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Fatjona Alidemaj

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Teachers' Perceptions of the Curricular Reform Implementation in Kosovo

Fatjona Alidemaj, MA.
EMLS "Hasan Prishtina" Prishtina, Kosovo.
Email: fatjonaalidemaj@gmail.com

Abstract

The perceptions that teachers create about the curricular reform act as determinants of their journey towards the application of the reforms in practice. This research explores the perceptions that teachers have about the curricular reform and its implementation in Kosovo. The research took place in three cities of Kosovo: Prishtina, Istog and Klina, with 225 teachers, where 220 were respondents of the Questionnaire, and 5 were interviewed. The research highlights that the curricular reform is overwhelming for teachers and it is more oriented towards administrative issues. The curriculum is perceived as incomprehensible, challenging and not really easy to be applied. Besides, it did not change the teaching practices, and it did not enhance the students' learning outcomes. Peer cooperation is perceived as one of the changes that the new curriculum has brought to life, and this is an important factor that facilitates the implementation of the curriculum. On the other hand, the lack of resources and the insufficient time available for teachers are seen to be the main obstacles in implementing the curriculum.

Keywords: *perception, curricular reform, teachers, implementation*

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Education is considered to be a great instrument for the achievement of the national goals. In order to make education meaningful and suitable for the society and the time, changes must be undertaken continuously. The process of planning and developing the reforms depends on the place where they are being executed. Over the years, the educational system in Kosovo has been subjected to constant reforms. Currently, the educational system in Kosovo is facing the implementation process of the new Curriculum Framework that was approved by MEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) in 2011.

Teachers have a crucial role on the implementation of the curricular reform as they are the main stakeholders of the teaching reforms and successful practices depend on them. Regardless of the way reforms are documented, there is still a major relevance on how teachers interpret and perceive the reform. According to Little (2001) perceptions built about a reform influence and determine the teachers' approach towards it. The understanding of the new reform often comes as a result of their design and presentation, where they are frequently presented by using a traditional approach and teachers are provided with a prepared product and a group of procedures that they must follow. Commonly, technical and external elements are highly focused on educational reforms, which means that the inner part of the teachers, respectively, their perceptions and the changes that they experience in the process of the implementation of reforms are habitually neglected. Hargreaves (1998) emphasized that if the emotional side of the teachers is ignored, that is to say, their work, their voices and their feelings, a chance of improvement may be missed or even lost. Therefore, the research aims to find out the answer of the main research question, respectively sub-questions:

How do teachers perceive the implementation of the new curricular reform?

Sub questions:

- *How do teachers see the new curricular reform?*
- *What are teachers' perceptions about the changes that the new curriculum has brought on their work?*
- *Which are the advantageous and disadvantageous factors that teachers perceive as useful in the curriculum implementation process?*
- *Does age affect teachers' perceptions of curricular reform?*

Teachers and Educational Reforms

Teachers play an active role during the process of reforms. But their perspectives are rarely introduced, when there is a discussion about the effectiveness of reforms and shifts in schools (Darling- Hammond, 2009). According to Bailey (2000) in the application of educational changes, teachers' voices, perspectives and feelings are often ignored and marginalized. Due to the fact that the educational shifts incorporate many social components including interpersonal relationships, dynamic social interactions (Norman, 2010), emotions are part of the engagement that teachers bring in the process of change. According to Nias (1998) emotions are not separated from perceptions. Emotions imply experiences resulting from teachers' interactions with their professional environment. They are recognized as significant experiences finding out the opinions of the teachers about the reform.

It is undisputable that teachers are the key to success for the curricular reform (Smith and Desimone, 2003). Their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions play a fundamental role in the understanding of reforms (Blignaut, 2007).

Little (2001) argues that despite the way how reforms are portrayed in documents or from their supporters, within or outside the school they have to go through individual, collective and institutional interpretation as well. Regarding the curricular reform, the new formed understandings may not support the new curriculum and this will lead to consequences when applied in the classroom. The new created understandings are often a result of how the reforms were presented. Occasionally, they are presented by a traditional approach, where teachers are provided with a prepared product and a group of procedures that they must follow. The main cause why these reforms fail, seems to be the incapability to accept the teachers' knowledge, pedagogical beliefs and the context of situation as a significant aspect (Knapp & Peterson, 1995). Other studies also suggest that teachers' actual thoughts and beliefs influence the manner in which the reforms are applied (Leigh et al., 2006). Teachers' beliefs reflect the personal comprehension, and the nature of their knowledge that impacts their decision making and their teaching approach (Lovat & Smith, 1995). If teachers have beliefs in accordance with the reforms, they will potentially affirm it easier. Otherwise if teachers have different beliefs or perceive many obstacles in the approval of the curricular reform, it is possible that there can be a disappointment and disapproval of the reform (Burkhardt, et al., 1990).

In a study of Bantwini (2010) about the way how teachers perceive the new curriculum reform, it is claimed that one of the most common teachers' perceptions was that the curriculum is overwhelming, featured with a lot of administrative work. The new curriculum is considered to be rather a burden than a simplified and well-structured program. Different viewpoints that the reform simply requires more work, made it difficult for some teachers to perceive the vision

and the aims of the reform itself. Clasquin-Johnson (2016) presented the feedbacks of the teachers toward curricular changes. Initially, they were skeptical and somehow reserved on their work, and they assumed that some aspects of the curriculum were not appropriate for their students/pupils. Most participants were critical toward the new planning requirements, they considered that they are not useful. The participants described them as very intricate, exhausting and time-consuming. However, the participants identified the benefits too, they stressed that there is a better structure and organization and after a period of implementation they confirmed that they know for the first time what is expected from them and their students.

Hargreaves (1998b) maintains that if attitudes, beliefs respectively the internal components of the teachers are not taken into account, there is a loss of chance for improvement, consequently the reforms may not be very durable.

The Reform and the Practical Work of the Teachers

Educational researches are focused on the complexity of changing the teachers' thoughts, beliefs and knowledge, so that there can be a change in the teaching practices. Vetter (2012) revealed that sustainable changes and practical transformations happen when teachers redefine and redecide their viewpoints. It is less likely for teachers to modify their teaching practices without changing their values and beliefs (Fullan and Stegelbauer, 1991).

Sikes (1998) suggests that in case teachers face educational changes, they have to change their ideas and practices only if the latter are suitable and useful for their teaching. Darling-Hammond et al. (1981) indicate that teachers tend to see the

educational changes and curricular reforms by some ambivalent means.

Teachers decide how educational changes will impact their teaching practices. It is reasonable to suppose that teachers will accept everything that ensures sustainability in their practices, and everything that risks this sustainability will not be involved in their present practices. Thus, old teaching practices will not be replaced with the new ones.

Nielsen et al. (2008) presents the experiences and the changes that teachers went through, during a two-year reform in writing-reading and professional development for a superior support.

Teachers reported the changes that occurred in the course of a continuity, moving from curriculum-based programs to student-centered practices, and then enhancement of collaboration between teachers, as well as teachers' requirements for policy changes.

As Fullan (2003) has stated, in the process of educational reforms the determination of the success depends on what teachers think and do in practice.

Factors Influencing the Application of Curricular Reform

The experiences of teachers in the application of new reforms are influenced by the surrounding factors. A possible ineffectiveness of educational reform application is generally accepted (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Smith & Lovat, 2003).

Factors that can help or obstruct the application of educational reform can be internal and external. Internal factors can be: *commitment, self-efficiency* and *motivation*. Whereas external factors can be: *management, professional collaboration, time* and *resources*.

These factors can be seen as contributing to the educational reform, but they can also be seen as reform obstacles or determinants of failure, in case there is absence of the above-mentioned features.

Teachers' commitment in the process of reform is an important element in the long-term application. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) provided a general definition of commitment as "a power (mindset) that connects an individual with ongoing actions that are considered necessary for the successful application of an initiative of change".

Smith and Lovat (2003) believe that teachers' commitment is essential for successful changes in schools. Teachers with greater commitment have more chances to succeed in significant changes in the classroom level, and perhaps they can have an impact in the whole system (Harris and Jones, 2010). The commitment of the teachers is important because committed teachers will be more motivated to give their best for their students/pupils, and this will lead them toward the achievement of school goals. Teachers' commitment is multidimensional. Teachers' individual commitment is supposed to be analyzed to identify centers of engagement in their professional practices. These centers of engagement, currently, are considered to be external for the teachers and they include the engagement toward school as an organization, engaging with students, career continuity and the teaching profession (Nias, 1981).

Swarnalatha (2016) denotes that the engagement of the teachers in their work is very important since they can face the continuous risk of self-consuming and an increasingly intensified working environment, if they do not have this emotional connection, that is to say, commitment.

Self-efficiency is important in every field. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficiency as "human judgements of certain abilities

to organize and apply courses of operation that are required to produce and attain information” which means that self-efficiency can be implied as an individual belief of what one can do successfully. Dellinger et al. (2008) interpreted teachers’ self-efficiency as teachers’ beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks, at a certain level of quality, in given situation.

Educational researches indicate that teachers with a greater sense of self-efficiency are more innovative and committed in their profession (they serve longer) (Harris & Jones, 2010). According to Bandura (1997) when teachers have a greater sense of self-efficiency, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of planning and organization, they are more open toward new ideas, more willing to experiment with new methods. They work more with students and intensify their efforts when their performance contradicts their purposes.

Motivation of teachers is important for the educational reforms. Motivated teachers are more likely to work for the educational reforms. The most important thing is that motivated teachers ensure an authentic application of reforms starting from the level of policymaking (Jesus, 1996).

Many studies find the motivation of teachers as an internal factor, interrelated to self-efficiency and commitment. Teachers’ commitment and self-confidence determine their motivation in their work.

Management during the reform period requires a set of particular capabilities. The creation of sustainable changes at school requires the ability to cooperate, shows responsibility and creates an engaging atmosphere at school (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Rational reform planning involves conceptual manuals as well as genuine leaders to give instructions and provide results. The most adequate person to deliver the

manuals and fulfill the requirements of curriculum management is the school principal.

The role of the director has changed recently. Requirements toward school principals and educational system have been elevated.

According to Olembo (1992), one of the most important roles of principals is the supervision of the curriculum application. Principals play a great role in the process of planning and adopting the curriculum, managing the classes, adjusting teaching programs and organizing activities outside the school. According to Marlow and Minehira (2006), the effective management of curriculum, through a proper presentation toward other teachers, is an accountability that belongs to the school principals. This means that the principals are not only responsible for the curriculum articulation of the schools and their objectives. They are responsible for the coordination, application, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. The establishment of a cooperative managing team, is very successful in the support of educational reforms (Gano-Phillips et al).

Principals must be well prepared with capabilities, expertise and good knowledge of the curriculum so that the application can happen. Taylor (2006) maintains that there are cases when school management is not quite skillful about the curriculum, this affects the teachers by failing to plan some aspects of the curriculum. Cardno (2003) notices that the role of the principals as leaders of the curriculum is wide-ranging and it requires dynamism. Therefore, they are expected to be co-coordinator, who continuously update their knowledge in the curriculum field, by involving relevant teaching methodologies. Principals should demonstrate a wide understanding of contemporary, effective teaching and learning approaches, by transmitting, ensuring and coordinating information about

ideas and recent approaches of the subjects, and evaluation strategies for the staff members. In general, principals must ensure a supportive environment, by orienting the teachers' work towards a professional direction, through progressive and advancing seminars and trainings. Meanwhile, they encourage innovation in class practices. During educational reforms, effective management encourages active participation, in the process of change. It can assist in the sustainability of reform initiatives over time, a field that is often problematic (Harris & Jones, 2010).

Professional learning communities. Collaboration between teachers managed by themselves, within a center, has been a key indication of effective educational environment that supports teachers' engagement in a meaningful change (Burgess, et al., 2010). The model of professional learning communities has been successfully demonstrated in building capacities to change the participants (Harris & Jones, 2010), by transforming their attitudes and beliefs (Burgess, et al., 2010), or serving as a network that supports the participants, expands their professional roles and perceived self-efficiency (Harris & Jones, 2010). All of this will lead to advancement of teachers efficiency who are facing reforms.

Rosenholtz (1989) indicates that the professional support through teachers' network, professional cooperation and the expansion of professional role improved teachers' efficiency and increased their effectiveness. Professional learning communities can stimulate and spread innovation in teaching and learning practices. They can increase professional collective and individual performance. Professional learning communities are groups of connected and engaged professionals, who trigger changes and improvements within and among schools. In this way students can benefit directly. The essential argument is that by fostering professional learning

communities, possibly, schools improve their students' outcomes through changing the teaching practices in the classroom (Hopkins, 2006).

Professional learning communities provide a very powerful way of teachers' engagement towards reflecting and refining their practices. Assuring improvements in numerous schools and classes is an indication of teachers' engagement in the process of change and their sense of possession regarding the results. Having reforms is not enough. There should be a basis of professional and practical changes to ensure that changes are happening.

Time and resources that are available during the change period will influence the abilities of the employees to accept the change. Burgess et al. (2010) found out that during the periods of change, time "is a continuous concern in every educational environment, where teachers try to find time for their professional development ... or engage themselves in the beginning phases of the initiative". According to Day et al. (2005), educational reforms are boosting the amount of time that teachers need to spend for administrative tasks. Literature resources are also an important part in the reform process, as they significantly affect the participants' work, moral and pleasure. According to Zeichner (2008), external factors, like limited resources, make the experiences of educational reforms more difficult and usually negative for teachers.

Generally, schools possess basic physical resources that support the application of the curriculum, including classes and teaching/learning materials (Shoba, 2009). Teaching/learning materials are predominantly fundamental for effective teaching, they are directly linked with the application of the curriculum. They help students achieve specific objectives on the content. Curriculum developers emphasize that there cannot be any teaching/learning program, applied effectively and adequately,

without adequate materials of teaching/learning. Likewise, Shiundu and Omulando (1992) agree that a new program requires adequate and relevant objects. Purchased physical objects and materials must be prepared before the implementation, in order to ensure successful program operation. Large-sized classes make learning difficult due to low financial funds; principals cannot hire more teachers to decrease the number of students/pupils per classes (Shoba, 2009). This results in poor and inadequate number of teachers for the application of the curriculum.

Research methodology

This research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, whereas interviews were done to attain qualitative data. The research sample was selected among teachers who had been subjects of reforms in three cities of Kosova:, Prishtina, Istog and Klina. There were 225 participants in total, where 220 were respondents of the questionnaire and 5 were interviewees. The selection of the sample was designed randomly, based in categories. Categorization is done on the basis of gender, age, residence and education. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. Questionnaires enabled the collection of the quantitative data on how teachers saw the new curricular reform, what were their perceptions about the changes that they went through and what factors influenced the implementation of the curriculum. The questionnaire was close-ended. The interviews were used to collect qualitative data. The nature of the interviews was semi-structured and they were done with 5 teachers, 3 from the Municipality of Pristina, 1 from Istog and 1 from Klina. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes, and were recorded in audio and transcript.

Descriptive, comparative and thematic analyses were used to analyze the data. Quantitative data attained from the questionnaires were analyzed through descriptive and comparative analysis (analysis of variance ANOVA). On the other hand, the thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected from the interviewees.

Research Results

Quantitative data analysis

220 teachers were participants of the quantitative data collection, according to the following distribution: 136 teachers from Pristina, 47 teachers from Istog and 37 teachers from Klina.

Regarding the respondents' age group, there were different ages involved. 28 teachers were between the ages 21-30, 55 teachers of the age 31-40, 72 teachers aged 41-50, 55 teachers were 51-60 years old, and 10 teachers above the age of 60.

Regarding the first sub-question of the research, "*How do teachers see the new curricular reform?*" the findings were as follows: responses to Question 6 reached the highest average with $M=4.03$, with a percentage of 44.5% who responded *strongly agree*; this constituted the highest percentage. It implies that teachers saw their work with the new curriculum as overwhelming and featured with a lot of administrative work.

To Question 8, $M=3.92$ or 34.5% responded *strongly agree*, which means that teachers perceive the new curriculum as more related to lesson plans than to their current teaching. To Question 10, $M=3.77$ or 25.9% responded *strongly agree*, if the curriculum is considered as a group of procedures that they must follow rather than a focus of adopting its elements within the context of a situation.

Responses with the lowest averages were found to Question 9 and 2. In Question 9 with $M=2.44$ or 25.5%, the highest percentage of *strongly disagree* responses means that teachers think that their thoughts and knowledge were not taken into account when the curriculum was designed. To Question 2, $M=2.92$ or 6.8% responded *strongly disagree*, which shows that teachers do not see the curriculum easy to apply.

Regarding the second sub-question of the research, “*What are the perceptions of the teachers about the changes that the new curriculum has brought on their work?*” the responses to Question 15 ($M=4.00$) were found to have the highest average, and also the highest percentage of *strongly agree* answers with 35.9%. This shows that teachers have less time for other activities, as a result of the work that needs to be done with the new curriculum. Responses to question 13 ($M=3.79$), with 31.4% responding *strongly agree*, indicate that teachers have become more collaborative as a result of the new curriculum.

Responses to Question 20 had the lowest averages with ($M=3.11$) 8.6% responding *strongly disagree*. It shows that the least of what they think is that the new curriculum increased students’ outcomes. In Question 11 ($M=3.23$), 5.9% strongly disagreed that the new curriculum changed their teaching practices.

Meanwhile, in the sub-question, “*Which are the advantageous and disadvantageous factors that teachers perceive as useful in the implementation process?*” the finding was that available resources for teachers were not sufficient and were considered as a disadvantage in the curriculum implementation process. While advantageous factors appear to be self-efficiency, motivation and cooperation among teachers.

Table 6: Factors that impact the implementation of the curricular reform

	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Commitment	220	4.2%	16.4%	25.2%	32.1%	22.1%	3.5152	.88236
Self- efficiency	220	1.7%	5.3%	14.2%	43.0%	36.8%		
Motivation	220						4.0989	.71485
Collaboration	220	1.4%	4.5%	19.8%	42.3%	32.0%	3.9894	.79979
Management	220	2.4%	8.8%	28.8%	35.5%	24.7%	3.7125	.85242
Time	220	4.1%	17.7%	49.5%	37.7%	37.7%	4.1182	.84109
Sources	220	30.9%	39.1%	22.7%	6.4%	0.9%	2.0727	.93349
Valid N								
Listwise	220							

In the responses to Question “Does age affect teachers’ perceptions of curricular reform?” the comparable analysis found that there were no significant differences highlighted between the ages of the teachers and their perceptions of the curriculum implementation.

Table 7: Differences between age groups about the conception of curricular reform

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.168	4	.292	.902	.464
Within Groups	69.602	215	.324		
Total	70.770	219			

Table 9: ANOVA about the factors that impact the implementation of the curriculum

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Commitment	Between groups	4.590	4	1.147	1.487	.207
	Within groups	165.915	215	.772		
	Total	170.505	219			
Self-efficiency and motivation	Between groups	2.341	4	.585	1.148	.335
	Within groups	109.571	215	.510		
	Total	111.912	219			
Collaboration	Between groups	4.027	4	1.007	1.591	.178
	Within groups	136.059	215	.633		
	Total	140.086	219			
Management	Between groups	3.457	4	.864	1.194	.315
	Within groups	155.671	215	.724		
	Total	159.128	219			
Time	Between groups	4.500	4	1.125	1.608	.173
	Within groups	150.428	215	.700		
	Total	154.927	219			
Resources	Between groups	4.523	4	1.131	1.305	.269
	Within groups	186.314	215	.867		
	Total	190.836	219			

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were taken from the semi-structured interview transcripts which were carried out with 5 teachers, 2 primary school teachers and a middle school teacher from Prishtina, a primary school teacher from Klina, and a middle school teacher from Istog. The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The results of the qualitative data are divided in three parts, they are associated with the sub-questions of the research. Three themes emerged from the first part “teachers and curricular reforms”

- Administrative reforms with overburdened teachers
- Challenging curriculum
- A designed document without involving teachers

Topic 1: *Administrative reforms with overburdened teachers.* One of the common perceptions of the teachers is that they consider the curricular reform is more oriented towards administrative issues, respectively focused on designing the lesson plans. They do not think that the curriculum brought new experiences; on the contrary, they declare that the new curriculum is taking too much of their time, by designing lesson plans that are seldom applied in the way teachers planned or foresaw them.

Topic 2: *Challenging curriculum.* At the beginning, all of the interviewed teachers talked about the incomprehensibility of the new curriculum when they faced it. They felt confused, about the things that the new curriculum was providing and what its importance was. They also considered that the curriculum was a misconstrued document and it was not presented very well by the trainers. This caused many difficulties in understanding it. At first, teachers had perceived the curriculum as agitating because of the changes that it brought in subject classes, in some field studies. They were preoccupied for the fact that they were facing something new and they were very concerned whether they could succeed.

Topic 3: *A document designed without involving teachers.* Teachers stated that the new curriculum was designed without taking into account their thoughts, knowledge and experiences. They were introduced with the new curriculum when it was already finalized, and no teacher was involved in the composition process.

Second part - these topics came out from the changes in teachers' work

- Enhancement of team collaboration
- Few changes in practice and results

Concerning the first topic, “*Enhancement of team collaboration*”, all of the interviewed teachers stated that there was an increase of collaboration between co-workers, particularly, within the professional subject groups. The new lesson planning methods (annual, two-month, weekly, daily lesson plans) as a result of the new curriculum, seemed to be the reason why teachers became more collaborative. This was considered to be a positive change in their work. Regarding the changes that had been made, teachers stated that they did not change their teaching practices, in fact, they remained faithful to their earlier approaches and methodologies applied in the classroom. They emphasized some slight changes that occurred dealing with daily lesson plans. When they were questioned if there were better learning outcomes, most of them responded negatively, and some did not have a fully clear statement. They assumed that this should be measured in a longer period of time, by external specialists. The change had raised awareness towards students about the new methods of evaluation, but not about their results.

The third part, “*Factors*”, concerns teachers’ perceptions about the advantageous and disadvantageous factors in the curriculum implementation process. The following topics came out:

- Team collaboration helped the application of the curriculum
- Lack of physical resources was an obstacle to the application of the curriculum

Teachers saw team collaboration as one of the factors that influenced the application of the curriculum positively. The lack of physical resources at school was apparently a disadvantageous factor. According to the teachers a genuine application of the curriculum requires the necessary and

appropriate equipment, such as technology and laboratory equipment, and allocation of space.

Conclusion

This research analyzed the perceptions that teachers have towards the new curricular reform in Kosovo, their perceptions about the changes that they experienced in their work as teachers, following the students/pupils' outcomes, and advantageous or disadvantageous factors in the curriculum.

In this research, the participating teachers see the curricular reform as more oriented towards administrative issues, most likely it does not bring new experience to their teaching. The curriculum is potentially a burden for teachers because it requires a lot of work on the new methods of lesson planning. According to the teachers this is the main thing that the new curriculum brought to them.

Little (2001) stated that understandings of the new curriculum are often a result of the way in which they are presented. In most cases there is a traditional approach: teachers are given a prepared product and a group of procedures that they must follow. It is apparent that the curriculum was presented to the teachers in its finalized version. Teachers' thoughts and experiences were not taken into account, they simply had to apply it, with or without their consent. For many reasons, teachers perceive the curriculum as a superficial change, mainly focused on designing lesson plans and new procedures to follow.

The methods in which the reform was presented, created confusion everywhere because it was inexplicable and not interpreted well by the trainers during the preparation phase for the new curriculum. There was a need for a detailed

explanation, which was why the application was not easy for teachers.

When reforms are presented, a consideration of the methods used to transmit the information needs to be taken into account because it leads them to build their perceptions and approaches towards it. The reform was perceived as hard to apply, inexplicable, preoccupying and superficial, that it does not bring new experiences and is not quite promising for a greater engagement towards applying it as it was planned in the written documents.

Stikes (1992) suggests that when there is an educational change, teachers change their ideas and practices only if the latter seem suitable and useful for their teaching. It is evident from the study that teachers do not see the curriculum as useful because it did not bring better learning outcomes. It has not changed the content or their teaching practices, they continue to approach the same way as before in relation to their students and other aspects of teaching.

According to Fullan and Stegelbauer (1991) it is less likely for teachers to modify their teaching practices without changing their values and beliefs. Thus, teachers' positive beliefs and perceptions of the curricular reform are a prerequisite for a genuine application of the curriculum. By believing that the new curriculum is not appropriate or useful, and is more focused on administrative work, and is burdensome to teachers, teaching practices will not change in the classroom.

The positive impact that the curriculum has brought to the teachers is the enhancement of team collaboration. Collaboration between teachers has surpassed the initial difficulties that teachers faced. This collaboration comes as a result of the new curriculum requirements, but in practice it is more focused on designing mutual lesson plans. Prior to that, lesson plans were made individually.

The research shows that collaboration between teachers is perceived as one of the main factors that constructively influences the implementation of the curriculum. Team collaboration enables a mutual understanding about the curriculum, it incapacitates teachers' individual interpretations, and generates coordinated learning outcomes, within and among the curricular fields.

The lack of physical resources and teacher's available time, are perceived as disadvantageous factors. According to Zeichner (2008) external factors like limited resources make the experiences of educational reform difficult and mostly negative for teachers. The lack of the appropriate school infrastructure, including lack of textbooks that meet the demands of the new curriculum, affect the implementation process of the curriculum.

When new reforms are planned, there is a must to prepare the physical areas and necessary materials to ensure successful operation, before its implementation.

Burgess et al. (2010) assert that during the changing periods, time is a continuous preoccupation for teachers. The research found that the new demands for lesson plans are perceived as very complex, tiring and time consuming. Excessive lesson plans, for instance, annual, two-month, weekly and daily plans are taking too much of teachers' time. Probably they could use that time for other class activities, or for their professional development.

Recommendations

From the perceptions that teachers showed about the curriculum in this research, it is recommended that:

- Reformers must ensure that the educational reforms will involve teachers in the designing and planning process,

since they represent the actuality of the educational system and the primary needs that are essential for teaching practices.

- Teachers have to be supported constantly in the process for the application of the educational reform, particularly at its initial phase
- Before decisions are made for a new curricular design, developers should take more into consideration the schooling system reality and practice, such as lack of materials, and other limitations.

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