

## ***The philosophy of new curriculum of the gymnasium and its meaning***

*Nikolin Gërmenji<sup>1</sup>*

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### **Abstract**

The new curriculum of gymnasium is in the third year of its implementation. Although a curriculum of study and a further expansion of the concept have led to problems arising from an incomplete knowledge and a clear conception of the philosophy by which this curriculum is guided.

Given that this curriculum includes not only programs changes or texts, but mentalities, concepts and philosophy of education, there is a need and interest of teachers, directors, designers of programs and textbooks and to students and their families to recognize this change and understand the philosophy of the new curriculum.

This study conducted in gymnasiums of Korça, brought to light some problems associated with implementation of new curriculum of high schools from the viewpoint of philosophy of education.

The results clearly differentiate categories of teachers participating in the study. The greatest differences were observed between the category of teachers with experience of 0-10 years and the category with over 10 years working in education. This result is statistically psupported by the Chi - square test is significant to undertake a curriculum review of the initial formation of new teachers.

Key terms: philosophy of education, new curricula, progresivisme, humanistic curriculum, curriculum goals, new teachers

### **Introduction**

The new high school curriculum which has been implemented since 2009 in our high schools, is a novelty and is part of the broad and deep reforms undertaken by MoES<sup>2</sup> these last 10 years. As a field of study, curricula characterized as elusive, fragmented and confused, (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2003) but we should be aware that the curriculum is crucial for the progress not only of schools, but also the whole society. If appreciate curriculum in the broadest sense of experiences that require individuals to real and full participation in society, cannot deny that it affects everyone, those that are involved in this

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1. *Nikolin Gërmenji, Head of Curriculum and Quality in Korça's Regional Education Administration (REA), E-mail: nikelingermenji@hotmail.com*

2. *MoES - Ministry of Education and Science*

field of study, teachers and specialists curricula, as well as to society in general.

Although over time schools tend to devote a certain method of curricula, many teachers do not strongly devote to her. Common teacher is unable to realize meaningful reform, and thus prevails, more significantly, superficial reforms (Fullan, 2001).

Many of the teachers do not have a single method or genuine; instead, in certain situations, they put emphasis on one method, while in other circumstances, reflect a particular method or curriculum actually affected by many methods. (Fullan, 2001) As a new phenomenon, part of reforms developed by MoES during the last 5 years, new high school curriculum is a field of study in the way of its realization. Brings new curriculum reform is not simply a change of plans, programs, textbooks or goals. Its meaning does not mean putting in the most recent educational policy implementation. Reform means to change the culture of classrooms, schools, districts and university teachers. (Fullan, 2001)

The focus of the study will focus on understanding the philosophy of the new curriculum by her implementers. Remains at the center of the curriculum philosophy, because philosophy protected or covered by a school and its representatives, affect the objectives or goals, the content and organization of the school curriculum.

The study of philosophy allows us to better understand schools and their curricula, noting perception systems, beliefs and values in which they believe. The study of philosophy allows us to determine what is important; understanding who we are, why we are and, to some extent, where we are going. The context of the study involves the field of philosophy of education in the conception and realization of the new high school curriculum; includes teachers' attitudes to change in practice (Fullan, 2001); against false clarity that happens when people think they have changed, but in fact, have adopted the new practice surface traps only.

The motivation for this study arises from the need to practice in their daily work to illuminate an aspect of the unknown sides of the "hidden curriculum" (Demeuse & Strauven, 2006) that has to do with the meaning of the philosophy on which it is built it.

Although educational philosophy's roots can be traced to the idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism, a general method should provide a model of educational philosophies. So far it has been recognized that emerged four educational philosophies: perennials, essentialism, progresivism and riconstructionism. (Ornstein-Hunkins, 2003). Each of these four educational philosophies rooted in one or more of the four main philosophical traditions. For example, perennials rely heavily on the principles of realism, essentialism is rooted in idealism and realism, while progresivism and riconstructionism derived from pragmatism. A part of riconstructionism related to knowledge and learning existentialist.

New high school curriculum, being a comprehensive training curriculum that serves students, takes into account principles such as: general conception, comprehensiveness, prowess in space and time, coherence, etc. (Framework, 2008)

These principles are reflected in its goals, which put the individual center and its potential. Thus, we have the right to think that the curriculum and through its educational system, aims to educate the whole individual; an individual to recognize the values and potentials putting them at the service of self and society. This view provides curriculum existentialist and humanist conception, as stated by Marc Demeuse and Christian Strauven in studying them: education should help man to know himself and analyze his position in society; he should provide it with the necessary tools to interpret the learned subjects like

arts, philosophy, morality, as well as changes in society.(Demeuse & Strauven, 2006)

Goals vary from one community to another and depending on the time, in a given society. What characterizes the Albanian society is also expressed to National Education Strategy (2009 – 2013). New high school curriculum (K12), aims to provide each student with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable it to:

1. Achieve personal well-being;
2. Contribute to society;
3. Contribute to economic development. (Guide, 2010)

This definition of goals offers new high school curriculum with curricula progressives educational philosophies, which point to the formation of the individual to himself, open to the world and change, and economic development; able to take on responsibility, to exercise his autonomy and accountability. (Ornstein-Hunkins, 2003)

### **Purpose of the study**

This curriculum includes not only program changes or textbooks but above all mentalities, concepts and philosophy of education. Naturally, there are a need and interest of all its factors: teachers, directors and programs and textbook makers, students and their families to recognize and then understand the philosophy of this change and the new conception. Faced with the challenge of professional freedom, many teachers still see and implement this curriculum based on the conception of the traditional philosophies of education.

As a result of these problems and difficulties in the implementation of the new philosophy of education in the gymnasium arise the question:

What impact has the recognition of the philosophy of high school curriculum to its realization by teachers?

### **Methodology**

This study relates to the simple description of the phenomenon or a relative concept in a population (Pendavinji, 2010). The phenomenon is new curriculum and its philosophy of education in relation to high school teachers of the city.

Instruments for data collection:

-Questionnaire -

The population selected for the research is the community of high school teachers of the city of Korça: “Themistokli Gërmenji”, “Raqi Qirinxi”, “Ymer Dishnica” and “Thimi Marko”.

-Interviews -

In addition to the survey, as a technique attached was used interview with directors of educational institutions to collect secondary data and to determine their views. During the interview is intended to face the the survey findings and the point of view of the phenomenon by the heads of these institutions. Interviews have been developed with high school directors and curriculum specialists at the REA-Korçë.

-Official Statistical -

In order to have more accurate information were used data from REA-Korçë

statistics office about the number of teachers who teach in high schools, where the research will be extended, and categorize them according to the profile, qualification, age and sex.

### **Ethical issues in research**

Relying on Order no. 105, dated 23.03.2012, of the Ministry of Education for approval of the Regulation on “Ethics in research and publishing activities”, the research will rely on the order and the rules of ethics in research. (*Lawrence. M & Cohen L & Morrison. K. ,2005*).

During the research:

1. It is made known participants in the study the applicant’s identity and background of the study;
2. Are familiar with the purpose of the research and the procedure for completing the survey;
3. Is seeking permission and approval of the respective institutions for carrying out the study, after they have been made aware of the purpose of the study, participants, time and place, and procedures;
4. The development of the survey, interview and survey participants provided for the preservation of their identity and confidentiality as well as mosdëntimin or a lack of any negative impacts from participating in;
5. The development of the survey respects the free will of the subjects participating in being informed about this in advance;
6. Respected the dignity and privacy of the participants in this study.

### **Analysis of the findings**

The survey was conducted by questionnaire, in which teachers hold a certain attitude about the statement data, as they really think they are true. The questionnaire was prepared by relying on classification that was made by Allan C. Ornstein in his work “Philosophy, curriculum decisions” (Ornstein-Hunkins, 2003). It includes several sections through which discussed the differences between contemporary and traditional educational philosophies. The questionnaire was constructed in two parts: in the first part are general information, through which gathered information about the grading of teachers by school, subject profiles, sex, age (divided into age groups) and professional qualification. The second part presents 13 statements divided into two columns each representing a synthesis of traditional and contemporary educational philosophies. Subjects were directed to choose ONLY one of the statements which express better and clear their concept or their attitude to the claim granted. Statements are divided into 4 major blocks through which are evaluated various elements of the curriculum, starting from the goals (first block); content (second block), teaching (third block) and the objectives of the curriculum. Variables are coded with numbers from 1 to 11 as listed in the table below:

1. Full champion
2. Scientific Profile
3. Social Profile
4. Sports and artistic Profile
5. Gender - Male

6. Gender - Female
7. Age group 20-40 years
8. Age group 40-60 years
9. Over 60 years age group
10. Qualification 0-10 years of work
11. Qualifications Over 10 years of work

IN THE FIRST GROUP OF QUESTIONS (questions 1 and 2), belonging to the purpose of education, it is noted that there is a positive position towards the concept that education is intended to develop the potential of the individual (Rogers, 1978), but when required to hold position about how education should be carried (by content or democratic experiences), subjects generally react more traditionally Remember that traditional teacher education is not the objective of preparing young people for the future, but more to prepare them with a general culture.

IN THE SECOND SET OF QUESTIONS that focus on the content, we observe changes in the attitudes of the variables. Although it is generally accepted that learning in school should emphasize problem solving (Dewey, 2011) (question 3), question 4 (curriculum should emphasize the content and the subject or the interests of the students), again strengthened the traditional attitude that puts emphasis on the content and materials, falling into contradiction with the spirit itself and the design of new curricula built on the basis of objectives and not on the basis of content (Guide, 2010).

In the question 7, for the organization of contents, note that it is generally accepted integration of content, so the concept of organizing the content according to their field of knowledge (Curriculum Framework, 2008). Interestingly, the reaction of variables 2 and 9 (which accept the division of academic disciplines rather than their integration). But the surprise is the reaction of variable 10 versus 11 where we face the categories of subjects according to professional experience. It seems that teachers with less than 10 years of work, are more resistant than those with over 10 years of work, featuring a closer position to the concept of separation rather than integration.

THE THIRD GROUP OF QUESTIONS 8 - 9 - 10, includes teaching concepts and methodology. Even in this group of questions are noticing attitude changes of variables from one question to another. In question 8 we have the concept of teaching based to the textbooks or based to teach in different sources. The reaction of all variables in this question is generally positive towards the concepts of contemporary philosophies, with the exception of variable 4 (artistic-profile teachers) and variable 10, where it seems that the traditional attitude is resistant. They show a closer position to the concept of text-centered teaching and learning. Remember that this variable was the teachers with 0-10 years of work. The situation is quite different in question 9 which requires a teachers' attitude to the way learning organization: separate groups, defined learning schedules and the same time period or small groups and individualized.

All variables react negatively to the concept of contemporary philosophy of organizing learning groups and individualized schedules. It appears that the variable 10 reacts more traditionally. This is repeated for question 10, when, if all variables generally react positively to the concept of student involvement in the search of information, what

is known as student-centered teaching, variable 10 appear more resistant. Remember that the same approximate value variable 10 has been in question 5.

Question 5 - variable 10 to 65% of cases supports the traditional position *that the content of the class must be chosen by the teacher*; versus 40% of variable 11 (subjects with over 10 years of work).

Question 10 - Variables 10 to 71% of cases supports the traditional position *that teaching should aim to involve students in the acquisition of what the teacher says or textbooks*; versus 27% of variable 11.

It seems that in both cases, the subjects included in variable 10, think that the content of the lesson should be chosen by the teacher and that he is the only authority in the classroom. If

we add to this the fact that this variable, thinks that the content and the subject should be the core of the curriculum, then we can conclude that we are dealing with a category of teachers who think and act generally traditional way.

THE FOURTH GROUP OF QUESTIONS relates to the goals and objectives of the curriculum and as appears from the survey, dominated by traditional concepts, according to which the curriculum (generally identified by the teacher as education programs), should aim at the highest possible standard and a special assessment for students with high scores. Let us mention one of the most important principles of the new high school curriculum (K12), such as the inclusion, then we conclude that teachers know the curriculum only on the surface or in its technical implementation, which is proved by the attitude on the question 11, when accepted by all subjects one of the fundamental principles of the curriculum, as is the integration of content and free choice. Let us mention here the fact that the question 2 (*what makes a high school curriculum a new curriculum*), in all the interviews was given the answer: the principle of choice.

The following tables present the outcomes of the findings that measure the attitude and belief of teachers to the new curriculum concepts (K12). For each question is listed the number of responses given to assertions that support the concepts of traditional and contemporary philosophies. At the same time makes their calculation in percentage.

## Statistical date

Table 1

Number of teachers according to subject profiles, qualifications and age expressed in number and percentage

Number of teachers	Social profile	Scientific profile	Art – sport profile
84 – 100%	30 – 36%	45 – 54%	9 – 11%
	Age 20-40 years	Age 40-60 years	Age over 60 years
	23 – 27%	47 – 56%	14 – 17%
	0 – 10 years work	Over 10 years work	
	14 – 17%	70 – 83%	

Table 2.1  
The survey results for each statement expressed in numerical values and percentages  
Traditional philosophies

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Numerical values	37	58	35	44	38	56	30	31	44	28	15	57	54
Percentage values	44	69	42	52	45	67	36	37	52	33	18	68	64

Table 2.2  
The survey results for each statement expressed in numerical values and percentages  
Contemporary philosophies

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Numerical values	47	26	49	40	46	28	54	53	40	56	69	27	30
Percentage values	56	31	58	48	55	33	64	63	48	67	82	32	36

In the above analysis we pointed out several attitudes variables that showed a significant variation in relation to analogue variables or even the whole champion. Given these incentives, research raises some questions that are important to address.

The first has to do with the fact, if we can establish a relation between attitude and categorizing subjects according to variables or not;

The second, which derives from the first, has to do with whether we have a relationship between the variables of the same category. To answer these questions emerging from the study will be used statistical analysis Chi-square Test (Mathew & Ross, 2010).

Measured values of the variables influence the raising of some hypotheses, which are statistically tested by Chi-square test.

1. Null hypothesis (H0) *that there is no difference in the attitude of teachers in the age group 20-40 and the age group 40-60 against traditional philosophies*, not verified. The indicator  $\chi^2 = 11.68$ , meaning that the possibility of achieving this hypothesis is very small. Using Tables for Chi-square values, we get as a result of the possibility of its occurrence  $p = 0.01$ , means that the feasibility of the hypothesis is 1%, Thus, statistically is accepted that the age group 20-40 years show a more traditional approach against teachers in the age group 40-60 years.
2. Null hypothesis (H0) *that there is no difference in the attitude of teachers according to profiles subject (science - social), to traditional philosophies*, there is an indication of the  $\chi^2 = 5.59$ , which means that the possibility of its realization is within the limits 10%. An indicator which is not statistically significant. This hypothesis cannot be rejected, but at the the same time cannot be accepted its opposite.
3. Null hypothesis (H0) *that there is no difference in the attitude of the subjects of gender (male-female)*, is confirmed. The indicator  $\chi^2 = 0.95$ . This value indicates that between male and female is no difference in attitude towards philosophies, as in 90% of cases this hypothesis is confirmed. So given opinions or views expressed by some directors interviewed are prejudiced or in the best case, the

misrepresentations.

4. Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) that there is no difference in the attitude of subjects with experience of 0-10 years and those with experience of over 10 years, as opposed to traditional philosophies, falling down. Indicator test  $\chi^2 = 20.15$ , said that the possibility of verifying the statistical significance is less than 1 %. Thus, we can conclude statistically that younger teachers with less experience, take a more conservative approach.

## Discussion

The field of the curriculum is very wide and diverse. The curriculum interweaves many interests and there are many problems that cannot get a solution if for them are not aware those who face more in practice: teachers.

Knowledge of curriculum and the dynamics that it has brought is an important condition for each of its implementers, in order to succeed and yield to his work. But this knowledge often remains only to an individual or to the sides of the exterior of a new phenomenon or reform and as such limits under the full true meaning of change.

The concept of *the hidden curriculum*, which has to do with that part of it which seems to lose during the implementation in practice carries in itself attitudes, interests and convictions of its implements. The survey showed some of these hidden sides expressing teachers' personal attitude towards a novelty and how each individual conceives this change. Analysis of the findings led us to conclude that among the new curriculum philosophy and philosophical conceptions, convictions and beliefs of teachers, there is a gap or a resistance. This resistance does not appear to spread steadily as horizontally, means, in the sense of uniform for all participating entities, but vertically as well, in terms of the different levels of the components of the curriculum.

Although in general, teachers have expressed their opinions and beliefs that are in the same direction with the changes and innovations of the new philosophy of education, specific groups of them still believe and express conservative views, sometimes contradictory between them. Remember to stay the statements 1 and 2, which shows very clearly the wavering from one direction to another. Such attitudes we observe between the groups according to age and experience, which, as mentioned above, the age groups 20-40 years and under 10 years of work experience teachers appear more conservative than 40-60 years age groups or teachers with over 10 years experience in education.

Findings and statistical analysis in this study, pointing out that some of the expectations of the directors or curriculum specialists, expressed in interviews given, seem to contradict each other. Although it is expected that the teachers of the age group over 60 years or over 10 years working experience in education, to have a more conservative response, results of the study showed that a different age group appear more resistant. The purpose of this study does not go beyond identifying the problems that difficult the realization of the goals of the curriculum with an emphasis on the human factor, but of course, we can raise the question of what affects this age group shows a more conservative approach in relation to other age groups. It is not without significance that this age group makes up about 30% of the entire sample. From this age group will depend on education reform in the future.

An important fact is that the age group of 40-60 years which constitutes about 60% of the champion, shows a consistency and is more aware of the attitudes that appeared to understanding the philosophy and educational changes. Although we can give numerous



factors affecting these relations, I think two of them are those that include the results of the research:

*The first* has to do with resistance to change and innovation.

*Second*, with deep meaning and full of reforms and changes.

If the first factor is one that unites all age groups and categories, as such it can be called a uniform impact factor, the second separates them.

## **Recommendation**

At the end of this paper, and after the conclusion of the study results, I think it should be, given the issues and concerns raised, to express an opinion about the suggestions that can affect the improvement of the understanding of change in education and teacher training key skills to cope with the reforms.

### First: Initial formation of teachers

The preparation of new teachers has a great importance in their attitude and dealing with continuous reforms and changes. This preparation can be achieved by:

1. Customized programs and university curricula to support change and reform of Pre -University Education, including knowledge of educational philosophy;
2. The development of professional practice to make students' part of school realities by strengthening the link between the university and pre-university education system;
3. Mentor or teacher preparation "at work", adding gradually their responsibilities under the guidance of a master teacher.

### Second: Continuous professional qualification

Training and continuous training are a key factor for the progress of reforms and positive perception of change. Today this task is performed by qualified agencies which will offer training modules for teachers in service. These agencies will respond to requests for constant changes and reforms of education. In order to have an impact as positive and fruitful, but also to allow a full understanding of curricular changes I think that teacher in-service should:

1. Involve in planning curriculum changes and new projects;
2. Undergo continuous training to break the old concepts of a sufficient base formation or unchanged throughout career;
3. Training system to adapt in response to changes and reformations that have taken place in the education system;

Thirdly, Harmonization of work on professional learning communities within schools. This concept is related to a reassessment of internal training including the creation of structures that open up opportunities for the performance of such interactions where teachers say more say in the decisions that are made in schools are also experimenting new roles, including work in cooperation. Such a role must take curricular team responsible for curriculum decision-making in schools.

However, as a result, it can be said that coping with changes and innovation is not easy. Today we live in unique times, characterized by the dizzying pace of change varied and versatile, which should make us aware that the intent and purpose of the curriculum can not be graven in stone.

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