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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA “HASAN PRISHTINA”**

Master in Educational Sciences (with specialisation)

(ACCREDITATION)

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

29.04.2021, Tbilisi



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: March 26, 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Elene Jibladze*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA*
- *Ilijane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report*
- *Evidence provided by the Faculty of Education corresponding each standard.*
- *Requested additional documents, total of 10 documents*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *KAA Accreditation Manual – program accreditation standards*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated (*no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion*) – joint session

09:45 – 10:25 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff – joint session

10:30 – 11:10 Lunch break

11:00 – 12:10 Meeting with the heads of the study programme 1. Master in Educational Sciences with specialisation, MA



12:15 – 13:15	Meeting with the heads of the study programme 2. Master in Subject Teaching with specialisation, MA
13:20 – 14:00	Meeting with teaching staff
14:05 – 14:45	Meeting with students
14:50 – 15:30	Meeting with graduates
15.35 – 16:15	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16.15 – 16:25	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
16:25 – 16:35	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

This report evaluated MA in Education Science at the Faculty of Education in the University of Pristina. The faculty was created in 2002 as a result of collaboration of the Ministry of Education, University of Pristina and the Kosovo Teacher Training Project (KEDP), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The mission of the Faculty of Education is to “provide quality programs for the continuous preparation and training of educators, teachers and other specialists in the field of education, development of scientific-research activity, as well as networking in the community, to advance the education system in Kosovo” (SER, p.4). The faculty achieves its mission by providing bachelor, master and doctoral degree programs, strengthen its research capacity and be(come) a centre of teacher excellence in Kosovo.

Currently, the Faculty of Education offers three bachelor's degree programs: Preschool Program, Primary Education program, and General Pedagogy. The Faculty also offers seven master's degree programs: Teaching and Curriculum, Educational Leadership, Pedagogy, Subject Teaching with Specializations, Vocational School Pedagogy, Inclusive Education, and Professional MA for Teaching Albanian Language and Literature.

Recently, there has been changes in legal requirements for teacher training in the Republic of Kosovo, as well as the teacher education. These changes has prompted the Faculty of



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Education to revise some of its programs. As a result, separate MA programs of teaching and curriculum, Educational Leadership, Pedagogy (pedagogical counselling) and inclusive education has been brought under an umbrella of Education Sciences. As a result, the Faculty is seeking accreditation for a program that prepares professionals in specific fields of education sciences, hence complying with both legal terminology and employment norms approved by the MEST. While formally, this is a new program (considerable part of it has been altered) and the faculty seeks for the accreditation, it should be noted that the experience of running the MA programs in specific specialisations has been practiced at the Faculty for years.

Apart from these programs, the Faculty has one doctoral program.

The Faculty has a new leadership, which has ambitious plans to transform this unit into a centre of excellence in teacher education. The new leadership has its development goals and has made much effort to create an organizational structure that will support them reaching these goals. As it is eloquently put in the SER, the organizational structure “aims to facilitate and build efficiency of administrative processes on the one hand aiming at decentralization of decision-making at the department level, while on the other hand established Research Clusters as professional structures aimed at developing the academic standard, advancing collegial collaboration and developing collaboration across departments and profiles of academic staff” (p. 8).



2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The mission of the study program, as defined in the SER is in line with the mission of the University of Pristina. However, the mission/purpose of the program, as stated in the SER could not be referenced in the official document, such as a program description, available publicly. Instead, separate programs in pedagogy, Inclusive education, leadership in education, teaching and curriculum, are available online. As explained by the faculty leadership, these separate programs have been reworked and combined in a single program of Education Sciences with specialisations. This is a good explanation, why the program description is not available online, as the program has not been accredited yet. However, the expert was not able to receive the program description from the faculty either. Instead, the Faculty submitted descriptions of the courses that comprise the program, which does not suffice to make judgment about the mission/the goal of the overall program. While the SER describes the mission of the program well and the faculty representatives at all levels – leadership as well as the academic personnel have been able to discuss the program and its mission so eloquently, it is important that the program description is put together and is available (easily accessible) for verification purposes as well as for the students.

Hence, the Faculty is advised to put together a program description with the clear statement of the program's aim.

The SER also mentions the faculty mission, however, no documents have been provided to the expert that could verify the same. The leadership of the Faculty explained that the unit is going under the radical changes and all of the guiding documents are in the process of development, including its strategic plan. This would be the document that would include the vision, mission and the objectives of the Faculty. As it stands now, the statements in the SER with regard to the mission of the Faculty could not be textually verified. However, commitment to the same mission as stated in SER could be verified during the interviews with the leadership. The Development Program of 2021-2024 of the faculty provides the indication that the mission of the faculty will be formulated along the lines of what is provided in the SER. (p. 5-6).

The faculty is advised that the strategic plan is soon developed and the revised mission of the faculty is part of the document.



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The learning outcomes of this MA program is realistic, well defined and in line with the NQF. This revised program is based on the long standing cooperation of the faculty with the international partners within the TEMPUS project of 2013-17 and beyond. The program also takes into account the main challenges of the teacher education in Kosovo and tries to account for the demand in the teacher profession, as much as system-wide assessments allow for it.

As the faculty of Education is part of the large centralised state university, it abides to the rules, procedures and regulations that are created at the central level. Main accountability structure, hiring and firing policy of the academic and non-academic staff, regulations for the program development and alike are defined by the Statute.

Other information, to guide students to the academic year, such as the program outline and the academic calendar is available online (i.e. the current program). The Code of ethics is also available at the university level, which concerns academic staff. However, it is unclear how is the ethical issues regulated for non-academic staff and students. Concerning student affairs and student representative body that should exist according to the Statute (p. 24), there is no evidence that the students of this MA program were aware of such a unit.

It needs to be highlighted that the Faculty of Education has new management (it has been about a half a year that leadership has changed), therefore much of the work has just begun. New leadership has plans to fundamentally change the unit and has made number of steps towards this transformation. This is a great opportunity for the Faculty of Education to modernise and become more responsive to the local needs and also become a change agent in the field of teacher education by bringing a modern learning and research experience in Kosovo. However, from the external evaluation point of view, it is challenging to assess the upcoming changes without much of the documented evidence that supports the plans of the new leadership. For instance, it was mentioned during the site visit that all the governing policies, relevant processes/procedures are under the review, hence no evidence could be provided on what are the governing processes of the Faculty (the Development Program of the Faculty states the same, p. 7). Moreover, there is no strategic plan according to which the Faculty is going to develop for the next few years. The QA concept and documents fitting the Faculty level is also under development, and the list goes on. In short, the lack of formal documents that guide the change is an issue.



Teaching philosophy is well described in the SER and was well articulated and explained during the site visit. So called “evidence and practice-based teaching”, which basically emphasizes two main pillars that the faculty emphasizes in teaching – evidence gathering, i.e. building up research skills in the future graduates/teachers and exposing them to the evidence-based work in general. And practice-based teaching, which puts much emphasis on putting acquired knowledge and skills in practice. This is well addressed in the practice component of this MA program. All in all, the Faculty’s immediate plan is to move away from the traditional knowledge transfer teaching towards knowledge and skill development.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Create regulatory framework for the Faculty’s effective operation and further development.*
- 2. Create Ethics Code for students, or make the university level one available for students.*
- 3.*
- 4. Mission and objectives of the Faculty have to be on the web-site and part of the strategic plan.*

2.2. Quality management

It is extremely useful that the Faculty is developing a QA eco-system at the faculty level. The leadership, the vice-dean in charge of the QA and the academic personnel are on the same page that the QA needs to be developed for the sake of advancing the quality work of the programs and of the academic unit, overall. The idea that the QA is not only for the external QA control only is well understood here.

The faculty representatives have done a thorough analysis of the main shortcomings of the programs and have already made some changes for this accreditation round (e.g. improving the Master thesis concept). More importantly, constant monitoring and improvement has become part of their QA concept-in-development, encompassing the whole programme development and delivery process and beyond. These have been explained to the expert during the interviews and are also well elaborated in the Development Program 2021-2024. As part of the thorough analysis, the faculty leadership has put an emphasis on professional



development of their academic staff, have made plans to attract younger generation of educators and has made plans to boost the research opportunities for them, thus boosting the research capacity of the Faculty altogether. It is worth highlighting the Faculty has been putting effort in rethinking the whole program in the light of COVID-19 restrictions, making sure that moving to distance education did not harm attainment of the learning outcomes of the program. This was particularly apparent in the school practice component, which was reworked specifically because of the distance learning.

While currently, data gathering for the QA diagnostics is happening in a usual manner, by collecting feedback from the student questionnaires, the Faculty plans to have a multidimensional monitoring system which will go beyond course evaluations of the students, including the peer/group discussions and more (Development Program, p. 9-11).

It is clear that QA is a priority for the next 4-year period for the Faculty leadership and it has been thought through thoroughly. It is clear to the QA team that the main challenge they are facing is a reliable evidence gathering to ensure a sustainable growth/improvement of the program(s). Hence the expert is confident that the evidence of multi-source data gathering will be soon available at the faculty level, as planned by the leadership. QA reports will also be produced in a due time, accordingly.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Institutionalise new QA concept at the Faculty level to enable more specialised approach to the needs of the Faculty.*

2.3. Academic staff

The Faculty has a good balance of the well experienced teaching staff and the younger generation of the professionals. In its analysis, the faculty has been honest in identifying main challenges for the upcoming years and has made some plans to gradually address those. To name a few, English language, research skills and the challenges, or rather new needs that has been revealed due to the niche that the faculty has identified. These are interdisciplinarity and inclusive education. Building competence so that the principles of inclusive education is a



crosscutting matter across the programs, and building capacity for interdisciplinary collaboration among peer education as well as among MA students and their professors.

Staff development schemes are well organized at both, central/university level, complemented by the faculty level efforts. 80% of the academic staff is currently retrained in various areas, which were identified through the needs assessment. Some of the trainings covered: research methods, modern teaching methods, assessment techniques, online education tools, etc.

Faculty seems to be making a good use of the international cooperations – projects and local opportunities to improve the capacity of its staff.

One of the main challenges that the faculty is still struggling, but is aware of it, is the high workload of the most of the teaching staff. Most of them teach at other programs within the Faculty of Education, on average amounting to the 18 hours of teaching (per week). Given this high of a teaching load, it is highly unlikely that the same personnel is able to do research, community activities, supervise MA theses. In order to address the teaching overload, it is important that the faculty continues its hiring/promotion process and soon builds the sufficient number of professionals that will allow for a sustainable quality of the teaching and research outputs of the academic staff.

Along these lines, the faculty has taken upon an initiative to complement centralised hiring and promotion system with the faculty level hiring/promotion regulations.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The Faculty has to aggressively carry on with its hiring and promoting efforts in order to elevate teaching loads from the academic staff, so that the time is freed up for the research and other duties set out in the contracts.*

2.4. Educational process content

According to the SER, the Master of Education Sciences program is a 2-year program consisting of 120 credits (ECTS). It has four specialisations: Pedagogical Counselling,



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Inclusive Education, Leadership in Education, and Teaching and Curriculum. The program is in line with the NQF and accounts for the European Qualifications Framework.

Throughout two years, the students will go through the first year of core courses, common for all and then specialise in the abovementioned specialisations in the second year. At end of their studies, the students will go through the practice in the schools in Pristina. The practice is well organized into 3 sections and lasts from 6 to 8 weeks. Over the course of the years, the school network has been organized around the Faculty of Education. These are the schools that have long standing working relations with the faculty and MA program students on annual bases. The interviews with the academic personnel, students and the schools representatives showcased that the practices are mutually beneficial for the school and the students. The only concern that the expert has is that the office for organizing practice has just one administrative officer who oversees the logistics and administrative processes of the practice. Given the workload of 40 students per specialisation, this could be overwhelming for one person to manage. *It is worth exploring a possibility of adding another staff member to this office.*

As for the learning outcomes and their achievement. The learning outcomes have been reviewed and thoroughly thought through. The combination of acquiring knowledge, understanding and ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills. Three pillars, inclusion of research methods in the program, providing a well-organized practice in schools and linking MA thesis to actual problems at school, ensure achievement of learning outcomes.

In addition, student assessment methods have been gradually changing and the teaching personnel went through the trainings in this regard.

Going back to the MA thesis supervision. During the interviews, academic staff mentioned that they supervise eight to ten MA theses per academic year. Since the academic staff is already overloaded with the high teaching workload (see standard 2.4) supervision of about ten MA seems unrealistic, assuming that the same staff members are expected to produce research outputs, be active in community services and also do some administrative work. Given these circumstances, it is important that the faculty makes its priority to increase the number of academic staff to be able to redistribute the workload more realistically. Otherwise, the quality of the program will suffer inevitably.



Program description, i.e. curriculum per se has not been provided to the expert. The analytical description of the program is provided on in SER. The material that has been submitted by the faculty are well developed course syllabi. Course syllabi have course-level objectives. The learning outcomes are clearly defined, teaching and assessment methods – described and basic literature/bibliography – provided. Teaching strategies are adequate to the learning outcomes of the courses mainly combining in class seminars, group or individual projects and practical tasks. *It would be more informative (for the expert, and more importantly, for the student), if the course is broken down into topics and reading material corresponds to each topic.* This could be the next step forward that the faculty should take in order to promote more transparency in teaching at the course level. In sum, the program description that brings together program level goals and learning outcomes is crucial for those, who teach, those who monitor and evaluate and those to be taught. Otherwise it is hard to evaluate how each course delivery contributes to the achievement of the program level learning outcomes? Right now, there is no official document that provides this information other than the SER, which is not sufficient.

To conclude, teaching and learning processes are very well organised and interaction between the academic staff and students and practice mentors and students is very productive. Most of the students and graduates commented on the benefits of their studies, including using learned assessment tools in their teaching process; using research methods at their workplace, when conducting small studies. Some of the graduates have become mentors themselves, maintaining their connections with the faculty, others have kept peer-relation with their professors and have had some joint research or professional projects. This is a direct indicator that the program is effective.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. It is crucial that the program description that brings together program level goals and learning outcomes exists and is available.*
- 2. It is worth exploring a possibility of adding another staff member to the office of organizing practice.*
- 3. It is important that the faculty makes its priority to increase the number of academic staff to be able to redistribute the workload more realistically*



2.5. Students

Admission criteria is determined centrally, by the senate. Enrolment numbers are provided by the faculty and approved by the senate. Procedures for the enrolment exams and appeal is available at the university level.

As stated in the SER and in the program description, the program intends to enrol about 40 students per specialisation, which would amount to about 160 total. The program is enrolling only full time students, attracting them from throughout the country, as well as Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro. According to the interviews, 70% of the student body comes from the regions of Kosovo. According to the three year statistics, provided by the faculty, the graduation rate is low compared to the enrolment. SER does not address this issue and it is unclear, whether the faculty and the program head has a strategy to address this issue in a long term. *It will be important that the faculty level strategic plan reflects low graduation rates as a challenge and devises the ways to overcome it.*

The teaching and learning processes are very well organised and interaction between the academic staff and students and practice mentors and students is very productive. Most of the students and graduates commented on the benefits of their studies, including using learned assessment tools in their teaching process; using research methods at their workplace, when conducting small studies. Some of the graduates have become mentors themselves, maintaining their connections with the faculty, others have kept peer-relation with their professors and have had some joint research or professional projects. This is a direct indicator that the program is effective.

As stated in the SER, p. 45, student assessment processes are well organized and the records of student outcomes are kept at the university level. This was confirmed during the interviews, however the expert did not have the opportunity to check the documented evidence. As identified in the SWAT analyses, the program's shortfalls is that there are no support services for students in case of emotional, financial or family issues, neither student counselling or services for the students with special needs (p. 46). If the first issue can be addressed at the faculty level, it is obvious that the latter two must be addressed at the university level. *Hence, it is important that the faculty includes the first issue in its strategic plan and also finds the ways to lobby the changes that would allow for the establishment of student counselling and services for the disadvantaged students.*



None of the students were able to explain the procedures against plagiarism, which is concerning and the *program representatives should put much effort in filling the gap of information* in this regard. Students are somewhat familiar to what is an ethical conduct and what is expected from them, however they are not aware of the consequences of unethical academic conduct, or the steps they need to take to prevent unethical behaviour of their peers, or the academic staff, for that matter.

Another issue that needs attention is that none of the students present at the interview session were aware of the student body at the faculty or at the university levels. They were not aware of their representatives at any of these bodies or what was the role of these bodies. It is important that the students are aware that they are represented at the faculty and the university levels and understand the benefits of their involvement in the decision making processes. *Therefore, the faculty needs to build awareness and understanding of benefits of the participatory decision making at the faculty level.*

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The faculty needs to include in its strategic plan the issue of providing services for the struggling (having emotional, academic, family, etc.) students.*
2. *Faculty/program representatives should put much effort in building awareness on anti-plagiarism matters among students.*
3. *The faculty needs to build awareness and understanding of benefits of the participatory decision making at the faculty level.*
4. *It will be important that the strategic plan reflects low graduation rates as a challenge and devises the ways to overcome it.*

2.6. Research

This is one of those rare occasions when the faculty has a sober understanding of the challenges and limitations of the research capacity in country. The faculty leadership is well aware of the challenges that the academic research is facing in new democracies that have scarce resources and strong time pressure to rebuild its higher education systems. Hence, the leadership understands that the resources that are needed to produce high quality research that



has international relevance, are not yet available in the system. This is why, the faculty has made its priority to produce applied research. The faculty is well aware of the system's needs to diagnose current state of affairs in the field of education, and this is where they will be contributing. In doing so, the faculty has analysed their potential, as well as challenges and created nine research teams, so called clusters. Each cluster works within predefined research area, ranging from child development to assessment in education and more. Clusters house academic staff different subject areas from within education field. They will look at the overarching themes from different disciplinary dimensions. As a result, e.g. the researchers from psychology, Albanian language and IT might be working on one research topic, thus producing interdisciplinary papers within the academic domain of education. In a longer term perspective, it will be excellent if the Faculty of Education steps outside of the education domain and broadens its interdisciplinary cooperation with other academic domains.

Obviously, the faculty is making use of all those instruments that are available at the system level as well as the university level to boost scientific interest and capacity. These include international cooperation, advantages that the EU funded grants bring, as well as the research related funds that are available in the university. This is complimented by the support schemes of the doctoral studies, which the faculty has been using to its advantage and attracting young scholars back to work. The research is made a strategic priority in the faculty's development paper and it's evident that the faculty leadership's efforts in this area are well thought through and will continue in the same manner.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *It is important that the faculty maintains its research clusters and makes its products more visible at the university and soon, at the system level through the conferences or other channels (such as blogs, academic discussions, etc.).*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The faculty of education is part of the largest state university in Kosovo, which has been successfully accredited. This has advantages and disadvantages for the sustainable development of the program. The program has no concerns about the infrastructure,



including classroom space, laboratories, library and the space for the faculty, as previous year was the year of capital investments and infrastructure development. University, out of the state allocated 228,000.00 Euros for the Faculty, 125.000,00 Euros were spent on infrastructure development (SER, p.49). Due to the pandemic, it was impossible to see the premises personally, however the video provided leaves the impression that the Faculty building has all the spaces needed. The premises are also accessible for the persons with disabilities.

However, in their SWAT analyses, they mention that there are not enough laptops in the classrooms and not all of the class rooms have internet access. Given the importance of these concerns, it is important that the university, in its next budgeting process, takes into account the Faculty's request for the number of laptops and provision of the internet access to ensure that the program runs smoothly.

Another concern that the Faculty needs to address gradually is the lack of Albanian language literature for the program(s). While it is important that the students and the faculty gradually improve their English skills, it would be unrealistic to base an academic program only on this calculation. *Hence, the Faculty will have to decide upon creating/translating some of the crucial literature into the language that most of the students master and make those available in their library.*

The Faculty does not have its separate budget, but is part of the centralised university budget. Faculty provides its calculations to the central office to be considered in the overall budget of the university. Faculty's budget is secured on the annual bases, hence the program has a guarantee that it will have its funds secured to run the program. However, since the state budgets are planned on annual bases, it is hard to have a long term financial forecast linked to the program's development. (Put it differently, long term financial planning is not just a technical issue, as the logic of the way financial work is organized in the large centralised state institutions hinders longer term financial planning which could be linked to the strategic development goals.) Hence, on the one hand, the program will always have the financial resources that is enough to continue program delivery without interruption, i.e. to sustain the current state of affairs. However, this kind of budgeting often trumps the development processes, as the annual budgets increase only in small increments (if at all), from one year to the other and mainly account for the running costs of the program, faculty and an institution as a whole.

The Faculty plans to acquire separate budgeting function, which would grant them certain autonomy and allow them for more flexibility on how to plan and use their finances. It is



difficult for the expert to assess the feasibility of this particular initiative nevertheless, it is certainly a relevant one.

ET recommendations:

1. The Faculty will have to decide upon creating/translating some of the crucial literature into the language that most of the students master and make those available in their library.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program (*insert name of the study program*) offered by University of Pristina is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends to *accredit* the study program for a duration of **three years** with a number of 40 students per specialization to be enrolled in the program.

4. APPENDICES (*if available*)

1. A
2. B
3. C



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Expert Team

Chair

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

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