

## ***Partial or comprehensive reform in the curricula of elementary, grades 1-5, in Kosova***

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### **Abstract**

Efforts to reform the education system by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), have included curricula for elementary school level, respectively grades 1-5.

Recently Kosovo has adopted new Kosovo Curriculum Framework, which differs much from previous one, offering a new approach in methodology and content, especially for the lower classes with the group of courses rather than specific subject. But despite these changes in curriculum, education in Kosovo continues to be challenged as teachers are not prepared for implementation of this curriculum. Changes are mainly partial and as such they lead to incomplete implementation of the curriculum in schools.

A difficult challenge to overcome on the implementation of the curriculum remains the methodology of teachers' work in classrooms.

The research was conducted with teachers, students and parents from schools of different municipalities of Kosovo. Results obtained from research show some of the most important factors of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum content and methodologies that they use at work. The research outcomes also prove that reforming efforts were mainly partial, by not providing comprehensive reform in the education system, and for this they have not given the expected results. They have created even more difficulties in the process of teaching and learning and in performance and achievement. Keywords: Curriculum, teaching, methodology, etc.

One of the biggest difficulties that Kosovo education system has been facing is the often and partial change of curricula, working methodologies and the school textbooks, which has been followed with many difficulties in the process of implementation from teachers, students or even the parents. Continuous change of curricula is a necessity that needs to be done in order to be in line with science and technology development.

However decision about implementation those curricula at the entire schools in Kosovo during the same period of time, without harmonizing first the change at all levels, or without piloted and analyzed the entire working process, has been proven as unsuccessfully in achieving the qualitative results in reforming the whole education system.

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The lack of pre preparation of teachers to adapt with the new changes, in implementing the plan and program, has created big difficulties in the entire teaching process and achieving the qualitative results in their work. Whole this process becomes more difficult with the changing of the school textbooks, which often has not been in line with the objectives set up with curricula for particular grades.

In general discussions about those changes the entire process has been criticized. However there was a lack of objective and detailed analyses of the causes for the lack of success during the implementation of new reforms in our schools.

Being part of these society that is facing all those kind of difficulties, this research paper work which is part of a wider PhD research, has been focusing in analyzing the causes that brought this confusion during the pre university educational reform in Kosovo.

This research has been based upon those hypotheses:

- ▶ **H1:** Partial reforms don't bring results in the quality improvement in education.
- ▶ **H2:** Large scale and thorough reforms as successful and impact the quality improvement in education
- ▶ **H3:** Reforms can be harmful if not piloted in smaller scale.
- ▶ **H4:** Educational system will fail in not the whole system chains are not harmonized together.

Respondents of this part of research have been 6 schools from different cities of Kosovo with total 60 teachers and 40 parents. Research has been done through interviews, with a questionnaire as an instrument of research using the Liker's scale. Data processing has been done using SPSS. Statistics below will show a part of questions with focus on the curricula reforms, preparation of teachers for implementation of those curricula and the school obligatory textbooks of the grade 1-5.

In the first question, "*Curricula are appropriate and easy implemented for the teacher as well as student*" Results of the answers given by the teachers were as follows: Totally agree responded 5%, 6.6% responded as agree, disagree 66% and strongly disagree 21%. By analyzing these results it is shown that about 87% of the respondents express their discontent with curriculum changes. Their responses indicate that these are not at all appropriate curricula and easily implemented in the process of teaching and learning. This view was shared almost by the parents, too, where fully 12% of parents agree that curricula are appropriate and easily feasible for teachers as well as students, 7.5% agree, 55% of parents do not agree and 25% of parents do not agree at all. As we can see around 80% of parents share the same opinion with teachers who declare that curricula are not at all appropriate and easily realizable in the process of teaching and learning.

The next question: "*Frequent changes in curriculum cause difficulties to teachers*", the results of the answers given by the teachers were as follows: 58.3% of teachers strongly agree on the difficulties that cause frequent changes of curriculum to the teacher and the progress of the teaching process. 25% agree, 11.6% disagree with the view that changes often lead to difficulties in the work of teachers, and 5% of parents strongly disagree. While parents about this issue have been expressed, 70% of parents fully agree that frequent changes in the curriculum cause difficulties to teachers and students, 17.5% agree, 5% disagree and 7.5% strongly disagree.

From the analysis of the answers given by both sides of the respondents we can clearly see that the frequent changes that are implemented are difficult for teachers and students in the learning process and of course that does not bring quality results in

preparing students with the knowledge and appropriate experience.

In the interest of this research was undoubtedly the professional preparation of teachers with training events, in order to implement more easily the new curriculum in the educational process.

So the next question was “*Teachers consistently receive proper training before you start applying the curriculum.*” About 3.3% of teachers fully agree with this opinion, 1.6% agree, 41.6% disagree and 53.3% strongly disagree with this view because according to them implementation of curricula in practice is done without any professional preparation for them.

Although curriculum issues are not familiar to most of parents, they also gave their opinion based on the work of the teachers of their children and through the cooperation they have established with them. Therefore, parents have given these thoughts: Completely agree was 0%, 7.5% agree, 25% disagree, parents who completely disagree with this opinion 20%, and parents who do not have knowledge about this issue is about 47.5%. The analysis of the results shows that in addition to teachers, it is parents who feel these difficulties, namely in the results of their children’s success.

One of the other difficulties that teachers and parents have identified is excessive overload involving elementary curricula grades 1-5. This is identified by the question “*Curricula are overloaded with content.*” About 86.6% of teachers fully agree with this fact, 11.6% agree and those who disagree with this view are only 1.6% of the teachers. This opinion is stated the parents; 82.5% fully agree, 10% agree, 5% disagree and 2.5% deny this fact and do not agree with the opinions of other parents.

Besides curricular aspects, goal of this research was to see how suitable the textbooks are. So the question that follows is: “*Textbooks are suitable for students.*” Percentage of teachers who fully agree was 0, of those teachers who agreed with this view has been 6.6%, the teachers who did not agree with this view are 70%, and the percentage of teachers who completely denied this fact has was 23.3%. Almost similar opinion was shared by parents; 17.5% agree that textbooks are appropriate, 30% disagree 52.5% completely reject this view. They think that textbooks are overloaded and often are not in accordance with the age of the children.

And the last question that is presented in this paper has been focused on the opinion of teachers and parents about the impact of the curriculum in reforming the education system in Kosovo. On the question “*Curricula in our schools have managed to completely reform the education system in Kosovo*”, teachers have shared their opinion as follows; 5% of the teachers strongly agree, 3.3% disagree, 46.6% disagree, teachers who completely disagree is 41.6% and teachers who are not sure about this and have not been able to give a concrete answer has been about 3.3%.

Regarding the parents, their answers were as follows. 12.5% of parents completely agree, those who agreed 2.5%, the parents who did not agree with this opinion were 55%, those who fully disagreed were 25% and those who have not Knowing what to give opinion on the matter results were 5%.

The analysis of these results shows that the reform in the lower grades 1-5, has passed with difficulty for teachers, students as well as parents. It is normal that every change brings hardship and resentment. But the difficulties will be much larger when there is comprehensive reform of all levels of education. Having compiled a detailed planning led by the state’s vision for education, and what direction should give the country’s education development?

Michael Fullan in his book “*Change forces in post-Communist Eastern Europe- education in Transition*” (2004)<sup>2</sup>, presented in a cycle change dependent on each other, in all its phases. According to Fullan, this cycle includes the stage of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization and the results obtained depend on the combination and interaction of these phases.

Therefore, reforms in the pre university system, i.e. the elementary level 1-5 should be interdependent as planned passing through the stage of initiation, implementation and institutionalization of a small group who can be part of the pilot project. From the results obtained then it can be extended more widely to encompass comprehensive reform of the education system.

#### *Conclusion and recommendations*

- ▶ Curricular frequent and rapid changes cause difficulties in reform.
- ▶ Do not prepare teachers to implement the new curriculum does not help the development of quality teaching and learning.
- ▶ Pilot curriculum is necessary.
- ▶ Are not overloaded curricula for teachers and students?
- ▶ Textbooks must be appropriate and not be overloaded with content.

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