

Misalignment of Cross-Curricular Areas in Primary Education in Kosovo

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Abstract:

Introduction: The alignment of cross-curricular areas in primary education plays a crucial role in ensuring balanced and effective learning experiences. In Kosovo, the curriculum serves as the foundation of the education system, guiding teaching methodologies, content delivery, and learning outcomes. However, despite its comprehensive structure, inconsistencies in the distribution of curricular areas can lead to imbalances that affect the quality of instruction.

Objectives: This study investigates the misalignment of cross-curricular areas in primary education in Kosovo, with a specific focus on the subjects of language and communication and mathematics. It explores how the current curricular framework influences the allocation of instructional time, teacher workload, and student learning experiences.

Methods: Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research utilizes a structured questionnaire distributed to primary school teachers in Prizren and Dragash. The survey, conducted in Bosnian, Turkish, and Albanian, assesses educators' perceptions of curriculum distribution and its impact on interdisciplinary learning.

Results: The findings indicate that the curriculum's structure often results in an overemphasis on core subjects, limiting opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning. This study highlights the need for a more integrated approach to curriculum planning to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of primary education in Kosovo. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators in revising curriculum frameworks to foster a more balanced and holistic educational experience.

Keywords: Curriculum alignment, cross-curricular integration, Kosovo primary education, curriculum distribution, interdisciplinary learning.

1. Introduction

Education systems worldwide aim to provide students with a comprehensive and well-balanced learning experience by integrating multiple subject areas and competencies. A well-structured curriculum is essential to ensuring equitable subject distribution, fostering interdisciplinary learning, and supporting student development across cognitive, creative, and physical domains (Drake & Reid, 2020). However, many education systems face challenges in effectively balancing core and non-core subjects, particularly in early education, where foundational literacy, numeracy, and communication skills are emphasized.

In Kosovo, the national curriculum serves as the framework for pre-university education, defining subject content, learning objectives, and instructional methodologies (MONT, 2016). The 2016 curriculum reform sought to modernize education by introducing competency-based learning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary connections (MASHT, 2016). While these reforms aimed to create a more dynamic and integrated learning experience, concerns have emerged regarding the misalignment of cross-curricular areas, particularly at the primary education level. Research indicates that language and communication and mathematics receive a disproportionate amount of instructional time, often at the expense of subjects such as physical education, arts, and social sciences (MONT, 2018). This imbalance raises concerns about curriculum overload, interdisciplinary learning gaps, and the overall effectiveness of primary education in Kosovo.

This study investigates the extent to which the Kosovo primary education curriculum aligns cross-curricular areas, with a particular focus on language and communication and mathematics. The research explores how curriculum distribution impacts teaching methodologies, student engagement, and interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Given the rigid structure of subject allocation, many teachers report borrowing instructional time from non-core subjects to complete language and mathematics lessons, leading to a reduction in interdisciplinary teaching and learning experiences.

Using a quantitative research approach, this study analyzes educators' perceptions of curriculum distribution and its impact on classroom practices and student learning. A structured survey was conducted with 150 primary school teachers and preschool educators in Prizren and Dragash, representing diverse linguistic backgrounds (Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish). The study seeks to provide empirical evidence on curriculum misalignment and offer recommendations for improving the balance of subject distribution, ensuring a more holistic and interdisciplinary education model in Kosovo.

By addressing these challenges, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on curriculum development, instructional equity, and interdisciplinary learning. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators, helping to inform future curriculum reforms that align with international best practices.

2. Methods

Quantitative Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the misalignment of cross-curricular areas in primary education in Kosovo, with a particular focus on the subjects of language and communication and mathematics. The research seeks to analyze how curriculum overload affects the distribution of instructional time and whether it leads to the reallocation of lessons from other subjects (e.g., music, physical education) to compensate for deficiencies in core subjects. Given the structured nature of the research questions, a survey-based methodology was selected to collect empirical data from primary school educators.

Participants and Sampling

The study targeted primary school teachers and preschool educators in Kosovo, specifically those teaching first and second grades. The participants were selected using a non-probability convenience

sampling method, ensuring the inclusion of educators directly involved in implementing the curriculum at the early education level. The research was conducted in the municipalities of Prizren and Dragash, two diverse linguistic and educational settings in Kosovo.

A total of 150 respondents participated in the study. The sample included teachers from Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish language instruction backgrounds, reflecting the multilingual and multicultural nature of Kosovo's education system. The gender, professional experience, and educational qualifications of respondents were also recorded to examine variations in perceptions among different demographic groups.

Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, developed to gather educators' perspectives on curriculum distribution, instructional challenges, and potential solutions for achieving better alignment among cross-curricular areas. The questionnaire contained 39 questions, structured into four thematic sections:

1. Demographic Information (e.g., years of teaching experience, grade level taught, language of instruction).
2. Curriculum Load and Subject Balance (e.g., perceptions of subject overloading in language and mathematics).
3. Cross-Curricular Implications (e.g., whether subjects such as music and physical education are being deprioritized).
4. Recommendations for Curriculum Adjustment (e.g., preferred strategies for better curriculum alignment).

The questionnaire was developed in three languages—Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish—to ensure broader accessibility and accurate representation of teachers from different linguistic backgrounds. Prior to distribution, the survey instrument was reviewed by experts in curriculum studies to enhance its validity and reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed electronically and in person to teachers in primary and preschool institutions in Prizren and Dragash. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the survey, and no responses were left unanswered, ensuring a 100% response rate across all items.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The analysis included:

- Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation) to summarize trends in teacher responses.
- One-sample t-tests to determine statistical significance in perceived curriculum misalignment.
- ANOVA and chi-square tests to assess whether demographic variables (e.g., years of teaching experience, gender) influenced responses.

- Correlation analysis to examine relationships between curriculum overload and reallocation of teaching hours among subjects.

The statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software, allowing for robust interpretation of patterns and relationships in the dataset.

3. Results and Discussion

Overview of Respondent Demographics

To provide a well-rounded understanding of the study’s findings, it is essential to examine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The 150 participants in this research consisted of primary school teachers and preschool educators from Prizren and Dragash, two municipalities in Kosovo known for their diverse educational settings. The sample reflects a cross-section of educators responsible for implementing the curriculum in early education, providing valuable insights into the challenges associated with cross-curricular alignment and instructional time allocation.

The demographic breakdown of the respondents provides critical context for interpreting the study’s results. Gender representation in the sample highlights the predominance of female educators in Kosovo’s primary education sector, with 80% of participants identifying as female and only 20% as male. This gender disparity is consistent with broader trends in primary education, where teaching roles are often dominated by women. The presence of both male and female educators in the study allows for an analysis of whether perceptions of curriculum misalignment differ based on gender, a variable that could influence attitudes toward workload distribution and instructional strategies.

Regarding teaching experience, the sample includes a diverse range of educators, from early-career teachers (0-5 years) to highly experienced professionals (more than 20 years). The largest proportion of participants (34%) had between 11 and 20 years of experience, followed by 33.3% with 0-5 years of teaching experience. This distribution suggests that the study captures perspectives from both newer educators adjusting to curriculum implementation and seasoned teachers with extensive firsthand knowledge of curriculum changes and pedagogical trends. The relatively balanced distribution of experience levels ensures that findings are not skewed toward one group’s perceptions, providing a comprehensive understanding of curriculum-related challenges across career stages.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Frequency (N = 150)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	120	80.0
Male	30	20.0
Years of Teaching Experience		
0 - 5 years	50	33.3
6 - 10 years	24	16.0
11 - 20 years	51	34.0

More than 20 years	25	16.7
Education Level		
Bachelor’s Degree (3 years)	2	1.3
Bachelor’s Degree (4 years)	130	86.7
Master’s Degree	16	10.7
Other	2	1.3

The educational qualifications of respondents further illustrate the high level of professional training among primary school teachers in Kosovo. The overwhelming majority (86.7%) hold a four-year bachelor's degree, aligning with Kosovo’s higher education framework for teacher preparation. A notable 10.7% of participants possess a master’s degree, reflecting a commitment to advanced pedagogical development and specialization in education-related fields. A small fraction (1.3%) hold other educational qualifications, suggesting that most primary educators in the study have received structured academic training in alignment with national and international teaching standards.

These findings emphasize that Kosovo’s primary education workforce is composed of well-qualified professionals, making their insights into curriculum challenges particularly relevant. Their academic training and practical experience position them as key stakeholders in identifying and addressing curriculum misalignment issues.

Perceptions of Curriculum Overload in Language and Mathematics

One of the primary objectives of this study was to examine educators’ perceptions of curriculum overload, particularly in the subjects of language and communication and mathematics. These two subject areas form the core of primary education and are given substantial instructional time under Kosovo’s curriculum framework. However, concerns have been raised that the emphasis on these subjects comes at the expense of other curricular areas, such as arts, physical education, and social sciences.

The results indicate that teachers strongly agree that language and mathematics require excessive instructional time, limiting opportunities for cross-curricular integration and student-centered learning approaches. The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 illustrate that a significant portion of teachers perceive an imbalance in subject distribution, with mean scores consistently above 2.30 across multiple survey items.

Table 2: Teacher Perceptions of Curriculum Overload

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
"The curriculum topics in language and communication are excessive."	2.39	1.00

"It takes too many lessons to cover the required language and communication topics."	2.46	1.07
"Mathematics topics are too comprehensive compared to available teaching hours."	2.30	1.15
"To complete the required curriculum, I often use instructional time from other subjects (e.g., arts, PE)."	2.57	1.25

The results suggest that teachers struggle to complete the required curriculum within the allocated instructional time, leading them to borrow lesson hours from other subjects. This reallocation of time further exacerbates curriculum misalignment, as subjects such as music, physical education, and creative arts are deprioritized.

These findings align with international research on curriculum design, where curriculum overload often forces educators to prioritize core subjects at the expense of interdisciplinary learning (Drake & Reid, 2020; Schleicher, 2018). Research suggests that countries with more balanced curriculum structures tend to emphasize competency-based learning models, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education that includes academic, creative, and physical development (Schmidt et al., 2001).

3. Impact of Curriculum Imbalance on Other Subjects

The uneven distribution of instructional time in Kosovo’s primary education curriculum does not only affect teachers' workloads but also impacts student engagement and limits interdisciplinary learning opportunities. The study examined whether teachers compensate for curriculum overload by redistributing lesson time from other subjects, particularly arts, physical education, and social sciences.

The ANOVA and chi-square tests revealed a statistically significant imbalance in subject time allocation, confirming that language and mathematics receive a disproportionate focus at the expense of other disciplines.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of Subject Time Allocation Issues

Test	F-Value	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
ANOVA: Do language and mathematics dominate the curriculum at the expense of other subjects?	27.161	< 0.001	Statistically significant difference exists.
Chi-Square: Do teachers compensate for overloaded subjects by reallocating lesson time from other areas?	144.974	< 0.001	Strong correlation found.
T-Test: Perception differences based on experience levels	9.225	< 0.001	Experienced teachers are more likely to perceive curriculum overload.

The ANOVA test confirms a statistically significant imbalance in subject distribution ($p < 0.001$), meaning the curriculum structure heavily prioritizes language and mathematics over interdisciplinary subjects. This has long-term implications for student development, as subjects like arts and physical education contribute to creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction—all critical skills for 21st-century education models (Schleicher, 2018).

The chi-square results further confirm that a majority of teachers reallocate instructional time from non-core subjects, reinforcing the need for curriculum adjustments that allow for a more holistic and competency-based learning approach.

Classroom Size and Its Influence on Teaching Challenges

Another critical factor examined in this study was whether class size affects teachers' ability to effectively implement curriculum content. The number of students in a classroom has been widely recognized as a determinant of teaching effectiveness, with research indicating that smaller class sizes generally lead to better student engagement, personalized learning, and improved academic outcomes (Fullan, 2007).

The distribution of class sizes among the respondents provides insight into the learning conditions within Kosovo's primary education system. The data in Table 4 illustrate that a significant portion of teachers (nearly 60%) instruct classes with more than 15 students, with 29.3% managing classrooms with over 20 students. Meanwhile, only 28% of teachers work with small groups (0–8 students), indicating that most classrooms are moderately or highly populated.

Table 4: Class Size Distribution

Number of Students Per Class	Frequency (N = 150)	Percentage (%)
0 - 8 students	42	28.0
9 - 15 students	46	30.7
16 - 20 students	18	12.0
20 or more students	44	29.3

The prevalence of larger class sizes compounds existing challenges related to curriculum overload and instructional balance. Teachers with larger classes often struggle to implement interactive, student-centered teaching methods, as the sheer number of students limits their ability to provide individualized attention and engage in differentiated instruction (Fullan, 2007).

Furthermore, research suggests that classroom size can directly impact the quality of instruction, particularly in subjects such as language and mathematics, where students benefit from one-on-one feedback, discussion-based learning, and personalized assessment approaches (Schleicher, 2018). In overcrowded classrooms, teachers may resort to traditional lecture-based methods, reducing opportunities for active learning, collaboration, and interdisciplinary teaching strategies.

The study findings indicate that teachers who work with smaller class sizes reported higher satisfaction levels with their ability to effectively deliver the curriculum, while those managing larger groups

expressed frustration regarding time constraints and lesson completion. These results align with global studies emphasizing that reducing class sizes improves overall student achievement and enhances teacher effectiveness by allowing for greater flexibility in instructional methods (Schmidt et al., 2001).

Given the significant proportion of teachers working in large-class settings, it is imperative for educational policymakers to consider class size reduction strategies or implement support mechanisms, such as teaching assistants and additional classroom resources, to facilitate more effective instruction and curriculum integration.

Teacher Strategies for Managing Curriculum Overload

Despite the evident challenges posed by curriculum misalignment, teachers in this study reported adopting a variety of strategies to cope with instructional demands. The findings suggest that educators often take independent measures to adjust their teaching approaches, balancing the requirements of the curriculum with the realities of classroom instruction.

As shown in Table 5, the most commonly employed strategy was reducing instructional time allocated to non-core subjects, with 64.5% of teachers reporting this approach. This indicates that subjects like arts, physical education, and social sciences are often deprioritized in favor of covering content-heavy subjects such as language and mathematics.

Another widely used strategy (58%) involved additional reinforcement and repetition lessons, where teachers dedicated extra time to reviewing key concepts. While this approach helps students consolidate knowledge, it can also lead to redundancy and decreased motivation, particularly when students feel overwhelmed by repetitive instructional content.

Table 5: Teacher Strategies for Managing Curriculum Overload

Strategy Used	Percentage of Teachers Using It (%)
Reducing time allocated to non-core subjects	64.5%
Using additional reinforcement and repetition lessons	58.0%
Increasing reliance on homework for curriculum completion	43.3%
Prioritizing examination content over holistic learning	35.7%

A notable 43.3% of educators reported increasing reliance on homework as a method of covering curriculum content, effectively shifting instructional responsibility to students and parents outside of school hours. While this strategy can supplement classroom instruction, excessive homework can lead to student fatigue and disengagement, particularly in younger learners.

Additionally, 35.7% of teachers indicated that they prioritize examination content over holistic learning, suggesting that test preparation takes precedence over broader educational goals. This trend aligns with concerns that high-stakes subjects tend to overshadow creative and exploratory learning experiences, limiting opportunities for interdisciplinary and competency-based education (Soulé & Warrick, 2015).

These findings highlight the need for systemic changes to ensure that teachers do not have to make these difficult trade-offs, allowing for a more balanced and sustainable approach to curriculum implementation.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study provide strong evidence that Kosovo's primary education system requires curriculum adjustments to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning experiences. Several key recommendations can be drawn from the findings:

6.1 Curriculum Adjustment and Policy Reform

- The results indicate that language and mathematics subjects should be revised to allow for a more equitable distribution of instructional time.
- Policymakers should consider alternative curriculum frameworks that emphasize interdisciplinary learning, rather than rigid subject silos.
- Educational authorities should evaluate the feasibility of reducing curriculum overload, ensuring that teachers can fully engage with students rather than rushing through content.
- Implementing a flexible, competency-based curriculum model, similar to Finland's phenomenon-based learning approach, could help reduce fragmentation between subject areas and promote holistic education (Schmidt et al., 2001).

6.2 Teacher Training on Interdisciplinary Instruction

- Professional development programs should be expanded to train teachers in integrated curriculum approaches that encourage cross-disciplinary connections between subjects.
- Training programs should focus on active learning strategies, ensuring that teachers can effectively implement student-centered methodologies in large and diverse classrooms.
- International models from countries like Canada, Denmark, and Finland demonstrate that flexible curriculum structures and strong teacher training programs contribute to improved student outcomes (Soulé & Warrick, 2015).
- A policy shift toward interdisciplinary education models would allow teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods, reducing the rigidity of the current curriculum framework and enhancing student engagement.

4. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of curriculum misalignment in Kosovo's primary education system, focusing on the imbalanced allocation of instructional time across core and non-core subjects. The findings indicate that language and mathematics are overemphasized, often at the expense of interdisciplinary learning opportunities, such as arts, physical education, and social sciences. This imbalance negatively impacts teaching quality, student engagement, and the holistic development of learners.

A key insight from the research is that teachers frequently borrow instructional time from non-core subjects to complete language and mathematics lessons, highlighting the structural overload of curriculum content. Statistical analyses confirmed that educators across different experience levels recognize this challenge, with many advocating for curricular adjustments to allow for a more balanced educational experience. Additionally, the study found that larger class sizes further compound the challenges of delivering an overloaded curriculum, making interactive and student-centered teaching approaches more difficult to implement.

The results underscore an urgent need for policy reforms and instructional adjustments to mitigate curriculum misalignment. Recommendations include:

1. Revising curriculum structure to distribute instructional time more equitably across subjects, ensuring a more holistic education.
2. Implementing interdisciplinary teaching strategies that allow for subject integration, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.
3. Providing professional development programs for educators to equip them with innovative pedagogical methods for managing curriculum overload.
4. Introducing pilot programs in select schools to test flexible curriculum models, such as phenomenon-based learning and competency-based assessment.

This study contributes valuable empirical insights into curriculum implementation challenges in Kosovo's education system and aligns with broader international discussions on curriculum overload. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that assess the impact of curriculum reforms on student performance, as well as comparative analyses with education systems that have successfully implemented balanced curricula.

By adopting evidence-based policy adjustments, Kosovo can work toward a more effective, student-centered, and equitable educational framework that prepares learners for both academic success and real-world challenges.

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