & analysis
Instruments
Phase I: Quantitative data collection

A questionnaire survey was administered to 4th form English language teachers randomly selected from 6 governorates. In response to social distancing measures, school disruption and mass gathering cancellation, teacher educators of the randomly selected governorates assisted in administering the questionnaires to the target population after being given a thorough overview of the instrument and research ethics and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

The questionnaire was divided into eight sections. Section one gathered demographic information. Section two elicited ELTs' attitudes towards the EBE and its impact. Section three elicited the respondents' opinions on effective teaching methods. Section four, section six and section seven aimed at understanding the common practices and the timeline teachers use in their classrooms to prepare their students. Section five investigated ELTs' beliefs about exam preparation. Section 8 explored the respondents' self-efficacy beliefs. Sections two, three, five, and eight used a Likert scale of agreement. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale of one to five. Statements were coded as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Sections 4 and 6 used a rating scale. Statements were coded as follows: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Usually, and 5 = Always on the scale. Section 7 used a scale of 1 to 5, in which respondents indicated how often they typically used certain activities to prepare students for the EBE. 1 =Never, 2 =Before each test throughout the year, 3 =Before the Bac Blanc, 4 =Before the Bac Exam, and 5 =During Lessons throughout the year.

Phase II: Qualitative data collection: Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews

Upon request, the researcher and an-inter-rater were allowed to observe their classes and conduct semi-structured interviews with 4 teachers. Both classes and semi-structured interviews were

recorded. An adapted adopted structured classroom observation checklist was used to investigate ELTs' classroom content and teaching methods. The emphasis was on the activities and materials used, the interaction pattern, the skills taught, the time devoted to each language skill, and the manner in which they are taught. The qualitative data were intended to explore if there was a corresponding relationship between ELTs' stated practices and their actual practices.

The instruments went through a reiterative process of pre-testing, item adjustment, and piloting to assure validity and reliability. Five language teaching and assessment experts were requested to examine, revise, and provide feedback on the validity of the instruments, and provide any additional comments that might improve the quality of the instruments.

Participants

364 fourth form English language teachers from six local administrative divisions across the country answered the questionnaire survey. They have more than 15 years of teaching experience, and a teaching experience ranging from 3 to 25 years with the 4th form. The sample of the population is made up of 27.8% males and 72.2 % females. Yet, there is no difference between both female and male groups as there is uniformity between both the sample and the population in terms of gender. The sample gender is composed of 72 % females and 28 % males, while the population gender is composed of 77 % females and 23 % males. 78.4% of the 356 teachers were over the age of 41; 20% were between the ages of 36 and 40; and only 1.4 percent were under the age of 36. 3. percent of the population was between the ages of 26 and 30. The majority of those who took part were between the ages of 41 and 50. 78.4% of the participants have a degree of teaching English Bachelor/License of English; 21.3% hold a Masters' degree and .3% holds a PhD. 99.4 % of the participants had a teaching experience of

more than ten years. Only .6% have a teaching experience of less than 6 years.

It is widely acknowledged that one of the inherent problems of questionnaires is that participants' responses may be based on their own perceptions. Therefore, triangulation of questionnaire data is required to assure their validity. One male teacher and three female teachers volunteered to take part in the follow-up study. Hence, a longitudinal classroom observation would enable the researcher to compare different teaching practices among teachers over time and as the exam period approached. They were all English language teachers with the same educational background but different teaching experiences. All teachers were experienced teachers with a teaching experience of more than 10 years teaching English and 3 of them had teaching experience teaching 4th form classes for more than 10 years. Only T3 had a teaching experience of 3 years teaching grade 4 of secondary education.

Data Analysis

SPSS software, version 23, was used for data cleaning, item distribution analysis, calculating variables, and statistical modeling by applying Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression. To address the research questions, descriptive statistics for teacher perceptions and practices were calculated to describe the patterns across different participants.

To facilitate the discussion of the results, the two categories of' agreement and disagreement were combined into a single category agreement and disagreement.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to discover common components that explain the structure of observed data in order to investigate the relationships between ELTs' attitudes and various beliefs and their teaching practices (Fabrigar &Wegener, 2012, Hair et al., 2019; Watkins, 2018). Three main criteria were

used: (i) at least three items with an eigenvalue of one or above; (ii) factor loadings of less than.4 were excluded; and (iii) items with double loadings were discarded. The criteria variables within a single component are intricately related, and no significant cross-loadings between factors exist, showing that factor extraction has both convergent and discriminant validity.

ELTs' AE construct's cronbach's Alpha is .654 and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .703. The computed factor resulted in 2 factors; FAE_1 has three significant loading variables AE1, AE3, and AE1 and its cronbach's Alpha is .683, while factor 2 has five AE1, AE3, and AE1 and its cronbach's Alpha measures .676. BETM is composed of only one component and it has 4 items. Its cronbach's Alpha is .616 and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .606. BEP construct is well composed of one component and has a total of 4 variables. Its cronbach's alpha is .646 and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .596. As for the BSE construct, it resulted in one component. It has 5 variables, its cronbach's Alpha is .752 and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .822. The computed factor TP has 10 variables with 3 factors with a cronbach's Alpha equals to .678 and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .652. Factor 1 has four significant loading variables TP9, TP10, TP5, and TP4 and its cronbach's alpha is .780, while factor 2 has three variables TP7, TP 8, and TP6 with cronbach's alpha is .632, and TP_3 has 3 items TP2, TP3, and TP1 and its cronbach's alpha is .560.

Given the sample size of 356, all the factor loadings are greater than .50, the overall cronbach's alpha is .705, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is greater than .5 and the P-value is less than .05, consequently, the factor analysis is appropriate, valid and applicable (Garson, 2007; Hair et al., 2019; Kaiser 1974).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section reports the results based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The results indicated that the majority of the participants agreed that the EBE determines what and how they teach. They also agreed that EBE reduces the amount of time spent on speaking and listening while increasing the amount of time spent on grammar and vocabulary, and that their tests must cover the same material as the EBE.

The participants in QAE1 were asked to express their views on the EBE in terms of the exam's intended purpose, specifically whether the EBE measures the English knowledge and skills that 4th form students should have learned. The findings revealed that 76.1% believed the EBE measures English knowledge and skills that 4th form students should have learned, while 23.9 % admitted that the EBE does not measure English knowledge and skills that 4th form students should have learned.

QAE2 and QAE3 asked participants to express their own thoughts on the EBE's impact on their teaching practices in terms of WHAT and HOW they teach. The EBE determined what they taught and how they taught, according to 59.3% and 58.4%. This viewpoint is shared by 69.9% respondents who stated that the EBE requires teachers to teach to the exam. Only 30.1 % respondents agreed with QAE4 that the EBE requires that teachers teach to the exam.

The respondents were also asked if their time allocation for teaching each skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) would change if the EBE were cancelled. 75.3 % respondents said that in this case, they would have allocated time differently to teach each skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Since listening and speaking were not on the EBE, 77.1 % agreed that the EBE reduced the amount of time spent on these skills; however, 76.1 % agreed that the EBE increased the amount of time spent on grammar and vocabulary. Only 24.7 %, 22.2%, and 23.9% respondents agreed that if the EBE were

eliminated, their time allocation to skills such as listening, speaking, and content taught would be different.

Teachers were questioned on their assessment knowledge and whether the EBE has influenced the content and format of their tests. According to the results of QAE8, 90.2% of the participant admitted that the format and content of their tests must be similar to those of the EBE. For teachers, the importance placed on passing the EBE is a major source of stress and frustration.

The results suggest that most teachers affirmed that the EBE determines the amount of time spent on various skills, their choice of materials, their teaching and assessment practices in general.

In order to determine whether ELTs' beliefs about teaching methods differed from what constitutes effective methods of teaching English as a means of communication, unlike most other school subjects. The communicative aspect of the language encourages learners to learn it as a system for developing various skills--speaking, reading, listening, and writing—so that they can express themselves and interact with each other, rather than as a collection of grammatical rules and separate language skills. It offers them opportunities to gain access to universal culture through English-speaking contexts. 88.2 % of the teachers agreed that the most effective teaching methodology was to emphasize the language skills (reading and writing) that are tested on the EBE. Similarly, 78.4 % of the respondents agreed that modifying and adapting the order of their teaching objectives in relation to the EBE.

The results suggest that ELTs' opinions of teaching methods are consistent; they thought that modifying and adapting the order of their teaching objectives in relation to the EBE and emphasizing the language skills (reading and writing) that are on the exam are what constitutes the effective methods to teach 4th form of secondary school.

In order to explore further ELTs' views on exam preparation and their perceptions of how exam preparation familiarises students with the exam, this section discusses ELTs' opinions about exam preparation. Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement in regard to their perception about exam preparation. QBEP 1–QBEP4 report on the findings regarding ELTs' beliefs about exam preparation. 83.1 % of the respondents disagreed with the statement that exam preparation wastes ELTs' time. Furthermore, 67.1 % of the respondents agreed that exam preparation helps students become familiar with the exam format. When asked specifically about the negative impact of exam preparation on language teaching, 80.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that exam preparation has a negative impact on language teaching. 76.4 % disagreed with the statement that exam preparation does not help students get a higher score on the exam.

Generally, the findings show that the respondents agreed that exam preparation does not have negative impact. However, exam preparation familiarises students with the exam format and helps them score high.

To explore how teachers believe in their own abilities to prepare students for the exam and teach them the different skills with respect to the spirit of the syllabus and the general curriculum of teaching English, the participants were asked several questions about their own self-efficacy. The results revealed that the means of the responses to the five self-efficacy items are close to four (mean=3.81). This indicates that respondents tended to agree that they had positive self-efficacy and a high level of self-esteem, and that they could handle unexpected situations and exam preparation problems. For QBSE1, 57.3 % stated that they had high self-esteem when teaching the materials on the EBE to even the weakest students. 83.4%, 84.3 %, and 78.7 % said they had high self-confidence in dealing with any problem or unexpected situation related to exam

preparation and remained calm respectively. Similarly, 80.9 % of the participants acknowledged that they were able to adhere to syllabus objectives while also prepare students for the EBE.

The results clearly illustrate that the teachers report significantly greater feelings of self-efficacy.

After indicating their level of agreement about the different perceptions that they had with regards to the EBE, on a frequency scale, the teachers were asked to show the amount of time they devoted engaged in different teaching practices. Frequency of use was identified on a five-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Always." 91.6 % of the participants stated that they always taught to the exam. More than 90% of the participants never taught listening and more than 65 % never taught speaking. More than half of the participants always taught language form. 66 % and 76 % teachers revealed that they regularly supplied and used past exam practice and activities respectively. 80% stated that they provided samples of written productions to their students in order to prepare them for the writing. Similarly, 90% admitted teaching their students strategies for answering multiple choice questions.

QTP6 and QTP10 asked the participants about the best time to provide and use past exam activities and practice. 30.3% reported they provided past exam practice and activities, and 43% said they used language similar to test questions found on the EBE throughout the year respectively. Almost 57 % respondents stated that they provided samples of written productions to their students throughout the year. Approximately 62 % and 64.6% claimed to have taught their students strategies for answering multiple choice questions, and some guessing strategies throughout the year.

The results clearly illustrate that the teachers the most conventional teaching practices they used included providing practice and activities based on the EBE, teaching students strategies for answering multiple choice questions, and teaching exam-taking strategies.

In order to explore the relationships between the different perceptions teachers hold and their teaching practices, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression were performed to determine whether AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE are predictors of their TP.

Table 1: Correlation value between AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE and TP

Variable		Variable	r	Relationship
AE	↔	TP	**.263**[**]	Positive significant
BETM	↔	TP	.019	Very weak positive
BEP	↔	TP	.017	Very weak positive
BSE	↔	TP	**.144**[**]	Negligible Positive correlation

As table 1 indicates the relationships between the teacher-related factors and their teaching practices, two relationships were found significant- AE and BSE and two other relationships BETM and BEP with TP were not statistically significant.

To analyze and estimate the relationships between the different predictor variables AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE and the outcome variable TP, a simple and multiple regression analyses were calculated (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the regression coefficient for prediction of TP from AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE.

The results suggest that there was a significant positive correlation found between r (AE) and (TP) =.242. As a result, teachers who have a positive attitude toward the EBE are more likely to teach to the exam and deviate from CLT principles. Furthermore, a positive correlation r between (BSE) and (TP) =.146,** indicating a negligible positive correlation between the two variables.

In contrast to the relationship between AE and BSE and TP, the results revealed a lack of

relationships between BETM, and BEP and TP. There is no significant relationship between the participants' BETM and TP.

Unlike AE and BSE, regression analysis indicated that BETM and BEP are statistically insignificant and have no predictive ability for TP. Hence a regression equation was found:

TP = 26.612+ .358 (AE) +.270 (BSE)

Table 2: Regression Coefficient for Prediction of TP from AE, BETM, BEP, and BSE

Coefficients[a]										
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 Constant	26.612	2.717		9.794	.000					
AE	.358	.077	.243	4.653	.000	.242	.241	.238	.958	1.044
BETM	-.055	.110	-.026	-.498	**.619**	.009	-.027	-.025	.944	1.060
BEP	.084	.141	.032	.595	**.552**	.023	.032	.030	.925	1.082
BSE	.270	.095	.150	2.855	.005	.146	.151	.146	.947	1.056

a. Dependent Variable: TP

Phase II Longitudinal Classroom Observations and Semi-Structured Interviews

To cross-check the findings from statistical analyses and to address the fifth research question, longitudinal classroom observations followed by semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Skills Taught &Time allocated to each skill

The amount of time spent on each task was measured and presented.

The teachers taught the skills in a sequential manner. In a 60-minute class, the teacher spent 30 minutes introducing and practicing new words, collocations, and phrases to be used in writing and the remaining 30 minutes working on language and vocabulary activities under real-world exam conditions..

T1, T2, and T4 devoted 80 % the class time practicing exam-related material. They usually spent half of the class time incorporating topics, concepts, and vocabulary into writing; the other half of the class time was usually devoted to language form. Finally, the teachers asked their students to reuse what they learned at the first half of the lesson in their writing that had been usually assigned as homework. Teachers placed much emphasis on knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. They devoted more than 50% of the class time on average. However, less focus, less than 5% of the class time on average, was given to listening and speaking

Reading, despite being a skill on the exam, was by far the least commonly addressed skill. This finding contradicts the expectations.

Feedback & Interaction Pattern

Besides, through observations, teachers used the same interaction pattern, assigning tasks and asking students to work on them individually. Teachers' Talking Time (TTT) surpassed students' Talking Time (STT). The most common type of interaction observed in the classes was Teacher–Students/Teacher whole class. The teacher had complete control over the content in all of these classes. Though the primary goal of the curriculum is to improve students' English proficiency and develop their understanding of life by involving them in solving real-life problems, it was found that there was a complete lack of student involvement, quite limited time for students' performance and the teachers continued to play a dominant role in the classroom, and consequently, the classrooms remained teacher-centered.

In general, the four observed teachers focused primarily on language form and skills and items on the EBE. No one of the four teachers used the student's textbook. Yet, they followed the themed-based content provided by the syllabus and developed their own worksheets based on the EBE. They tailored their worksheets to the specifications of the exam by adapting all the activities, language form, grammar and vocabulary, and the writing assignments from previous exam papers administered in the previous years. Only one of the observed teachers acted in a different manner. She used the textbook once over a period of four months and taught writing as a process in another lesson. She introduced the different steps of the writing process, however, she failed to give her students the chance to experience the process of generating ideas, prewriting, writing, reviewing and editing their work.

To a large extent, the results revealed that the teachers were more concerned with the exam than with teaching for learning. They placed far too much emphasis on language form, with varying degrees of emphasis on writing, and completely ignored listening and speaking. The findings revealed also that the teachers made no distinction between exam preparation and teaching to the exam. When asked about their actual practices with regards to the main objectives of the curriculum, they admitted that exam preparation was their primary concern and that it was no longer the appropriate time or context to concentrate on teaching the language.

In order to better understand the reasons behind the teachers' extensive use of materials they developed, their emphasis on language form, ignorance of some skills and emphasis on others, such as writing, the teachers were interviewed on several occasions shortly after leaving the classroom in an informal setting and in semi-structured interviews. The participants expressed mixed and contradictory attitudes toward the EBE, ranging from negative to positive, and feelings of anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty. They insisted that the EBE placed a great deal of stress and pressure on them.

T4: admitted that

"The EBE affects us psychologically. Sometimes it is very far beyond expectations".

In a similar vein, T4 described the mutual pressure endured by both sides, saying:

Our students themselves feel lots of pressure ... We as teachers feel the same pressure. The Bac exam is haunting every 4th form teacher! Even those who spot weaknesses and want to address them, feel pressured to 'catch up' with everyone else otherwise they'd be behind schedule".

Methodology and Practices in Teaching

When asked about the impact of EBE on their teaching practices, there was a general agreement about the washback effect of EBE on their teaching practices. They openly stated that the EBE had a negative impact on their teaching practices. T4 reported:

I, Well, teaching English to 4th form classes is not like teaching year one or other levels. I may even say that from year one, we should prepare

students for the 4th form, to pave the ground for the Bac exam and it targets specific areas particularly in language and grammar but can never give an accurate assessment of the students' level".

T1:
"I personally focus more on test-taking strategies, like guessing, answering through a process of elimination, using the Bac Exam format so as to expose students to the types of practice actually included in the exam, and, thus, I focus more on the skills that are tested in the exam."
T2:
"… I develop my own worksheets. I regularly use old exam questions, in reality, Bac classes have a lot of oral presentations, but unfortunately, we cannot deal with any of them. …. Students are creative especially when you give them the opportunity, yet we don't do so. This is always missing".

The teachers generally agreed about the activities used, the skills taught, and the materials provided and used. They claimed to have used activities from previous exam papers.
As a result, the teaching practices were geared toward exam preparation.
Exam preparation
The participants stated that they prepare their students for the national exam at the beginning of the academic year and familiarize their students with the content and format of the EBE. They also used various exam preparation strategies early enough to help students achieve high grades.
T1
 "I am aware that I am teaching to the exam. I plan all my lessons in a way so as to ask my students to train them on exam-preparation strategies, and narrowly focus on topics and questions that are on the exam. I teach only what is going to be on the exam." (T1).

T1:

"Well, personally, I don't specify any period for my students because I start preparing them from DAY 1, from September to, April or May and I rely on the continuous assessment of their writing, production and mainly grammar items. I provide my students with helpful tips according to my experience with the 4th form teaching and my knowledge of the Bac Exam typical tasks."

Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs
The teachers reported continually that they were confident in their teaching practices, knowledge, and abilities to prepare students for the national exam, to score high, and psychologically make them believe in themselves. T1 stated that

"When ….. students believe in you as you make good results and your own students reward your efforts by scoring high, that is motivating and putting some stress that pushes me to work more and more with my students."

The teachers not only demonstrated high self-esteem and confidence, a strong sense of self-efficacy, but they also stated that they did not require any additional training or professional development (PD).
"Training? It is a waste of time, Name whatever you want except training. They add nothing to me personally. I prefer to do some research, read, attend a webinar though not all the time free to attend du Bla Bla".
The results of quantitative data analysis were compared to those of qualitative data analysis to look for patterns of agreement and disagreement. As a result, the findings from qualitative data analysis did not match those from quantitative analysis. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes were mirrored in their teaching behaviours. The teachers followed a similar pattern in that they aligned their teaching practices with the spirit of the exam, emphasized exam skills, ignored listening, and relied heavily on exam-related materials and past exam modals. The participants,

to varying degrees, prepared their students for the exam from day one, all year long, at the expense of real language learning. They used a knowledge transmission strategy.

The findings from statistical analyses revealed significant relationships between AE, BSE and their TP. In fact, their teaching practices reflected their attitudes and their self-efficacy beliefs. The participants expressed mixed, but negative attitudes towards the EBE. The also showed high self-esteem in teaching the materials and preparing students for the exam. Teaching experience and self-efficacy were important in generating washback and shaping teachers' teaching practices. The findings are in line with the findings of Basturkmen, 2012; Choi & Lee, 2017; Jäger et al, 2012; Lam & Ki, 1995; Shahzad & Naureen 2017; Shohamy et al. 1996; Watanabe 1996. In line with

In contrast to the results of statistical models, classroom observations revealed that what teachers believed in was reflected in their teaching practices. The findings from Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression revealed that teachers' beliefs about (i) BETM and (ii) BEP had no significant relationship with their TP. Nevertheless, classroom observations and the interviews yielded some very interesting results.

These findings concord with those of Smith (1991), who stated that high-stakes tests reduce teaching time, limit curricular offerings and modes of instruction, and emphasize reading and writing at the expense of oral skills.

The findings confirm previous research in various educational contexts (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Smith, 1991; Gebril & Eid, 2017; Xie, 2013, 2015) in which teachers spent significantly more time on exam skills and ignored skills that were not on the test. Teachers believed that in order to avoid feeling embarrassed or sanctioned as a result of low scores, they had to work tirelessly and primarily for the sake of improving

their students' marks, subsequently, "teaching becomes more testlike."

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses are consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Basturkmen, 2012; Choi & Lee, 2017; Jäger et al. 2012; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017; Shahzad &Naureen 2017; Shohamy et al. 1996; Watanabe, 1996), and suggest that teachers' self-efficacy impacts not only their teaching methods, but also the classroom environment as a whole.

Experienced teachers are exam-oriented, negatively affected and they tend to teach to the exam more than novice teachers.

CONCLUSION

The current study was exploratory. It provided a step toward an under-researched area in the local setting by investigating ELTs' roles in developing and influencing their teaching practices.

The findings are expected to have far-reaching implications in the fields of language teaching and testing. It creates a conceptual and preliminary model of the washback of teacher-related factors on their teaching practices. It may serve as a baseline study data for future research. This study suggests some recommendations to various stakeholders.

Because ELTs' attitudes, beliefs, and practices are crucial to understanding and improving English language teaching, it is significant to encourage teachers to have a solid understanding not only of the language system but also of the curriculum's core principles. Teachers should believe that the main purpose of teaching English is to help students improve their English language abilities and to be able to use the language communicatively. In other words, teachers should '*Englishise'* the classroom. Engaging students and understanding formative assessment help teachers guide students through the learning process effectively.

The MOE should understand ELTs' beliefs and perceptions, know where they come from, diversify the training, and engage teachers themselves in effective training workshops that answer their real needs. In other words, changes should come from bottom up rather than top down. Understanding and considering ELTs' beliefs and attitudes is an essential step toward meeting the needs of diverse teachers and the ultimate goal of achieving the intended objectives of the global English curriculum and implementing them. They should tailor training to individual needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

All stakeholders, whether directly or indirectly involved, should work together in harmony toward the common goal of teaching English. Further research should be conducted to determine the source of ELTs' perceptions and where these beliefs originate. Furthermore, more empirical studies are required to obtain a more complete picture of this phenomenon in various contexts by collecting data from different sources and methods. It is also critical to investigate teacher-related factors in content areas such as mathematics, physics, and science. Accordingly, additional research is needed to determine whether the curriculum was planned and structured in an appropriate and effective way that can really support the teaching and learning of the English language.

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