UDC: [37.011.3-051:005.336.2]:373.3.016(497.115)
Professional paper

FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM COMPETENCE BASED IN KOSOVO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Belgizare KRYEZIU
Basic Education School, Rogane, Municipality of Kamenica
Author's correspondence: email: kryeziubilka@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores and analyzes the factors that are determinants of the effective implementation of a competency-based curriculum in primary schools in Kosovo. Therefore, the tasks and objectives of this research should identify teaching approaches and methods, the impact of teaching materials, and assess the role of teachers in implementing the curriculum. We believe that individuals and their social context play an active role in the construction and creation of their knowledge acquisition. They are not consumers of knowledge but also its producers.
The study used a case study design combined with a qualitative approach, and data were collected through focus group discussions with teachers (128 in total). Teachers were interviewed with pre-prepared questions from high-potentiated indicators about their approach to the new curriculum, their training, and the implementation or adaptation of their methods based on the new curriculum.
The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) on the one hand, and local education authorities on the other hand, are key players in providing training and support to teachers and school leaders for the effective implementation of the competency-based curriculum. The findings of this research recommend that teachers need to be trained in teaching and learning approaches and methods, i.e. they need more frequent and qualitative training to effectively implement the curriculum, including through training programs and seminars organized by educational agencies to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality education and ensure that students achieve better results. On the other hand, the paper highlights the need to provide adequate teaching resources for the effective implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

Keywords: Competency-based curriculum, primary education schools, teaching approaches, learning

Introduction

A curriculum is the medium through which nations worldwide empower the general public with the values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to engage economically and socially, thus achieving national and personal development (Wambua, 2019). The curriculum defines the entire learning structure, regardless of where it takes place inside or outside the school, individually or in groups.
Both primary education and its curriculum have undergone significant changes in Kosovo, where it is worth emphasizing the essence of the new competency-based curriculum, which was the most fundamental change by moving from a teacher-centered/knowledge-based approach to a student-centered/competence-based approach. The purpose and need for this change was to ensure that students could easily understand the concepts learned, although the implementation of the new curriculum is quite difficult and challenging.
The competency-based curriculum focuses on what students are expected to do and not on what they are expected to know. Therefore, this curriculum is student-centered and adaptable to their needs, as well as society in general. This curriculum is based on the experiences that students go through in the educational process, structured in a logical way for easier understanding.
The educational process and their curricula represent an ongoing process driven by the need to respond to change, as noted by Stabback (2016). A quality education system and curriculum

must adapt to global trends in information development, advances in communication, and changing labor market demands to ensure that students acquire the skills necessary for success. Currently, there is a global shift towards competency-based education, as identified by Gardner (2017).

Theoretical Perspective

Based on the theories of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who believed that individuals play an active role in creating their knowledge (Woolfolk, 2011) this study according to constructivism, claim that the students are encouraged to actively engage with complex information, transforming it into their personal understanding through personal discovery. This is the approach highlighted above where the student is placed at the center, that is, the teacher takes on the role of manager and facilitator of learning and teaching activity instead of controlling the activities in the classroom. Based on this theory, our goal is to analyze the most efficient way and implementation of the curriculum based on competencies. So, social interaction is at the center of this theory, since individuals learn from each other and teachers create dynamic learning groups. In this context, it is also worth highlighting Vygotsky's research, which examined how social environments influence the learning process, where he concluded that learning occurs through social interactions between students, students and teachers. According to Woolfolk (2011), teachers are responsible for creating an environment that maximizes engagement potential through discussions, hands-on activities, and feedback.

Over the years, the field of education has witnessed significant changes and advancements, leading to a shift in focus from traditional content-based approaches to more student-centered and skills-oriented frameworks (Smith, 2017). It should be noted that historically the educational concept in Kosovo has been woven and influenced by the traditional legacies of eastern countries, where curricula were mainly designed to meet socialist and communist ideological needs and interests.

However, in recent decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of a curriculum that prepares students for the demands of a rapidly developing, globalized world (Johnson, 2012). The introduction of a Competency-Based Curriculum in Kosovo can be seen as part of a broader trend toward a more meaningful and inclusive approach to education. Such a curriculum aims to equip students not only with subject-specific knowledge but also with the practical skills and competencies necessary for their personal and professional development (Brown, 2019).

Furthermore, we can easily conclude that globalization and technological advances have played and continue to play an important role in structuring the need for a competency-based curriculum. In an increasingly interconnected world where information is readily available, the emphasis is more on skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration (Smith et al., 2020). So, the competency-based curriculum is at the core of these needs, which actually focuses on developing transferable skills that shape a healthy workforce.

Contextual Perspective

Although Kosovo has installed the competency-based curriculum, today we can freely say that the resistance of teachers to its implementation is hindering its success, this is confirmed by research in this direction as well as official reports of relevant educational entities, both domestic and international. However, the competency-based curriculum is simpler in structure and implementation than the knowledge-based curriculum, and this may be the problem of the resistance of teachers who cannot yet break away from the old curriculum and adapt to new methods. McMillan (2000) suggests that teachers need knowledge and skills in conducting

assessments, integrating them into teaching, and using effective approaches, techniques, and strategies to enhance students' competencies.
The challenges in implementing CBE in Kosovo's primary schools are multifaceted and can be categorized as:

- ✓ Curriculum development and alignment with competencies - This challenge involves defining clear learning objectives, identifying core competencies, and integrating them into the curriculum. Ensuring that the curriculum reflects the cultural diversity of the nation while maintaining a quality standard presents significant challenges.
- ✓ Teacher training and professional development - Adopting CBE requires equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate this approach effectively.
- ✓ Assessment methods - Creating effective assessment methods that can accurately measure student performance in line with the new curriculum.
- ✓ Resource allocation and infrastructure - Ensuring that all schools, especially those in rural or underserved areas, have access to these resources is a crucial challenge.
- ✓ Cultural and social factors – Kosovo's diverse cultural and social society influences the acceptance and implementation of the CBE.
- ✓

Statement and hypothesis of the study

Teaching using the Competency-Based Curriculum can help students acquire competencies such as general skills, values, concepts, and attitudes (Musai, 2014). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) decided to undertake a reform in basic education (primary and secondary education), structuring this curriculum in the educational process.
Although the government has supported the implementation of the new competency-based curriculum through numerous training sessions organized by MEST in cooperation with the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute to update, develop and expand the knowledge of various stakeholders in the education sector, the competency-based curriculum is still experienced with resistance which results in poor success in its implementation.
So, based on these theoretical and conceptual streams as well as the results of relevant research, the following basic hypotheses have been structured for the methodological stream of the study:
H1. Teachers who have attended the trainings mainly have a positive perception of the trainings and are satisfied with their content
H2. Teachers who have attended the trainings mainly have made adequate changes in their approach to teaching based on the new curriculum
H3. Teachers' approach to the new curriculum mainly depends on their experience in education, their level of qualification and their own attitude (perception and satisfaction) towards the trainings organized by MEST

Purpose of the study

In this context, the main purpose of this research is to analyze the factors that influence the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in selected basic education schools in Kosovo. Therefore, the tasks and objectives of this research should identify teaching approaches and methods, the impact of teaching materials, and assess the role of teachers in implementing the curriculum. They are not consumers of knowledge, but rather producers of knowledge. The study uses a case study model in addition to qualitative and quantitative approaches, and data were collected through structured interviews with questions developed according to basic

indicators to assess teachers' approach to the new curriculum, how they apply knowledge from MEST trainings in contexts such as Forms of peer support, Working methods, Forms of planning and use of methods, Use of textbooks and activities, Approach to the use of ICT, Approach to the role of the student in the classroom, Approach to reporting and communication with parents, etc.

Methods and data analysis

Based on this goal for methodological objectivity and for the interpretation of the hypotheses in the study, analysis and conclusion methods are used in the qualitative segment, that is, the teachers' approach to the curriculum based on competencies, as well as in the quantitative one through descriptive statistical methods of numerical frequencies and percentages through graphs and on the other hand with the methods of difference of variances and means (t-test and anova) through which the support of the curriculum and its implementation is analyzed depending on the socio-demographic factors of the teachers.

Population and research sample

10 primary schools were included in this research in the Municipality of Gjilan, which were selected in urban and rural areas. The study included 128 teachers who were direct implementers of the new competency-based curriculum in the classroom, of different ages and with different experiences, teachers who have attended trainings and those who have not attended trainings from MEST for personal reasons. Teachers were interviewed with pre-prepared questions from high-potentiated indicators about their approach to the new curriculum, their trainings and the implementation or adaptation of their methods based on the new curriculum.

Statistical methods and instruments

Based on the methods of focus groups of teachers and individual interviews, significant data were collected and then processed with descriptive and inferential statistical methods.
Interview method: After identifying the key informants, interviews were conducted with open and closed questions to collect information on the factors that influence the competency-based curriculum in the municipality of Gjilan. The interview was conducted with questions developed according to basic indicators for assessing teachers' approach to the new curriculum, how they apply knowledge from MEST trainings in the context of forms of peer support, working methods, forms of planning and use of methods, use of textbooks and activities, approach to the use of ICT, approach to the role of the student in the classroom, approach to reporting and communication with parents, etc.

Study results

As we highlighted above in the methodological part of the research, the main goal lies in the analysis of factors that influence teachers in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum, as a new curriculum, in primary schools in Kosovo, namely in Gjilan and the surrounding area where several primary schools are located. Therefore, the tasks and objectives of this research should identify teaching approaches and methods, the impact of teaching materials, and assess the role of teachers in implementing the curriculum. Teachers for proper implementation of the curriculum have attended adequate training organized by MEST and normally, knowing the nature of teachers, the implementing of the curriculum itself is determined by these socio-

demographic factors (experience, qualification, perception and satisfaction with the training itself, etc.), i.e. the teachers' approach to the curriculum is assumed to depend on these socio-demographic factors.
The very concept of teachers' approach to the curriculum is understood as how they apply the knowledge from MEST trainings in the context of such things as Forms of peer support, Ways of working, Forms of planning and use of methods, Use of texts and activities, Approach to the use of ICT, Approach to the role of the student in the classroom, Approach to reporting and communication with parents, etc. Based on these indicators for assessing teachers' approach to the new curriculum, questions were previously structured through which 128 teachers in primary schools in Gjilan and the surrounding area were surveyed/interviewed.
So, a total of 128 teachers were surveyed, of which 70 or 54.7% were female and 58 or 45.3% were male. On the other hand, depending on their experience in primary education, it turned out that nearly 30% of them had 6-10 years of experience, 29% 16-20 years, 20% 11-15 years, 19% up to 5 years and 1.6% over 20 years (Graph 1). So we can say that we managed to include all categories of teachers according to experience, which means that the following results are more than objective.

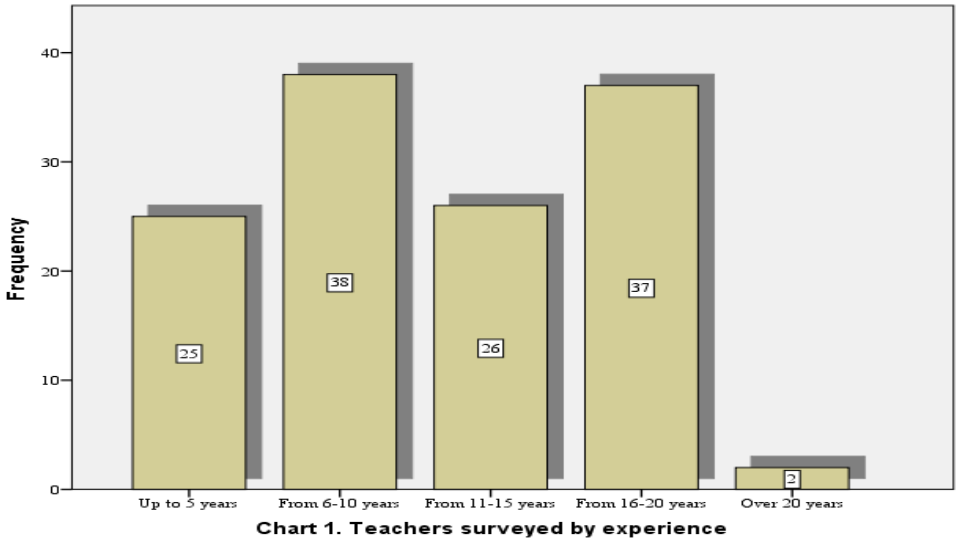

Chart 1. Teachers surveyed by experience

On the other hand, according to the qualifications of the teachers, it resulted that nearly 37% of them had completed four years of college (7th grade), with 24% each being teachers with a Bachelor's degree and a higher education in teaching, nearly 15% with a Master's degree and 1 of them with a doctorate (Graph 2).

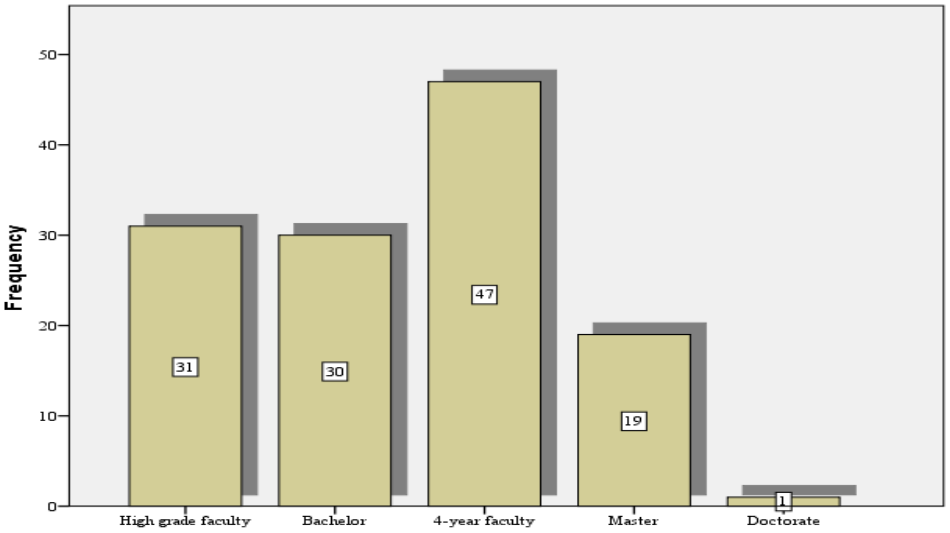

Chart 2. Teachers surveyed by qualification

When asked how many teachers surveyed had attended trainings from MEST, given that there are still some ongoing trainings and that (according to information) a significant number had not attended the trainings for personal reasons, this survey showed that 73 or 57% had attended the trainings, compared to 55 or 43% who had not attended the trainings for high-potential reasons.

For those teachers who stated that they had attended trainings from MEST, the following questions were asked about how they perceived the training themselves and how satisfied they were with the training. After processing the data, a proportionality between the levels of satisfaction with the training resulted: 22% of them are very satisfied and think that the training is very useful, 19.5% thought that the training was sufficient, 18% that the training was practical, 15.6% satisfactory, and on the other hand, close to 25% stated that the trainings from MEST are worthless or a waste of time (Graph 3).

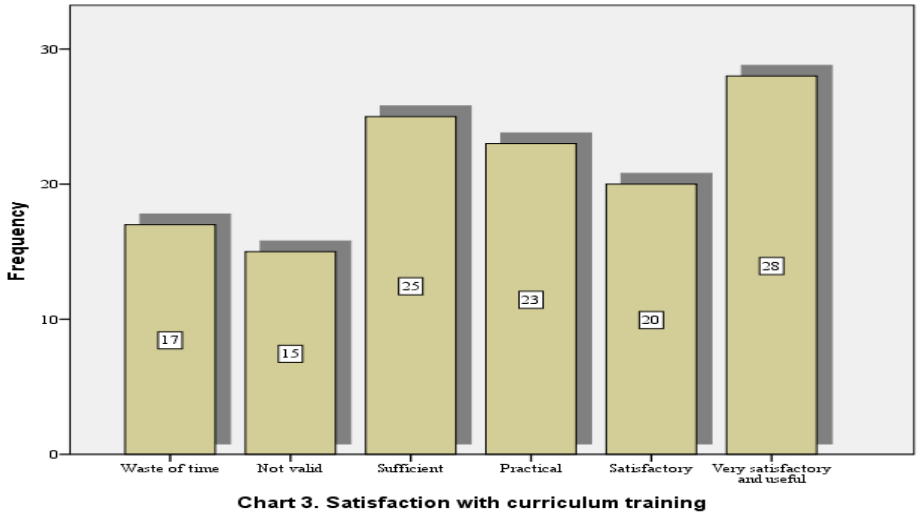

Chart 3. Satisfaction with curriculum training

In the question of how and how many teachers (those who have attended the training) have made changes and preparations for the new curriculum (the objective of the research to identify teachers' approach to the curriculum), i.e. according to the statistical levels We have made substantial changes, We have made moderate changes, We have made minor changes, We intend to make changes, Changes are considered necessary, but we decide not to change and

For me changes are not necessary, a proportional distribution of these levels presented in Table 1 and Chart 4 resulted:

Table 1. Teachers' approach to the new curriculum

		Responses	
		N	Percent
Teachers' approach to the new curriculum	For me, changes are not necessary	402	17.4%
	Changes are considered necessary, but we decide not to change	382	16.6%
	We intend to make changes	412	17.9%
	We have made minor changes	366	15.9%
	We have made moderate changes	352	15.3%
	We have made substantial changes	390	16.9%
Total		2304	100.0%

So, it turned out that those who have made changes are close to 49%, so, We have made minor change, We have made moderate change and We have made substantial changes, compared to those who have not made changes with 51%.

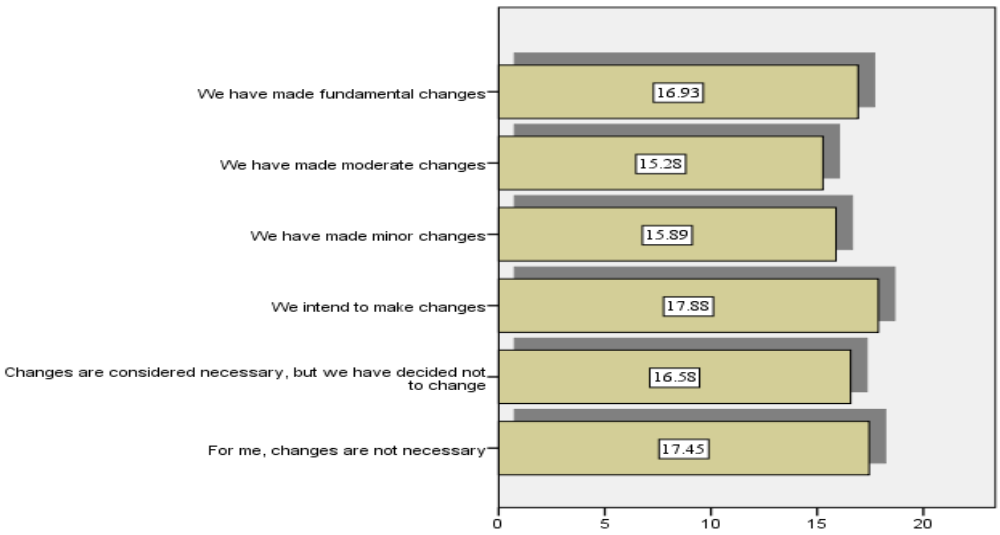

Chart 4. Teachers' approach to the new curriculum

So it turns out that most of the teachers who attended the trainings have not made any changes in their approach to the new curriculum, despite those who have made adequate changes according to the trainings. This is also an indicator of the low quality of teaching at the state level, which is also confirmed by the latest results of Teams and Pisa 2024.

Next, referring to the research objective of determining teachers' approach to the curriculum by socio-demographic factors (experience, qualification, perception and satisfaction with the training itself), from the analysis with inferential statistics of the difference of variances (anova) with the statistical software SPSS 20 resulted in significant or important differences for the second level of reliability of 0.05. Below we present these results in tabular and graphical form:

Table 2. Curriculum changes in depending on teachers' experience

	f	M	sd	S.E	95% Confidence Interval		F	Sig.
					Lower	Upper		
Up to 5 years	25	42.76	6.641	1.328	40.02	45.50		
From 6-10 years	38	45.32	7.378	1.197	42.89	47.74		
From 11-15 years	26	45.04	8.478	1.663	41.61	48.46	2.651	.044
From 16-20 years	37	43.86	6.365	1.046	41.74	45.99		
Over 20 years	2	38.50	2.121	1.500	19.44	57.56		
Total	128	44.23	7.165	.633	42.98	45.49		

So, regarding teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their experience in primary education, table 2 presents the averages for the approach depending on the levels of experience, where in the penultimate and last columns it results in F=2,651 with sig=.044 ($p<0.05$), or in other words, we say that there are statistically significant differences in teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their experience in primary education.

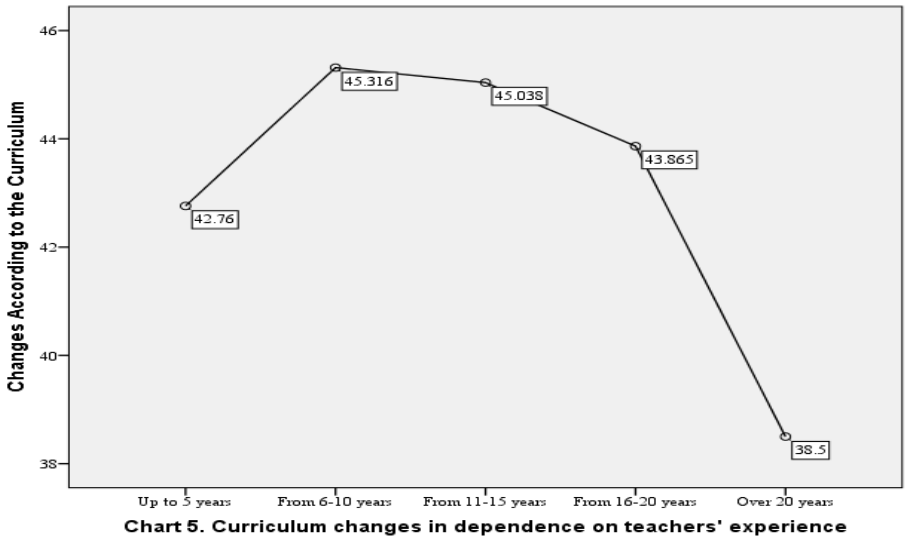

Chart 5. Curriculum changes in dependence on teachers' experience

According to Chart 5, these differences are significant between the two groups, with the first group ranking teachers with over 20 years of experience with a more negative approach to the new curriculum, while teachers with experience of Up to 5 years, from 6-10 years, from 11-15 years and from 16-20 years have a more positive approach to the new curriculum.

Further, regarding teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their qualification, Table 3 presents the averages for the approach depending on the qualification levels, where in the penultimate and last columns, F=3,287 with sig=.025 ($p<0.05$), or in other words, we say that there are statistically significant differences in teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their basic qualification.

Table 3. Curriculum changes depending on teachers' qualifications

	f	M	sd	S.E	95% Confidence Interval		F	Sig.
					Lower	Upper		
High grade faculty	31	43.42	5.296	.951	41.48	45.36		
Bachelor	30	45.23	8.216	1.500	42.17	48.30		
4-years faculty	47	44.57	8.209	1.197	42.16	46.98	3.287	.025
Master	19	43.21	5.493	1.260	40.56	45.86		
Doctorate	1	43.00	.	.	.	.		
Total	128	44.23	7.165	.633	42.98	45.49		

According to Chart 6, these differences are significant between the two groups, with the first group ranking teachers with High grade faculty, Master and Doctorate qualifications with a more negative approach towards the new curriculum, compared to Bachelor and 4-year faculty teachers with a more positive approach towards the new curriculum.

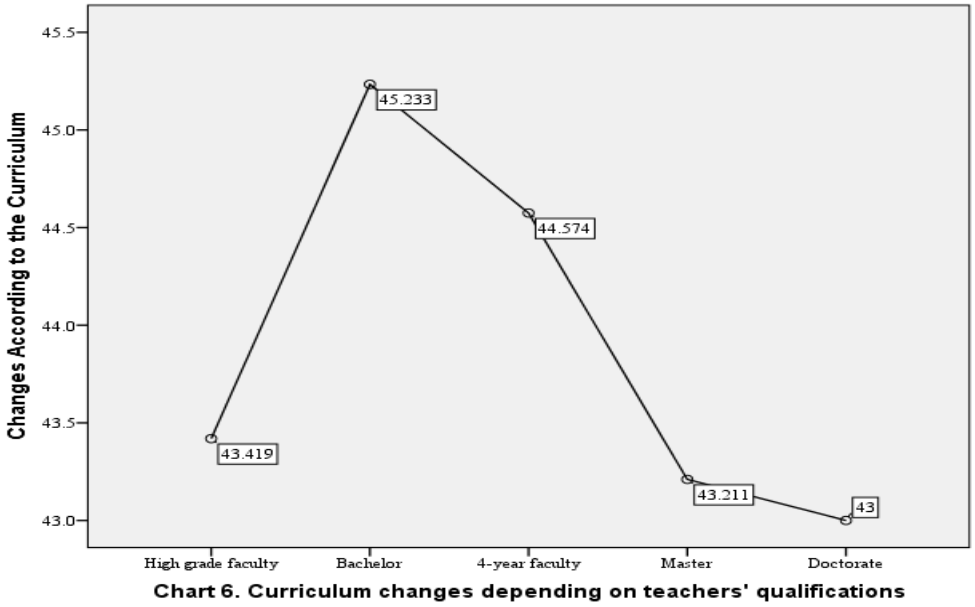

Chart 6. Curriculum changes depending on teachers' qualifications

As well, regarding teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their perception and satisfaction with MEST trainings, table 4 presents the averages for the approach depending on the levels of perception and satisfaction, where in the penultimate and last columns it results in F=2,678 with sig=.047 ($p<0.05$), or in other words, we say that there are statistically significant differences in teachers' approach to the new curriculum depending on their perception and satisfaction with MEST trainings for the curriculum.

Table 4. Curriculum changes depending on teachers' satisfaction and perception of curriculum training

	f	M	sd	S.E	95% Confidence Interval		F	Sig.
					Lower	Upper		
Waste of time	17	44.06	6.524	1.582	40.70	47.41	2.678	.047
Not worth it	15	44.27	6.756	1.744	40.53	48.01		
Sufficient	25	44.40	7.388	1.478	41.35	47.45		
Practical	23	42.61	7.133	1.487	39.52	45.69		
Satisfactory	20	46.35	8.002	1.789	42.61	50.09		
Very satisfactory and useful	28	44.00	7.201	1.361	41.21	46.79		
Total	128	44.23	7.165	.633	42.98	45.49		

According to Chart 7, these differences are significant between the two groups, even though the first group includes teachers with the statements Waste of time, Not worth it, Sufficient, Practical and Very satisfactory and useful with a more negative approach towards the new curriculum, as opposed to teachers with the statement Satisfactory, with a more positive approach towards the new curriculum.

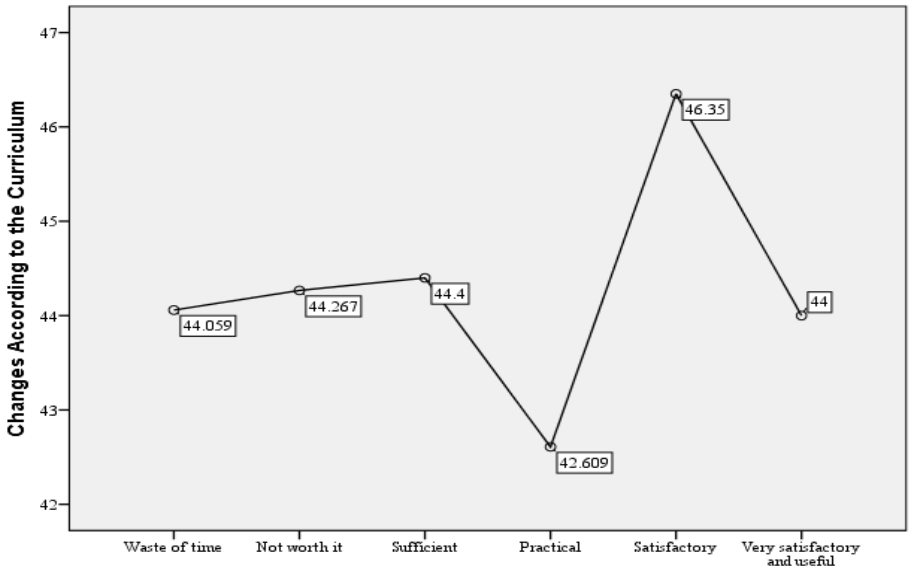

Chart 7. Curriculum changes depending on teachers' satisfaction and perception of curriculum training

Conclusion

Presenting the results of the research, we concluded that the majority of teachers have attended the trainings, despite those who did not attend the trainings for personal reasons or something else. Then, regarding the attitude and satisfaction of teachers from the training, it resulted that the majority of them have mainly positive attitudes and are satisfied with the content of the trainings organized by MEST. But it is surprising that most teachers who have attended the training have not made any changes in their approach to the new curriculum, despite those who have made adequate changes according to the training, this is also an indicator of the low quality of teaching at the state level, which is also confirmed by the latest results of Teams and Pisa 2024.

On the other hand, it turned out that teachers with over 20 years of experience have a more negative approach to the new curriculum, despite teachers with experience of Up to 5 years, From 6-10 years, From 11-15 years and From 16-20 years with a more positive approach to the new curriculum. Also, teachers with High grade faculty, Master and Doctorate qualifications have a more negative approach to the new curriculum, despite Bachelor and 4-year faculty teachers with a more positive approach to the new curriculum. And teachers with Waste of time, Not worth it, Sufficient, Practical and Very satisfactory and useful result in a more negative approach towards the new curriculum, in contrast to teachers with Satisfactory declaration, with a more positive approach towards the new curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions from the research results, we can also structure some basic recommendations in a generalized form for the implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

Therefore, teachers as a key factor in the implementation of this curriculum should be included from the earlier stages of installing the curriculum in the educational process. Even before specific instructions are set for teachers, relevant government entities should allocate funds to education stakeholders (both governmental and non-governmental) to enable them to develop adequate training for teachers on the implementation of the new curriculum, as well as for school administrators and directors, to ensure that they can evaluate and supervise the implementation process.

Therefore, it is recommended that the formation and professional development of teachers be comprehensive and qualitative, then, the provision of adequate teaching materials to facilitate and motivate the implementation of the new curriculum by teachers, Monitoring and Evaluation to be an improving, suggesting and motivating instrument for teachers and not punitive, further, the cooperation between schools and educational agencies should be strengthened for technical and substantive support for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

References

[1] Adams (2007). Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach. California: Sage Publications

[2] Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2019). Social cognitive career theory at 25: Empirical status of the interest, choice, and performance models. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 115, Article 103316. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.06.004.

[3] Gardner (2017). "Repeated testing produces superior transfer of learning relative to repeated studying." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 36:1118-1133.

[4] Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2012). Social interdependence theory. In D. J. Christie (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

[5] McMillan, James H. (2000). Fundamental assessment principles for teachers and school administrators. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 7(8). Retrieved September 16, 2004 from http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=8

[6] Musai, B. (2014) Teaching methods. Second edition. CDE: Tirana

[7] Smith, J., et al. (2020). Effective Team Coordination in Collaborative Communication Leadership. Leadership Quarterly, 31(2), 101-117.

[8] Smith, Lauren (2017) Teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of 'Mantle of the Expert' as a teaching strategy in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The STeP Journal (Student Teacher Perspectives), 4 (4). pp. 118-135.

[9] Stabback, P. (2016). *What Makes a Quality Curriculum?* Current and Critical Issues in Curriculum and Learning. Geneva: IBE-UNESCO (UNESCO International Bureau of Education). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243975.

[10] Wambua, M., & Waweru, S. (2019). Constraints Facing Successful Implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Kenya. American Journal of Educational Research, 7(12), 943-947
[11] Woolfolk, A. (2011) Educational psychology. Eleventh edition. CDE: Tirana