

The implementation of Kosovo Curricula regarding the English Language Teaching

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Abstract

According to Kosovo Curricula one of the key competencies that students should possess during the pre-university education is communication competence by which the student is considered as an effective communicator. The main objectives of Kosovo Curriculum are: Students should be challenged to master the English language correctly in different situations of communication through writing as well as speaking. Kosovo Curriculum mentions problems such as the lack of qualified teachers. Our opinion is that English teachers may be less qualified teachers' compared to others. It is also said that the methods that need to be used by the teachers are CLT and Task-based learning. However, in the field it was seen that there is a lack of implementation of these two methods. Communicative Language Teaching, often considered the methodological foreign language teaching approach of the 21st century, has recently gained prominence in Kosovo secondary education curricula. While, the efficacy of this approach has shown several advantages in comparison to other standard methods. However, this method's implementation has not yet been empirically proven in the Kosovo context.

The research was based on three regions Prishtina, Fushë Kosova and Lipjan. Observation method was used in order to gain data about the teachers' qualification, the method used, and implementation of Kosovo Curriculum.

Keywords: *Component; Communicative Language Teaching Method; Teaching; Kosovo Curriculum;*

Introduction

A significant number of public school students continue to gain knowledge of English languages, at private school of foreign language courses. So, it was obvious that we should make a research about what makes these students obtain knowledge in private schools when the same knowledge, based on Kosovo curriculum, should be taken in their public schools.

Teachers can use the curriculum to run it right into material selection and preparation of a syllabus in detail to achieve its goals towards a better performance of their students. However, the question arises how to make Kosovo curriculum impendent in our public schools these days?

Therefore, it was necessary to investigate the theoretical aspect regarding curricula, in particular Kosovo curriculum of English language. Moreover, it was done a literature review about the Communicative Language Teaching as well.

Furthermore, we implemented the instrument regarding the class observation and at the same time we interviewed foreign English teachers to have a better understanding of the ongoing situation which had to do with teachers' qualification and implementation of Kosovo curriculum regarding the students' learning and their performance.

Kosovo Curriculum

The curriculum is a dynamic system of interrelated and overlapping processes. Three main Curriculum processes are: planning, implementing, and the evaluating performance. All these variables are implemented by people and can result in a variety of curriculum products such as syllabi, curricula and assessment instruments (Mariane Celce-Murcia, Donna M. Brinton & Marguerite Ann Snow, 2014, p. 49).

Communication Competencies according to Kosovo Curriculum Framework

The competences according to Kosovo Curriculum Framework are derived from the goals of the pre-university education and determine key learning outcomes, which should be achieved by the students in a progressive and sustainable way during the pre-university education system (Ministry of Education, 2011).

One of the key competencies that students must possess during the pre-university education is communication through foreign languages as well as students' reflexion as effective communicators (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Competence of communication and reflexion (effective communicator) means that children and youth should be developed as personalities, learn and participate actively in society. It is important to understand the messages that are addressed adequately and expressed through languages, symbols, signs, codes and artistic forms. To communicate effectively, students are encouraged to use independent critical and creative tools as well as possibilities of communication and expression.

At first glance it seems that Kosovo Curriculum fits more with the critical theory, where the curriculum supports socio-educational transformation as lessons enhance student-teacher interaction where the teacher prepares his students for activities outside the classroom. Kosovo curriculum foresees how students should be equipped with the knowledge in order to be able to cope successfully with the various challenges of everyday life reality.

On the other hand, holistic theory, states that there should be negotiations between teachers, students and the environment. The main objectives are: students should be challenged to master the English language correctly in different situations of communication through writing as well as speaking. They should be challenged with oral and textual messages of medium or high degree of difficulty. Students should be able to communicate effectively in English while demonstrating fluency, correctness and clarity in their written and spoken messages.

The curriculum says that the acquisition of the English language will enable students to be in close contact with the culture and traditions of other nations, to have an easy access in information and to exchange the information at an international level. It will help them to cope successfully with the challenges of communicating through the computer as well as e-learning.

Kosovo Curriculum concerning teaching methods

Studying the curriculum of Kosovo, respectively the tenth grade curriculum, we noticed that it puts emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) and (Task - Based Learning). The idea of using these two methods was, to teach students communication in a more successful way.

These two teaching methods are related to *laisser-faire* curriculum, where the student is independent to communicate and select the topic or situation to speak, but at the same time, it is linked with the curriculum of critical theory, curriculum which gives a special emphasis on learning a language in order to use the knowledge in situations outside school, either in the neighbourhood or in situations such as the airport, restaurant, boulevard, street, or in remote places.

Since communication essentially means sending and receiving messages, students must develop four language skills, which are the essential part of communication. Development of receptive skills such as listening and reading ability, will enable students to receive messages and depending on the tasks to fulfil and select essential information.

Language skills do not occur in an isolated way, but are usually integrated for communication purposes. Once students have received a message, they should be able to make decisions to respond adequately. In a situation that involves language, their answer is a communicative function, which is performed by one of the reproductive capabilities, or through the skill of speaking or writing (Ministria e Arsimit, <http://www.masht-gov.net>, 2011).

Research Methodology

The research question that guides this article regards the extension of Kosovo curriculum implementation in public schools of Kosovo.

In order to answer this question, we used an observation method, which allowed the observation of the implementation of CLT and Learning by Doing in classrooms. As stated earlier in this article, these are the two compulsory methods that teachers have to employ in a foreign language teaching according to Kosovo curriculum.

The study was conducted in the school "Hivzi Sylejmani" localized in an urbanized locale of Fushë Kosova, "Ulpijana" school in the rural periphery of Gadime-Lypjan, as well as "Luarasi" school in Prishtina.

At the same time we gained data about the qualification of English language teachers from the Ministry of Education and three respective over mentioned Municipalities, furthermore, we interviewed American teachers working in Kosovo and local Albanian teachers.

Results

The impact of teachers' qualification in the use of interactive communicative methods and the quality of English language acquisition by students?

The data gathered from the class survey

The survey conducted in tenth grades had to do with some very important elements that also play a primary role in the performance of students. These elements are: qualification of teachers, methods, techniques and tools used in teaching, the number of students in class and their motivation to learn English. However, this article talks more about the teachers' qualification and the methods, techniques and tools used in teaching.

Before we give some information about each class and teachers in particular, we will give a very important statistic in terms of qualified teachers. From 2892 English teachers throughout the Republic of Kosovo,

only 1266 are qualified; these data in percentage would be 43.78%. On the other hand, the data show that unqualified teachers in the English language course are 1578 or about 55%, and the remaining 39 teachers or 1:35% are those who have not declared their qualification (Makolli, English Language Teachers according to Kosovo Municipalities, 2014).

In the municipality of Prishtina from 37 high school teachers, 22 of them have completed Master of English Language and Literature, 5 teachers have completed Bachelor of English language, which are not recognized as qualified, according to this statistic and 9 teachers are not declared for the level of their education (Nagavci, 2016).

Lipljan municipality has a total of 8 teachers. Of the total number, only 3 is the number of qualified teachers with Master Degree, and the rest 5 have completed Bachelor Degree so according to MEST are not considered as qualified teachers (Hasani, 2016).

Municipality of Fushë Kosova counts only 5 teachers of English language. According to the Department of Education of this region, all teachers are qualified, even though they graduated in Bachelor. However, Ministry of Education refers as qualified teachers only to those who have graduated in Master. So it appears that Fushë Kosova municipality has only one qualified teachers and 4 other teachers who completed Bachelor, are not considered as qualified (Shabani, 2016).

This is a significantly negative indicator in terms of the quality of English language teaching for Kosovo schools, which has a direct impact on students' performance. To confirm these data, at the same time we also used our data are based on results obtained from the survey conducted in schools, which shows almost the same situation. From three schools observed during our research, four teachers were observed. From four observed teachers; only one was qualified for the English language. One was a student of English and had same experience in teaching, and the other two teachers were not qualified as English language teachers but had qualification for branches such as economy and chemistry.

Graf.1. MEST statistics on the percentage of qualified English language teachers at the national level (Makolli, English Language Teachers according to Kosovo Municipalities, 2014).

Teachers

We will show some quality data about teachers and teaching for the observed classes such as: grammar instruction in the class, lesson plan, methods applied in teaching, basic techniques used in class, language

English used by teachers and their professional preparation, and teacher-student as well as student-student interaction.

Grammar instructions: Grammar instructions and patterns presented are relatively good. Corrections of grammatical mistakes were immediate.

Lesson Plan: Standards of content defined in the lesson plan were poor; standards of content defined for every activity were relatively good and related to the presented content. However, there were no clear objectives on how students demonstrate their achievements as indicators of performance. Furthermore they did not keep records documenting the presentation of learning and students' achievement.

The methods applied in teaching preparation: the methods of language introduction are not identifiable in the lesson plan or diary, as well as during the lesson presentation. However, it is obvious that the method used is ESA (Engage - Study - Activate) as a leading and dominant method, as this is the method which is applied to the syllabus and Headway Pre-intermediate text books, used by all tenth grade teachers, following the directive of the MEST.

Basic techniques used in the classroom: The teacher starts the class on time, takes student absences, and continues giving instructions, there is no prepared and facilitator material, except the use of the course books. The teacher does not listen properly to the students responses does not have a satisfactory relationship with students. However, the teacher has a satisfactory flow of thing throughout the class. There s not much working atmosphere in the classroom, and also no introduction or engagement at the beginning of class. There is a lacks diversity / variety of classroom activities. Projectors and CD player are missing to develop audio-visual exercises, so students can not develop the skills of listening and speaking. We realized that the only skill developed in class is reading, continuing with subsequent exercises dealing with this skill and then turn and work with grammar exercises. Moreover, there was lack of writing, creativity, speech and negotiation. Only the use of blackboard was done properly.

English language teachers and their professionalism: English language level of teachers pleases the Pre- intermediate level, with some shortcomings in terms of grammatical accuracy during teaching. Teachers' pronunciation and intonation satisfactory, and also the level of English was appropriate for the level of teaching. The teachers also speak clearly and audibly for the entire class. They are punctual at the beginning, as well as at closing of the lesson. Teachers look, demeanour, confident, authority and professional distance is fine, but respect for students is not at the right level.

Teacher-student and student-student interaction: teacher does not encourage interaction between students and teachers as well as among students themselves to use target language, which in our case is English. Also, there were no activities with the student in the centre, but there was a frontal teaching where the teacher talks and the students listen. This way of teaching makes us think that the teacher uses direct method with the theory of behaviourism that is inconsistent with the Kosovo curriculum, which encourages teachers to use constructivist approach to teaching. Contextualization and personification of material is not possible and the teacher does not have a strategy to correct mistakes. There is not an appropriate student-teacher and student-student relationship and there is no encouragement for active participation of students in the class. On the other hand, the enthusiasm, eye contact, humour, body language and competence to respond to students are in the right level. However, the teachers do not perceive the lack of learners understanding so do not help their students interaction.

Data gathered from the Teachers' Interview in terms of their qualifications

Regarding the teachers qualification, it emerged that there were fewer qualified teachers in rural regions compared to those of urban areas. Also, we noticed that older teachers were those who had more problems regarding the use of communicative methods and the use of modern techniques and tools.

However, almost all teachers stated that it was necessary to intervene in class infrastructure and facilities to have a convenience and better quality teaching.

Only 30% of teachers had heard about the communicative method and only 15% were aware of the use of this method in practice.

All teachers declared that they use the text books "Headway" during their teaching, but were not aware about what method should be used with those textbooks.

Almost all teachers said that they did not use any additional materials in their teaching and according to them textbooks had enough material for teaching. Moreover, they added that it was impossible to apply the whole syllabus, as they do not have enough time to cover all the material in their teaching textbooks.

In a question directed to the American teacher Cassandra Ganzak about the English language level of our local teachers in the schools of Prizren region, she stated that there were cases when some students were more

fluent as well as grammatically more correct than some teachers. She also added that she was not satisfied with the level of teaching as well as teachers, over the age of 50 and, according to her; over 50% of teachers were not willing to be teachers of Pre-Intermediate level.

Regarding the teaching methods used in schools in Prizren, she said that since the teachers used "Headway" textbooks it was evident the use of ESA the method. Teachers do not use other materials outside the classroom, except the textbooks. However, according to her, of course the use of books was not enough to have a quality teaching (Ganzak, 2015).

On the other hand, Keisy Keane stated that the method used in schools in the location of Mitrovica was Grammar Translation Method (Keane, 2015). About the number of students in the class, Ms. Keane said that classes were not overloaded with students. So classes did not have more than 24 students per class. She added that in Mitrovica, teachers use only "Headway - Pre-Intermediate" textbooks and that there was no material brought from outside, which means that teaching was not very attractive for the students.

Conclusions

We concluded that Kosovo Curriculum was hardly implemented in the Republic of Kosovo on the grounds of several factors: The first factor is the lack of qualified teachers, which means that they have little or no knowledge regarding Kosovo Curriculum.

The second factor which needs to be mentioned is the use of 'Headway' textbooks which are designed with ESA syllabus.

The last factor is the lack of infrastructure, environment and tools for the implementation of CLT and Task-based learning.

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