

EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY IN EFL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

The Albanian Education System has shown a great emphasis on the English Language Curriculum which is in a process of changes. Despite other factors which seem to be main ones in reshaping the curriculum, a great emphasis is given even to the expectations of the curriculum versus the reality in our English classes. This paper describes the disparity between the principles, guidelines, suggested themes, organization, methodology, classroom activities, and assessment outlined in the thematic, content-based English language curriculum adopted by the Albanian Education System in 2009 and the classroom realities and other contextual factors that have influenced its proper implementation. The paper shows that the curriculum is designed in line with international EFL standards as it has clear goals, objectives, and performance indicators as well as sound perspectives on instruction, material selection and adaptation, and evaluation guidelines. These perspectives are based on widely accepted theoretical views in language acquisition and best practices in English language education. However, the content-based curriculum normally demands a high level of language proficiency and content and pedagogical knowledge from teachers, and it is highly dependent on the availability of adequate resources and ongoing professional development programs. The educational context in Albania still suffers from the effects of the old Education System, which has made the implementation full of problems. When committees consisting of academic experts, researchers, and practitioners are entrusted by their country's educational authorities with the vital task of developing a curriculum for a certain school subject, they normally start by identifying the country's general educational philosophy, its overall developmental priorities, goals of teaching that subject, and the available human and physical resources. Their next move would be to consider international trends and research findings in their field, model their work after well-known successful experiences in other contexts, and create a unique product that is compatible with global educational trends and, at the same time, addresses the needs and special characteristics of the local context. No matter how hard committees try to produce an ideal product, only the process of translating the curriculum into classroom teaching and learning will reveal if there are glitches in the system in the form of inherent shortcomings or contextualized implementation problems that need to be addressed. In most instances, both inherent and contextualized issues emerge. It is for this reason that it should be made an evaluation to the EFL curriculum in the Albanian High School context.

Keywords: *EFL Curriculum, implementation, Albanian Educational context, curriculum development, teaching methods*