

REPORT ON CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

MUNICIPALITY: GJILAN

DATE: FRIDAY 4 JUNE 2010

VENUES: MED AND SCHOOL

TIME: 1100-1500

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FOR MEST: RAMUSH LEKAJ; PROFESSOR SABRI TAHIRI

SUMMARY

- Four sessions, two morning (MED, directors, professors, parents and primary teachers) and two afternoon (lower and upper secondary teachers)
- Main concerns of participants: lack of information and preparation for meeting; system capacity to meet KCF targets; speed of change; weak school infrastructure; extended school year; English from G1; teaching of integrated subjects and loss of teaching jobs; overloaded textbooks with errors; lack of advisory support; lack of identification of individual student needs on entry; lack of textbooks and practical work opportunities for VET students

Recommendations

- Raise public awareness of availability of KCF on MEST website
- Link meetings to media campaign (started?)
- Make materials available well in advance with agenda for meetings
- Especially with teachers use interactive approach and group work (e.g. discuss and respond to key points in KCF leaflet) to replicate the kind of approach the KCF wants to encourage with students
- Clarify role of EU SWAp observers

1 MORNING SESSION: MED, SCHOOL DIRECTORS, PROFESSORS

VENUE: MED OFFICE

NUMBERS: 26 (2 women = 8%)

INFORMATION SUPPLIED: KCF LEAFLET

INTRODUCTION

Cramped room in MED. Arrived after PowerPoint presentation of KCF had finished despite being on time according to the information supplied by MEST. Mixed audience of MED staff, professors, parents' council, school directors, private sector). No Serbian speakers or obvious minority attendance. All participants had a leaflet. Interruptions by mobile phones, people coming and going. Numbers reduced by the end of the session.

Nine people (35%) spoke (including one of the two women).

Duration: 1100-1245 (but had started earlier)

FORMAT

Presentation of key points in leaflet by Professor Sabri and responses after each question. DR spoke briefly on the Project at the end. Gave out Project leaflets.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Extended school year: after June too hot (Albania schools start in mid-September); for two months school starts before sunrise; also end after 7pm; windows blacked out because of sun
- Previous reforms done, took time and cost money: 22 people trained in developed countries formed curriculum team
- Problems not with content but implementation and decentralisation: schools affected by politics; authors connected to high officials; law not effective; does KCF prevent political interference?
- KCF materials received too late

- Need to learn from last 10 years
- English at G1 too much for students plus Albanian; lack of teachers
- Pre-primary grade inclusion is a good idea
- European goals/targets important
- G13 removal: how many classes affected? Need to retain teachers.
- Importance of integrated sociology
- Integrated science a bad idea: separate subjects more effective; what happens to teachers (afraid of job losses)?
- No methodology or other support for schools and teachers as in other European countries I (loss of pedagogues)
- VET issues: no textbooks, lack of practical opportunities/need to create conditions for practical work; need to monitor pilot phase; personal interests may hinder reform; CPD important and giving students orientation to make better choices of profession
- Space in schools limited
- EU goals recognised but KCF implementation too fast
- Optional subjects??
- Parents: what model was KCF based on? Budget and infrastructure implications taken into account? More practical work in VET; more physical education; teachers to be evaluated by students; use common tests for all schools; test evaluates teaching.
- Use e-learning (private school owner who has sent proposal to MEST); possible to link to KCF targets; e-learning important for future of Kosovo and its competitiveness
- Pre-primary 'centres' for subjects; adapt idea for higher grades
- Prepare teachers for piloting and integrated teaching
- Need to invest more in the system; danger of repeating past mistakes; improve teaching and learning environment; students have better facilities at home including computers;

MAIN MEST RESPONSES

- Pilot in seven municipalities – the best schools
- Pre-primary important: children have ability to learn two languages at the same time; importance of English globally
- integrated subjects to reduce subject load
- G12 opportunities to go to university or non-tertiary VET
- KCF envisages six outcomes/type of learner
- Parents want fewer subjects; irrelevant topics to be excluded
- Phased implementation plan: piloting 2011 then all schools by 2014
- Schools have autonomy **AND** responsibility
- KCF includes PE and health learning area; PE weak for last 20 years

- Team teaching of integrated sciences and humanities possible
- Plan to support teachers and mentor; not planned to sack teachers: integrated subjects will be delivered in modules
- Not enough alternative textbooks
- Schools not monitored in the past; supervising/monitoring foreseen
- Overcrowded schools as a result of migration/immigration
- 45 students per class: bigger than other European countries; two shifts only from September 2010
- KCF needs to be politically neutral; decentralisation means autonomy but also responsibility
- Outcomes need to be seen over longer term; 2001 Curriculum needed updating after 9 years; some of the same people involved

2 AFTERNOON SESSION: LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY TEACHERS

VENUE: SCHOOL CLASSROOM

NUMBERS: 25 (11 women = 40%)

INFORMATION SUPPLIED: only two visibly referring to the leaflet

INTRODUCTION

Teachers sitting in rows in bare classroom; few with any paper or notebooks. Nine speakers (40 %), three women (12 %)

Duration: 2 hours

FORMAT

Presentation of leaflet content by Professor Sabri. KCF on MEST website: responses by email by 30 June. DR introduced project (gave out leaflets, pens; donated notebooks to school director)

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Unprepared for the meeting; more discussion needed
- English at G1 not a good idea: mother tongue first then foreign languages; risk to national identity

- Pre-primary: need to implement law on free transport for children more than 3km away
- Extended school year is a problem as weather is too hot.
- Impact of IS on teachers? Fears about jobs
- Lack of (economic) motivation to use new methodologies
- 14 subjects reduced to 7/8: what about teachers with 25 years' experience? Not enough qualified teachers for maths and science.
- Kosovo should look to regional comparisons first then European; may be too ambitious.
- Requalification of teachers expensive but necessary
- Pre-primary grade a good idea
- Jumps rather than steps may mean we miss the horse altogether!
- Capacity?
- No pedagogues; students not classified on entry and special needs identified
- Need 6-7 class a week for Albanian; textbooks have errors
- Too many students in classes: 45
- Minimum conditions lacking for 40-week teaching year
- Build on previous training under other projects; very ambitious but need to make a start
- Need more emphasis on economics; physics and chemistry a priority
- Textbooks a major problem: were supposed to be simplified/clarified but opposite happened: more complex and information overload; must be more attractive to students and usable
- Currently G9 repeats G7-8 and is too theoretical; G5 use of one teacher successful (was G1-04)? G9/10-12 sequencing better.
- Motivate teachers and make it attractive 'economically'
- VET: more opportunities needed for professional orientation in G9

MAIN MEST RESPONSES

- English: discussed by 24 professors in State Council; research indicates it's possible
- Pre-primary: intention to use private sector accommodation
- Extended school year: weather factored into decision.
- Don't be afraid of moving too fast: system not perfect; textbooks an issue (maths written by one author for whole system who doesn't have methodology training; all books will be reviewed against KCF with SWAp support; there will be a choice of books and flexibility
- IS team teaching until enough qualified teachers

- Aim to increase prestige of teaching as a career