New National Curriculum and the Impact in the Education Sector of Kosovo: Implications for Successful Implementation

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Abstract

In August 2011, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) adopted a new national curriculum. Among other concepts, the Ministry committed to focus on learning outcomes, competencies, differentiated learning, and learner centered education in the new national curriculum. The impact of these changes rippled across the education sector requiring professional capacity building within the Ministry of Education, redesigning teacher pre-service preparation program, restructuring teacher in-service program, innovating staff development and teacher mentoring for professional capacity building in schools, re-writing textbooks and creating supporting teacher resource materials. It was calculated that it would take ten years to implement fully these curriculum concepts. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the consequences of a Decision to create new national curriculum across the education sector and determine the best approach to implement it.

History of New Curriculum Framework

In 2001, post-conflict Kosovo developed its first national curriculum. It might be best described as subject focused and based upon learning objectives. The emphasis in this original curriculum design was on what teachers would do as they developed learning objectives for their students in each subject area. Curriculum resources necessary for the implementation of the 2001 curriculum were developed over the next six years. However, the 2001 curriculum was never totally implemented. It was after the declaration of independence in 2008 that the Minister of Education announced that MEST would develop and implement a new curriculum that would meet the needs of this new republic.

A new curriculum framework was adopted by MEST in 2011 which focused on student competencies and learning outcomes. Currently, teachers mostly rely upon minimalist strategies of lecturing and assigning desk work to prepare students for final examinations. Teachers would have to revise their strategies. Instead of setting objectives for students to meet, they would create strategic learning activities that were designed to lead to students acquiring specific competencies. They would begin by imagining how learning activities would lead individuals to acquire different levels of competencies. These levels were organized in learning typologies, such as Bloom's Taxonomy, where children would demonstrate knowing, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing. Guided by the Typology, teachers would create an array of learning activities that engaged students in learning through group work, debates, project work, paper writing and designing. This change from setting objectives for students to planning how to engage students in learning would ripple throughout the entire sector.

Implications for the System of Education in Kosovo

Today, the impact of the changes is spreading across all levels of the educational sector in Kosovo. Members of different institutions within the sector are gradually becoming aware of the significance that these changes will have upon them. These changes represent an opportunity for a traditional culture to become a more progressive modern culture characterized by tolerance of diversity and valuing individual achievement. In response to the Minister’s decision to create a new national curriculum, MEST refocused its efforts in all its departments as implications for the curriculum change became clearer.

The authors interpreted changes that were anticipated to be experienced at the different levels in the education sector against two major social science constructs: the perception of locus of control over the change (internal or
and source of motivation for the change (intrinsic or extrinsic). These two factors created a 2 by 2 matrix comprising of 4 cells (see Analysis section below). Each change was analyzed and placed in the cell that best described it. The results were then compared and implications were drawn to inform MEST how best to approach the changes.

Educational Sector: Ministry Level

Department of Higher Education: Two years ago, the university was required to respond to an external accreditation decision by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) that revoked the accreditation of 8 of the 10 teacher preparation programs in the Faculty of Education. With the new curriculum framework in place, MEST had another reason to require the Faculty of Education to respond to the accreditation report of 2010. The Minister created a Commission to review the current structures and programs for teacher preparation at the university and as a result, he issued a Decision on restructuring teacher preparation programs which was supportive of the implementation of the new curriculum.

Teacher Training Unit: MEST required teachers to upgrade their skills to implement the curriculum as part of teacher licensing. As a result, MEST began to develop a system that recognized teachers’ accomplishments. The Teacher Training Unit developed a new Management Information system to track in-service experiences that each teacher successfully completed. MEST began gathering professional and biographical data on 24,000 teachers in Kosovo to track teacher development activities and linked this with salary level and teacher licensing.

Curriculum Development Unit: Curriculum implementation documents and tools had to be developed in the Curriculum Development Unit at MEST. These documents included a Curriculum Framework which described the conceptual framework for the new curriculum; three Core Curriculum operational documents for all grade levels that defined learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each curriculum area and stage level; a Subject Syllabus Template to guide teachers to revise the existing syllabi; an Assessment Framework for monitoring learning and evaluating achievement; an Optional Curriculum document that provided a regulatory path for developing locally-developed curriculum at the school level; and a Monitoring and Evaluation program and Quality Assurance system to ensure the continuity and coherence of the course syllabi that would be developed. In addition, MEST authorized schools and teachers to pilot the Syllabus Template by revising the current course syllabi so they conformed to the assumptions and concepts of the new curriculum. By the end, syllabi for all 215 courses in seven curriculum areas would be developed, piloted, revised and finalized.

Recognizing the current lack of capacity within the education system to implement the new curriculum, the Curriculum Development Unit would develop a strategy to invite graduate students in the Faculty of Education to conduct research in the area of curriculum and teacher development studying how teachers revised the course syllabi and piloted the changes in their classrooms. Graduate students the area of educational leadership development would study how school
directors developed learning cultures within their schools and mentored and coached teachers through the syllabus change process.

State Council for Teacher Licensing: MEST needed to address how to acknowledge the work of Mentor teachers who supervised practice teachers and discussed granting contact hours of professional development that would raise their teacher licensing level. The State Council for Teacher Licensing would revise the way it selected professional development training programs for teacher in-service by using a demand-driven model instead of a supply model. Teacher performance standards and minimum teacher competencies were identified for teacher licensing and were linked to the demand-driven process.

Assessment Unit: The Assessment Unit within MEST also had to respond to the Minister’s 2008 Decision to create a new curriculum. In the past, student assessment focused on final examinations and preparation for matura examinations after grade 12. With the new curriculum, the Assessment Unit would restructure assessment to include assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning; formative as well as summative assessment. Teachers would learn assessment criteria for topics (units) covered in classes and whole courses (subjects) as well as for the grade level and stages. They would learn to consistently gather data for learning assessment to guide them in revising their teaching strategies according to appropriate cognitive levels in Bloom’s Taxonomy. Writing tests and exams would no longer be sufficient to assess the levels of learning identified in Bloom’s Taxonomy. The Assessment Unit at MEST had to develop supporting regulations and appropriate strategies to free teachers and school directors from the existing ‘one final exam’ format and instead enable them to create multiple assessment activities to assess learning as required by the new curriculum.

Special Education Unit: The Special Education Unit at MEST responded to the mandate to implement a new curriculum. Underlying outcomes-based, competency learning is inclusion, and teachers would be expected to develop learning activities in their topics that optimize learning for all students with different abilities. Therefore teachers would adopt differentiated strategies to enable learners with a wide range of abilities. The Special Education Unit coordinated with pre-school level learning by developing learning standards and developing implementation guidebooks for pre-school education.

Vocational Education Unit: The Vocational Education Unit at MEST also developed parallel, modular-based curriculum that reflected the new curriculum framework. The Unit supported the development of Centres of Competence designed to meet needs of the labour sector in Kosovo. A Vocational Education Teacher (VET) In-service B Ed degree program would be developed to qualify VET teachers to be granted a teaching license.

Educational Sector: University Level

Rector’s Office: At the university level, actions tended to be reactive rather than proactive. In 2010 an Accreditation Team reported on the B Ed degree programs in the Faculty of Education where multiple programs failed to gain accreditation. In response to many recommendations made by the authors of the report, the Rector promoted closing 8 subject programs for lower secondary teaching and all the upper secondary programs that were offered by four different academic faculties. Instead, MEST agreed to create a new 3+2 consecutive program model for secondary teachers. This model would require aspiring secondary teachers to complete a 3 year academic degree in a teachable area through an academic faculty then apply to the Faculty of Education for a 2 year Master of Education professional degree. The M Ed degree would focus on pedagogy, methodology, assessment, learning theory, education foundations, educational psychology and teaching practice. The Faculty of Education would create this two year M Ed program by 2014. Reacting to MEST’s development of national teacher competencies for beginning teachers, the Faculty of Education would review all the B Ed degree programs and revise them to ensure they covered all the competencies in the national teacher competencies profile.

### Table 2.0 Predicted changes at the University of Pristina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Locus of Control by Extrinsic Motivation</th>
<th>• Create new academic BA Degrees in two specializations as a route to a new 3+2 consecutive secondary teacher preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| External Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation | • Revise B Ed Pre-service degrees to meet TCP standard  
• Create new M Ed Degree for Secondary Teachers  
• Revise MA (Leadership and Curriculum & Teaching) degrees in readiness for Accreditation  
• Create new B Ed In-service degree for VET |
Internal Locus of Control by Extrinsic Motivation

- Minister’s Decision on Teacher Preparation
- Consolidate all Teacher Preparation programmes under Faculty of Education
- Close the B Ed In-service degree (Higher Pedagogical School trained teachers)

Internal Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation

- Redesign the Practice Teaching 22 week programme
- Revise the Mentor training programme to support the Practice Teaching 22 week programme

The Minister formally mandated the Rector to implement changes through a Decision signed in July 2012. Most of the terms of the Decision involved changes at the university or the faculty level. The decision focused on increasing quality of performance of new teachers entering the teaching profession. The university was mandated to move all teacher preparation programs into the Faculty of Education. This would bring together people who understood the concepts of the new curriculum and who had capacity to support its implementation.

Dean’s Office: The Faculty of Education would review and revise its two MA degree programs in readiness for accreditation in 2013. A major issue that existed with these programs was that while the Faculty could offer 60 ECTS of coursework, they did not possess the capacity to mentor students through 30 ECTS of candidacy which included a research project and thesis writing. There were over 350 students who were ready to move to the candidacy phase but there were less than 10 mentors, professors who could supervise them. The Faculty considered naming co-mentors, young professors without PhD’s, to provide supervisors for these 350 graduate students to complete their degrees successfully. The Faculty was given a mandate to create a VET in-service teacher preparation program by 2014 to ensure that VET teachers have the capacity to implement the new modular VET curriculum.

MEST determined that an existing in-service program would have largely met its goal to provide an opportunity for practicing teachers with 2 year diplomas from Higher Pedagogical Schools to upgrade to a 4 year B Ed degree. This program might be closed, which would have the impact to release a number of professors back into the Faculty of Education so it could better respond to the 2010 Accreditation Report.

MEST required that the Faculty of Education review its practice teaching program. Student teachers were required to successfully complete 22 weeks of practice teaching over a 4 year B Ed degree. Currently too many students were enrolled in the programs and most did not experience more than 16 weeks of practice teaching, and when they did they were most often in groups of up to 10 colleagues who had nowhere to sit so they stood at the back of the classroom observing the teacher. Rarely was a mentor teacher assigned one student. A more effective practice teacher program would build the capacity of teachers to implement the curriculum in the future.

Educational Sector: Municipal Level

Director’s Office: At the level of Municipal Education Districts (MEDs), officials reacted to the announcement of the new curriculum by changing many regulations which guided the work of school directors and teachers. One of the first changes was to create regulations to give teachers and school directors authority to evaluate student learning using formative and summative processes. School directors would encourage teachers to create innovative ways to assess student learning day to day, consistently and accurately. MED officials would support teachers learning to write deep and rich behavioral descriptions that could be used to evaluate student affective and psychomotor learning by participating in debates or class presentations. Another change for the MED was to authorize school directors to create annual development plans which would enable planning for staff development activities throughout the year.

Municipality officials would emphasize to school directors that they must learn to become an ‘educational leader.’ In addition to the more easily understood and traditional roles of ‘administrating’ and ‘managing,’ school directors would learn the art of leading. The MEDs would provide regulations that captured the art of leading and insist on school directors practicing it. Educational leadership might be best described as leading by doing and motivating teachers through trust, caring and morality. School directors would need to shift from traditional monitoring and evaluating roles to that of mentoring and coaching. In order to implement the curriculum throughout the MED, school directors would create learning cultures in schools where teachers experimented with the best way to engage students in learning activities. When experiments did not work, school directors would ensure teachers were praised for their efforts and not only when successful.
Table 3.0 Predicted changes at the Municipality Level

| External Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation | • Create new regulations for formative assessment (subject) and summative assessment (stage)  
| • Create regulations for school directors to create an annual school development plan |

| Internal Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation | • Create new mentoring and coaching roles for school directors  
| • Create new school-based staff development regulations for school directors |

It was commonly understood that it was not practical to implement a national curriculum through countless workshops offered throughout the country. Instead, MED officials would create regulations to mandate annual school-based staff development plans. School directors would become leaders, and teachers on staff would become experts to support various aspects of the new curriculum design. The school would become a professional organization where experimentation by teachers was recognized by colleagues and thus teachers would be rewarded. Teachers could gather into groups to share their ideas about learning activities and help each other by collecting materials and engaging in peer-mentoring or peer-coaching.

Educational Sector: School Level

School Director’s Office: The school level directly functions to support teachers and students. Most communication with parents and the local community occurs at this level. In response to initiatives by the MED, school directors determined professional development training within the school based upon the needs of individuals, groups of teachers and the overall school staff. Using a demand-driven model, the school community would decide what support they required and the director would identify teachers on staff who could provide it or would seek resources through the MED.

Table 4.0 Predicted changes at the School Level

| External Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation | • Revise selection of professional development training to a demand-driven model  
| • Develop regulations to authorize promotion meetings that include teachers who discuss the ‘whole’ child  
| • Develop storage for teaching materials for each teacher  
| • Develop strategies for providing space to teachers who are off shift  
| • Develop a shift/grade strategy i.e., shift 1 = 0,3,4,7,8, shift 2 = 1,2,5,6,9 |

| Internal Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation | • Revise formative assessment procedures at the subject level for teachers  
| • Develop new mentoring and coaching roles for school directors including expectations to motivate intrinsically, nurture self-worth, interact in authority, use empathy  
| • Develop trainings for school directors to build supporting climates and learning cultures  
| • Develop expectations to encourage teacher experimentation with new learning activities  
| • Create Internships for MA (Leadership) students who are candidates writing theses |

A fundamental principle for staff development is to optimize learning conditions for each learner, that is, to consider the whole child. This principle is especially important in summative assessment of learning. The school director would establish protocols for promoting students from one grade to another, one stage to another. Included in this protocol would be promotion meetings which involved all teachers and an educational psychologist who would consider the continuous assessment data of teachers, home situation information, and personal abilities for each student. The school
director would consider students one grade at a time. Once the decision of promoting was recorded for each student in one grade, the school director would then review each student on the roster for the next grade until all students in the school were considered.

Competency-based teaching and student-centered approaches require teachers to develop learning activities that use many different teaching materials. As a consequence, school directors need to find sufficient space for teachers to store their teaching materials. In Kosovo, the fact that many schools were scheduled in shifts made it more difficult to find the necessary space for storage and use of teaching materials in school laboratories cabinets. School directors developed strategies that took account of the time that school facilities were used by various groups and classes. One proposal was to organize schedules in such a way that grades 0, 3, 4, 7 and 8 were in the first shift and grades 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9 were in the second shift. This schedule enabled the school director to schedule science labs for lower secondary classes in both shifts and organize the available space in the school building more efficiently and effectively.

The new Kosovo Curriculum Framework with its new approach based on competences and learning outcomes required teachers to change the way they use formative assessment with students. Teachers would revise their practice to include regular and frequent formative assessment strategies to ensure that students achieved the core competencies. Tests or final exams simply measure the lower levels of the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy of knowledge and understanding. The new curriculum was competency-based that included learning knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

In addition to the tests and final exams that measured student knowledge and levels of understanding, teachers would use other assessment methods to measure skills, attitudes and values of students. This change of practice was deeply fundamental to how teachers embraced the new curriculum. If teachers failed to adopt multiple assessment practices the new curriculum would not be implemented.

School directors would shift from traditional monitoring and evaluation roles to mentoring and coaching roles to support teachers to understand and apply the concepts in the new curriculum. To shift to mentoring and coaching, school directors would become comfortable being in close, supportive relationships with teachers. They would focus daily on intrinsic motivation, for instance, wanting to make changes because the results would optimize learning for students. School directors would shift their style from controlling and compliance, to providing teachers with opportunities to change so students could learn better. Teachers who experience self worth during a change event have a potential of achieving sustainable professional development and life-long learning, whereas teachers who are forced to comply will not.

School directors would learn to relate to teachers more empathetically at a human level and less from a traditional status or hierarchical level. As a consequence, teachers would more likely follow the lead of empathetic school directors out of respect for their values and substance of character. School directors play a critical role in determining the type of culture that evolved within schools. Relating with teachers through care and cooperation instead of control and compliance creates school cultures that supported learning, and makes it safe for teachers to take risks and experiment with the new curriculum.

School directors could take advantage of the new curriculum and invite graduate students studying educational leadership at the Master level to come to their school to observe the interactions amongst the school director, teachers and students as they experimented with implementing the new curriculum. As an outside observer, graduate students could provide valuable insight and feedback for the staff to consider.

Educational Sector: Classroom Level

Table 5.0 Predicted changes by Teachers at the Classroom Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation</th>
<th>Restructure assessment to meet Core Learning Outcomes for Subject and Stage levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Locus of Control by Intrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>Develop opportunities for teachers to experiment with different learning activities in their classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop the expectation that teachers will share with each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop the expectation that teachers will seek support of their school directors in developing differentiated learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Require teachers to gather new teaching and learning materials to support learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop expectations for teachers to engage professional development and to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers are builders of the curriculum. All other professionals in the educational system are architects or suppliers. Those in the MEST Curriculum Development Unit were the architects who designed the curriculum and indentified the assumptions and concepts within the design. Others in MEST provided supportive operational guidelines, textbooks or teaching and learning resource materials. The Municipal Education Districts (MEDs) staff and school directors provided direction, mentoring and coaching in support of teachers. But it was the teacher who would use formative assessment to determine not only how well students learned, but to determine how well the learning activity worked. In addition the teacher would learn how to assess summative student learning at the end of the year and at the end of the curriculum stage, to determine whether the student was ready to move to the next level of school.

Teachers share their ideas about possible learning activities with colleagues. In doing so, they would be acting professionally and contributing to a safe, risk-free learning school culture. In Kosovo teachers would respond more positively to their director’s role as mentor and coach, rather than monitor and evaluator. Working in a risk-free school culture, teachers would feel safe to share their failures as well as their successes for they would understand that as professionals they learned from their mistakes.

Teachers would constantly be on the look-out for new materials that might support learning activities and end up collecting many boxes of materials in the process for each of their courses. They would learn to share materials with colleagues and to rotate responsibilities to lead in monthly staff development activities scheduled by the school director.

Finally, teachers could gain experiential knowledge of concepts related to child-centered and outcomes based learning. They would gain a deep understanding of constructivism and related concepts of validity of multiple realities because of their experimentation. Differentiated learning strategies would no longer be just an abstract idea, rather it would be something teachers practiced daily as they considered individual needs of students in their classrooms. Teachers would begin to feel comfortable with giving up control of learning to the learner, and facilitate activities that were designed to achieve learning of specific outcomes and competencies. Teachers would be able to successfully implement the subject syllabus by the end of the year by skillfully guiding students’ learning through planned activities.

Analysis

We considered the impact of the new curriculum framework as it would be felt throughout the educational sector. In each case, implications of the change were placed in a category depending upon type of Locus of Control and type of Motivation. For example, structural changes were placed in a category characterized by an external Locus of Control whereas changes in teaching practice were placed in a category characterized by intrinsic motivation. In the graphic below the changes were approximately equal between external and internal Locus of Control (20/22) whereas the changes were substantially different between extrinsic and intrinsic Motivation (7/35).

This finding suggested that MEST should focus on motivating members of the educational sector using intrinsic means. It could focus on ‘WHY’ the changes were necessary, and urge educators to establish a greater sense of urgency for change by focusing on critical principles like optimizing student learning, conforming with the Bologna Standards and enabling students to study across Europe and the world, and providing learning experiences that lead to graduates possessing high level skills, knowledge and attributes required for Kosovo to take its place amongst the nations of the world. MEST could urge school directors to identify ‘early adopters’ amongst teaching staff to create a coalition of change agents who could coach and mentor their colleagues. School directors could develop a vision for a preferred future state and communicate to teachers and members of the community a strategy to achieve this vision. They could empower teachers to mentor and coach their colleagues to implement the changes. They could create strategies to achieve ‘quick wins’ so community members and teachers can see the benefits of change.

Through these actions, educators would shift from centralist control to school-based self-determination. Drawing upon collegial coaching and mentoring, teachers and school directors would emphasize the importance of staff development within safe and caring cultures founded upon the value of cooperation and acceptance of differences. In the end, to implement the curriculum successfully, teachers and school directors would find their own solutions to the change
process, diminishing reliance upon so-called ‘outside experts’ who would otherwise visit schools and provide trainings and workshops.

Table 6.0 Number of changes predicted by Type of Motivation and Locus of Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF MOTIVATION</th>
<th>EXTRINSIC</th>
<th>INTRINSIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURAL PARADIGM</td>
<td>MEST 2</td>
<td>MEST 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University 1</td>
<td>University 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEDs 0</td>
<td>MEDs 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 0</td>
<td>School 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 0</td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCHANGE PARADIGM</td>
<td>MEST 1</td>
<td>MEST 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University 3</td>
<td>University 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEDs 0</td>
<td>MEDs 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 0</td>
<td>School 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 0</td>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYMBOLIC INTERACTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARADIGM</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Most of the changes that will be made within the educational sector in Kosovo to implement the new curriculum framework are predicted to be based upon intrinsic motivation. That is, educators will be motivated to make the changes because they believe in them and support the final vision. This vision will include an educational system that optimizes learning for all regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, abilities, or socio-economic status. It will include an educational system that is recognized by nations throughout the world enabling graduates to study overseas. And finally, it will include an educational system whose graduates possess needed knowledge, skills and attributes required by Kosovo to take its place with developed nations of the world.

Teachers are the implementers of the new curriculum while all other members in the educational sector are supporters. Teachers will implement changes if they experience self worth, a sense of efficacy, adequacy and security in relationship with their school directors and amongst colleagues in their schools. These experiences are possible if school directors are perceived by teachers to be consistent and principled: to act as mentors and coaches; to care about teachers and students; to consistently demonstrate educational leadership skills; and, to function for the benefit of student learning. School directors who communicate these principles congruently through structural, official and personal actions will influence teachers the most. These teachers will change their practice because they are attracted to the substance of character demonstrated by their educational leaders. The new curriculum will be implemented successfully if teachers are intrinsically motivated.
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