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PUBLIC UNIVERSITY “KADRI ZEKA” GJILAN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

BA program in PRIMARY EDUCATION

RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

09/06/2021



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: May 18, 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Elene Jibladze*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA*

Sources of information for the Report:

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

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *KAA Accreditation Manual – program accreditation standards*

Site visit Agenda, 18th May

09.00 – 09.40 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*)

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09.45 – 10:30	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
10.35 – 11.35	Meeting with the heads of the study programme Primary Education, BA
11.35 – 12:10	Lunch break (to be provided within the faculty premises)
12.10 – 13:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme Preschool Education, BA
13.15 – 14:05	Meeting with teaching staff
14.10 – 15.00	Meeting with students
15.05 – 15.45	Meeting with graduates
15.50 – 16.30	Meeting with employers of graduates
16.30 – 16.40	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
16:40 – 16:50	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

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

University "Kadri Zeka" Gjilan (UKZ) is a public university established by the Government of Kosovo in 2013. Since 2002 UKZ has been operating as a branch of the University of Pristina. However, in response to the increased number of students from Kosovo (mostly from Eastern Kosovo), Serbia (the Presevo Valley), and North Macedonia (Kumanovo region), it has been

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established as an independent university. Currently, UKZ has 2343 students (67% female and 33% male).

UKZ consists of five academic units: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Computer Sciences and Faculty of Applied Sciences and implements 8 Bachelor's and 2 Master's degree programs (one of which is a joint program implemented in cooperation with the University of Prizren and University of Peja).

Faculty of Education has two BA programs – the BA in preschool education and the BA in primary education. In AY 2020-2021 faculty enrolled 199 students total. Within the frames of this reaccreditation, the faculty seeks to slightly increase the number of seats for both programs and asking for 110 seats per program.

Primary education program is in demand, according to the survey conducted by the university, which found that the number of retired teachers is growing in the region. And University of Gjilan is in an advantageous position to prepare new cadre for the primary schools in the region, as it is the only state institution that is mandated to offer teacher education programs.

This program was previously accredited in in 2016 until 2020, September.



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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

According to the SER, overall purpose of the primary education program is:

- “Enabling students to complete primary school curricula according to the current curriculum (Languages and Communication; Arts; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Society and the Environment; Physical Education, Sports and Health; Life and Work);
- Understanding the importance of practice in school institutions;
- The credit system enables deepening in the knowledge of certain areas within the elective courses, in addition to the obligatory courses of the program;
- Training for using and applying contemporary achievements in the field of primary education, as well as the application of information technology in the development of activities with primary school students (grades I to V).” (p.23)

While these bullet points are not necessarily the mission of the program, but they are also not learning outcomes of the program. But the mixture of the

Based on these fragments of information, ET deduces that the preschool education BA program aims at transferring theoretical knowledge and developing practical skills amongst the students that is relevant for their field of study. These are all statements that are present in the mission of the university as well. In this manner, it could be deduced that the program’s purpose and the mission of the institution are aligned. However, ET must highlight that the mission of the program is not provided in the SER, only the purpose of the program, and these two are not analogous.

The faculty representatives at all levels – leadership as well as the academic personnel – were able to point out two areas - development of critical thinking and student centeredness - as main



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pillars of the program. However, they were somewhat vague in explaining how these two themes are represented in the program. In general, ET lacked the narrative in writing, where the main pillars of the program would be presented, main foci of the program – highlighted, and faculty's understanding of its teaching and research approaches would be explained. What is available in SER (area 2.4.) is the program structure – the table with the courses assigned to each semester. The web-site offers the same. Learning outcomes of the program were submitted to the ET after the site visit. When asked, during the interviews, academic staff could not confirm their participation in the formulation of the learning outcomes. *It is important that the academic staff participates in the formulation of the learning outcomes of the program in order to ensure relevance of the learning outcomes, increase the ownership of the program among the academic staff and, as it seems essential now, to assist the academic staff in formulating learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.*

As for the teaching and research philosophy – these are also a bit abstract for the faculty representatives. It was hard to gather from the interviews what is the teaching philosophy that guides the program? At least, it is not explicit. Research philosophy also could not be explicitly explained to the ET. However, it should be mentioned that on the level of teaching, development of research skills is quite well incorporated: there is a journal of mathematics, subject-related clubs, and small projects that the students are involved in. To put it differently, the elements of research are present in the work of the academic staff, and surely, they have main approaches to teaching, however those are not identified as something that contributes to the research and teaching philosophy. Hence, their everyday work has not been conceptualised in the light of new educational and quality assurance terminology.

All the above mentioned indicates that the faculty representatives is in the process of modernisation – new ways of building the curriculum and the concepts which they have started

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operating with are still new and need time to be absorbed and put to practice more thoughtfully. This is natural and will take time, however, *it is important that more effort is put into distilling what exactly the program wants to absorb from the modernised understanding of teaching and learning and include only those elements that they consider necessary. And then, produce a program description, which brings together the mission of the program, learning outcomes and teaching and research approach together.*

The faculty has an action plan, which corresponds to the strategic plan of the university. The ET assumes that this, as many other developments at faculty or university levels, is a new endeavour. Expectedly, working towards strategic goals and building internal accountability system will be challenging and will seem a bit artificial at first. The ET assumes, this is the main reason, why very little reference was made to the strategic plan of the university or the faculty level action plan during the interviews.

Main accountability structures, such as QA, hiring and firing policy of the academic and non-academic staff, regulations for the program development and alike are defined by the Statute of the university and the faculty of education abides those. Therefore, QA matters are centralised and the faculty has its QA representative. Hence, all the QA procedures are established at the faculty level as well. The introductory section of the SER (pp. 3-10) also showcases that certain data collection has been done and the faculty has started using it to inform its decisions. Standard QA relevant evidence gathering, such as student opinion, academic staff evaluation and self-evaluation, is conducted regularly. QA tools have been recently introduced, which is why it is yet to be seen, how well is the faculty (and the university) able to make use of the gathered evidence to foster its development. Important areas, such as the insurance of ethical conduct of the staff (both academic and administrative) is managed centrally. Separately, students are also informed about ethical conduct in their work,

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specifically plagiarism is explained to them as well as its consequences. Additionally, the faculty has created several additional bodies to ensure smooth functioning of the faculty. It should be mentioned that the student representatives are quite active.

As other higher education institutions, University of Gjilan had to quickly adjust to the distance education due to the COVID 19 pandemic. As in most of the cases, the transition was ad hoc, due to the time constraints. Nevertheless, the academic staff of the university and therefore, the faculty of education were granted one week off of work to adjust their courses to the online platforms and review their coursework as well.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. It is important that more effort is put into distilling what exactly the program wants to absorb from the modernised understanding of teaching and learning and include only those elements that they consider necessary and then, produces a program description, which brings together the mission of the program, learning outcomes and teaching and research philosophy together.*
- 2. It is important that the academic staff participates in the formulation of the learning outcomes of the program in order to ensure relevance of the learning outcomes, increase the ownership of the program among the academic staff.*



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2.2. Quality management

For the purpose to draft the self-evaluation report of the Primary Education program of the faculty of education has established the self-evaluation team, which consisted of the teaching staff and the representatives of the quality assurance unit of the faculty. The final version of the self-evaluation report has been reviewed and approved by the faculty council. The ET has noted that the self-evaluation report is still general and does not describe the specific program related evidences that could help the program team to better reflect on the input, process and outcomes of the the program. During the interviews the ET learned about several examples of improvement of the program based on the self-evaluation and survey results. This allows us to assume that the evaluation process is integrated into normal planning and improvement process of the program.

The Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation defines the quality assurance and evaluation system, its mechanisms and instruments, with duties and responsibilities of the parties involved in this process. UKZ has developed the survey forms and instruments to evaluation quality and performance of academic and administrative processes, student services and institutional resources. The surveys are regularly conducted with students, staff, graduates and labour market representatives. The results of the student surveys are sent to the individual academic staff members. The university annually prepares the reports of quality evaluation of programs and quality action plans. The quality evaluation reports are not publicly available. The results of the quality evaluation are discussed by the faculty council annually and the results are taken into consideration for further planning and development.

The effectiveness of the quality assurance system itself is reviewed by the Quality Management and Evaluation Council. The system has been updated in 2020, which introduced new survey

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forms, teacher self-evaluation and peer evaluation mechanisms. Hence its effect and impact on the program and the faculty's work is yet to be evaluated.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a more comprehensive self-evaluation report, which provides detailed and evidence-based analysis of the program performance.*
2. *Make the quality evaluation reports publicly available*

2.3. Academic staff

As most of the institutions in Kosovo (and largely, in Eastern Europe), University of Gjilan also struggles with striking a balance between the well experienced teaching staff and the younger generation of the professionals. This is true at the faculty level as well. In the SER, it is mentioned that the faculty plans to introduce a doctoral level of studies, which is considered as one of the ways of addressing the shortage in the academic staff with the relevant qualification. *The ET encourages the faculty to look into other ways of attracting qualified academic staff, which would not depend only on the 'home-grown' human resources (international experience shows that it is much better to attract academic staff with the experience from different universities in order to allow interchange of experiences and refreshment in teaching and research perspectives).*

Lack of English was identified as one of the weaknesses in the SER (p. 53), however, ET could not gather from the interviews that the faculty leadership had some ideas, or strategy to address

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this issue. Improving English language proficiency is left up to the individual staff members. A Lecturer of Mathematics is a good example of a self-motivated academic staff, who works on this. *It is important that this and other deficiencies that will be identified over time at the faculty level, are addressed in an organized manner, rather than at the individual level. Otherwise, it will be difficult to achieve sustainable results. ET suggests that these kind of weaknesses are incorporated in the annual plans of the faculty, so specific targets are set annually in order to stimulate development.*

Staff assessment schemes have been recently introduced, hence it is yet to be seen how those work. Student assessment, self-assessment and the evaluation by the dean are those instruments according to which academic staff is evaluated and measures for staff development or otherwise, are/will be taken.

There is no information about staff development schemes and efforts in the SER. Hence, the ET can only rely on the interviews, which are not completely verifiable. As the academic staff representatives described, there are several ways for professional development: the university-level trainings, and the information is usually disseminated by the QA office. On-demand trainings, when academic staff puts the request to the faculty. And the project-based capacity building. The faculty is involved in several projects through Erasmus funds, and Caritas Kosova, and few others. It was mentioned that the trainings covered research methods and online education tools and methods. While evaluation of academic staff is just picking up, it is too early to judge, how well is the evidence used from the needs assessment. *It is important that the professional development becomes part of a sustainable development of the faculty and is not ad hoc and heavily based on what is offered, rather than what is the need of the academic staff. It will be beneficial, if capacity development of the academic staff becomes part of the action plan of the faculty.*

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Most of the staff teach 6 hours (per week) on average, have 6 students for practice supervision (7 to 10, if the teaching load is less than 6 hours), in addition, they have to supervise BA thesis (maximum of 5 thesis). In addition, academic staff, especially those who teach art education, are greatly involved in extracurricular events of the university, whether those are official ceremonies, university chorus, concerts, and alike. While this distribution looks satisfactory, it is important that this remains this way, given that the academic staff needs to become more and more active in research.

Overall, motivated academic staff is one of the strongholds of the program. Interviews showed that staff representatives are true educators and are oriented on self-development.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The faculty could explore other ways of attracting qualified academic staff, which would not depend only on the 'home-grown' human resources (attract academic staff from different universities in order to allow interchange of experiences and refreshment in teaching and research perspectives).*

2.4. Educational process content

According to the SER, the BA in Pre-school education is a 4-year program consisting of 240 credits (ECTS). The program is in line with the NQF and accounts for the European



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Qualifications Framework. The program plans to enroll 110. However, the rationale or formula on how the program representatives arrived to this particular number, is unclear.

According to the SER, throughout four years, the students will go through the first year of core courses, and elective courses will be introduced from the second year onwards. Throughout their studies, the students go through the practice in elementary schools in 12 municipalities in the region. The practice is well organized into phases, throughout four years of study and lasts for about 22 weeks.

As for the learning outcomes and their achievement the ET was provided with the list of learning outcomes later on. These are:

- Development of knowledge on the basis of primary education standards for student development as well as the creation of conditions for a suitable educational environment for primary school students;
- Decomposition of the core curriculum for the primary level, in the planned activities for children of this age, orienting their work, according to the approach with the child in the center;
- Creating a prior experience through practical learning, on the teaching and learning process;
- Development of forms of school-family-community cooperation;
- Applying scientific achievements in daily work with students;
- Creating a positive climate in the classroom and organizing learning through contemporary forms of teaching;



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- Applying contemporary methods when working with children, enabling them physical, linguistic, emotional, cognitive development, etc., development on basic mathematical and artistic concepts, enabling them to develop life and work skills;
- Implementing a comprehensive approach to the process of implementing the plan and program, giving equal opportunities to each of them;
- Establishing professional relationships with teachers, principals, parents and the community.

These learning outcomes require revision. They are too complex, need to be broken down and re-defined in order to be measurable and verifiable (for instance, first and third are hard to measure. the fifth has the same problem). Also, there is little mention about attitudes and the main focus is made on knowledge acquisition and its practice. Skills are also not separately defined. More importantly, the link between the program, and the learning outcomes are not explicit. These two are divorced from each other.

As it was explained to the ET, the program is developed based on the Core curriculum for primary education (which spells out main learning outcomes according to which primary education schools need to teach their pupils), which is why the learning outcomes were not spelled out in the SER. However, even with the Core Curriculum for primary education in mind, the program needs to have its goals, learning outcomes and a brief program description that should be known and accessible for teaching staff and students. This is also critical for ensuring the alignment between the learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment methods.



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Meetings with program head and academic personnel also confirmed that the faculty needs to put more effort in improving the understanding of the academic staff in the modern techniques of how to build (rework) a programme using learning outcomes. Having said that, this does not mean that the program does not have the necessary components for the primary education BA. The point here is that it is difficult to evaluate what this program tries to achieve, without declared goals, which are formulated as the learning outcomes, i.e. several core competences that the program graduate should possess after finishing the program. More importantly, the link between the program purpose/learning outcomes and the courses, practice, or the BA thesis are not explicit. It is all implied, therefore it is not verifiable whether the program is achieving its learning outcomes.

Having a program developed according to a certain scaffolding allows not just the program heads and academic staff understand the overall goal of the program, but it also enables students to develop accurate expectations towards the program. Program evaluators, internal or external, will also have a better understanding of what is to be expected of the program. Lastly, local and/or international partners will also have an accurate understanding of what are the program's main goals and how are they going to be achieved.

The program also lacks the description of what it is about. i.e. What is the main priority of the program? What is the program's main focus for the next six years? For instance, it could be the development of research skills amongst students, or it could be inclusive education, or improvement of English language proficiency among the students, or acquisition of modern teaching methodology by the students, or any other topic/area that the faculty would consider important for the primary education in Kosovo/in the region.



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As a general point, the program lacks guiding documents: program description is absent, practice guide is one of University of Pristina, dated for 2004. The ET wonders, if no revisions and updates were needed 2004 onwards to the practice organization, which could be reflected in the new addition of the practice guide. *It is important that the faculty organizes guiding documents - creates some, if necessary, and updates others.*

Keeping in mind all of the abovementioned, it is difficult to assess whether the program description, program learning outcomes and the course-level objectives correspond with each other, and whether they are aligned with teaching and assessment methods, since the first two are hardly available. *Hence, the program structure needs to be more thoroughly thought through and the connection between the program goals, the learning outcomes, program description and the course level objectives need to be demonstrated.*

The program incorporates research in teaching in a productive manner: there is a journal of mathematics, subject-related clubs, and small projects that the students are involved. Since incorporation of the research is still relatively new development in Kosovo, it is important that the heads of the program maintain student involvement in the research activities, and more importantly, incorporate it as teaching method during the coursework (e.g. small in-class group projects/assignments). In this manner, the students will better understand usefulness of research as an instrument to diagnose the problems/issues they face in everyday work environment. Helps them pose questions accurately and use simple research skills to find answers to those questions.

It is difficult to evaluate whether mandatory courses allow achievement of the learning outcomes of the program, due to the discrepancies mentioned above. The logic, according to which the coursework is organized is easy to follow, the first year is dedicated to the mandatory

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courses and then, from the second year, elective courses are also introduced. Practice is organized with the growing intensity from the first year onwards and the program is finalized with the BA thesis.

ET looked through the course syllabi by randomly selecting them. Based on this review here are few observations: it seems confusing that the students have two English courses – English I and English II – as mandatory, but have English for teachers as an elective course. Interestingly, English I and English II have exactly the same syllabi. Also, the course on Curriculum Development does not seem to be a 5 credit course, judging from the course description, but less. Lastly, some of the course syllabi do not describe the assessment methods, but only state the “first assessment” and “second assessment” and the portion of the contribution of the assessment in the overall grade. *Overall, the course syllabi need a thorough review to detect and address different types of inconsistencies present there, as mentioned above.*

As mentioned in 2.1, it is not clear from the interviews what kind of teaching philosophy is guiding the program? At least, it is not explicit. The ET concludes that the philosophy has not consolidated yet and the lecturers are following their own teaching philosophies. The heads of the program have to develop teaching philosophy for the program and be able to demonstrate it explicitly.

The course level objectives are defined, but not always clearly or accurately (e.g. Mathematics II lists the statement “mobile phones are not allowed during the class” (p. 2) as its learning outcome), teaching and assessment methods that are described are relevant (although, tests are used as the assessment tool at the majority of courses, excluding art-related courses), and basic literature/bibliography is provided for each course, some of which need to be reviewed and

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changed/undated. Teaching strategies are adequate to the course learning outcomes/course description mainly combining in class seminars, group or individual projects.

The program has two strong points. First, it is the practice component. Interviews with the academic staff and the heads of the program let ET conclude that the practice is well organized, and well documented. Practice lasts for about 22 weeks, broken down into several modules throughout four years. The practice has both, mentors on site/in schools, as well as academic supervisors. Students keep their own practice diary, the mentors in preschools keep their attendance sheets, and supervisors evaluate them. Second, the academic staff is dedicated to their profession and motivated towards self-development. They are willing to learn more and are motivated to work with students and assist them in their academic journey.

To conclude, the discrepancies in the area of learning outcomes and its links with the program outline discussed in this section are vital to have a well-developed program and currently those are lacking. The ET may only infer that the teaching and learning processes are running smoothly, as the documents provided and the information gathered during the site visit leave considerable space for improvement. While academic staff seems competent and confident in delivering courses in high quality, the overall structure of the program lacks transparency, seems fragmented and needs to be consolidated. Otherwise, the efforts of the individual lecturers will be compromised.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *ET recommends to (re)formulate the learning outcomes of the program and link those to the mandatory courses of the program, practice component and the BA thesis.*

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2. *Make learning outcomes measurable and verifiable*
3. *ET recommends that the faculty organizes guiding documents of the program - creates some, if necessary, and updates others (for instance, the practice guide).*
4. *Thoroughly review the course syllabi in order to detect and address different types of inconsistencies present there.*
5. *ET recommends that the heads of the program (with the involvement of the academic staff members) develop a teaching philosophy for the program and make it explicit.*

2.5. Students

The regulations of study programs (developed separately for each faculty and study cycle) and the university statute define admission requirements and procedures for Bachelor's studies. According to these regulations, UKZ academic units establish Student Admission Commissions and Appeals Review Commissions which ensure consistent application of the admission requirements and procedure. The information about admission requirements and procedures is publicly available on the university website. The admission requirements and process as aligned with the MEST requirements. The regulation also defines the procedure for students' transfer.

University collects and maintains the student profile data, also data on student progression and satisfaction surveys through University Management System.

Although the university tracks student progression, there is a lack of evidence that the results are taken into consideration to improve the teaching and learning process and support students with academic difficulties. The university has recently developed the quality indicators with



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includes the completion rate, however the target indicators and ways of their achievement are not elaborated yet.

Teaching staff offers consultations for students and the additional classes if needed. The ET found that while assessing the regular student work teaching staff does not provide a feedback to students unless students ask for the additional consultation. This might limit the opportunity for students, who find it uncomfortable to ask an instructor for consultation to understand the areas to work on to improve their learning.

Besides, some of the course syllabi do not describe the assessment methods, but only state the “first assessment” and “second assessment” and the portion of the contribution of the assessment in the overall grade. This approach limits the opportunity for students to have a clear understanding of the course expectations towards their work.

The university has recently introduced the software to ensure the originality of students’ academic work. Students are also expected to make a statement on originality of their work before its submission. Besides the Academic writing course includes a special topic on academic integrity.

The procedure for student appeals is defined in the regulation of Bachelor Studies. According to the procedure, students have the right to file a written appeal, which is then discussed by the Review Commission created by the dean of a faculty. The Review Commission consists of three members and it cannot include the professor against whom the appeal was made. The policies and procedures dealing with academic misconduct, including plagiarism are defined in the university statute and the Code of Ethics. According to the procedure, the appeal about academic misconduct is discussed by the Disciplinary Commission. The regulations do not indicate the representation of students in the disciplinary committee.

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Ensure that student performance monitoring results are closely monitored and relevant interventions are made to assist students with academic difficulties or to modify the teaching and assessment approaches.*
- 2. Ensure that the course syllabi include the description of the assessment methods*
- 3. Ensure that the students are regularly provided with the feedback on their work*
- 4. Develop and diversify the student support services (career development, psychological counseling, etc.) and ensure that students are aware about such services.*

2.6. Research

The university has recently established the institute of scientific research and training that supports and promotes research and scientific activities of the academic staff throughout the university, including the Faculty of Education. The ET learned from the interviews that overall this has enhanced the research productivity of academic staff. As academic staff members mentioned, according to the newly set requirements towards research activities, their contracts will not be renewed, unless a staff member has published, participated in the conference(s). However, the university still has not conducted the formal evaluation to assess the effectiveness of newly introduced policies. The university has also created various incentives for faculty members to promote their research work, which is mainly financial. Research funds are

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available for those who would like to participate in the conference, or publish. Some exchange programs are also available for the staff.

These steps at the university level are a very good start to promote research and develop research capacity in the institution. It would be extremely helpful, if some efforts are made at the faculty level. This could be bilateral cooperation with other faculties of education in the universities in Kosovo, as well as internationally. Targeted actions (combined with the university-level incentives) will amplify the possibility to build research capacity quickly and in a more sustainable manner. More importantly, it is essential that the faculty has its own research agenda. Neither dean nor the program heads could elaborate on this. Given the fact that the research funds are scarce (and this is true even in larger universities in Kosovo), it is almost impossible to produce quality research without creating a research agenda, identifying main research areas (and these do not need to be many), where academic staff could produce quality and relevant research. Right now, this is absent. The research capacity of the academic staff needs substantial upgrade, so that they are capable of publishing internationally as well (publishing in English is one of the criteria of credible research, hence academic staff members should be able to demonstrate that they can and have published outside Kosovo). This, by no means, diminishes the importance of locally published research. However, the ET considers that gaining the experience of publishing internationally will help academic staff members gain experience in conducting and publishing quality research.

As mentioned during the interviews as well as highlighted in the SER (p. 40), much of the research activities are happening within the frameworks of projects funded by USAID, GIZ,



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Erasmus + and the Ministry of Education and Science of Kosovo. The ET has the understanding that through these projects the faculty representatives have research capacity building opportunities. These projects also make it possible to organize joint conferences with local partners (other universities), as well as participate in international conferences. Few of the staff members mentioned that they have participated in conferences recently (before the pandemic), therefore the ET has a fragmented view on what portion of the academic staff takes the opportunity to participate in local or international conferences? How many of them present their research projects/papers? The ET can only conclude that since the research-oriented policies have just been introduced, therefore the processes in this direction are just beginning to unfold. Therefore, the current developments are expected to be fragmented and present individual development stories, rather than program or faculty level efforts towards research capacity development.

As mentioned in 2.1. and 2.4. involvement of students in research is more streamlined into the teaching processes, then the academic staff itself imagines. These efforts need to be thought through and put forward as a strong side of the program. It is important that these small joint research projects which involve students, different clubs or else are not concentrated only on one discipline, such as mathematics, but are also incorporated in teaching across courses, just like teaching methods – small group projects, short research assignments, etc. Obviously, the final BA thesis is the main component which develops research skills amongst the students. The way BA research projects are organised also gives an indication that the long term research areas could be identified and students' thesis would contribute to those.

Compliance level: Partially compliant



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ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a research agenda for the Faculty of Education*
2. *Strengthen the research support system to explore and establish cooperations on education research at the regional, country and international level.*
3. *Review the performance of the institute of scientific research and training in terms of its contribution in developing the research activities at the Faculty of Education and explore the possibilities for planning targeted activities for the teaching staff and students of the faculty.*
4. *Regularly track the research activities of the academic staff and students and use the data to further develop the research performance and capacity.*
5. *Diversify the research activities and involve students in the research projects that are carried out by the Faculty of Education.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The faculty of education is part of the University of Gjilan, which has been successfully accredited. In this light, the program has no concerns about the infrastructure concerning classroom space or the library, however they lack adequate space for the academic staff (SER, p. 30). Due to the pandemic, it was impossible to see the premises personally, hence the ET had to guide themselves with the video provided by the faculty and the description in the SER. The interviews also revealed that the infrastructure needs to be better adjusted for the persons with disabilities.

In their SWAT analyses, the faculty mentions that they lack “digitalised halls” (SER, p. 35), this refers to both, adequate amount of computers/laptops and internet access. *Given the importance of these concerns, it is essential 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.*



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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. Lack of funds is most visible in the research. Although much effort has been put into promoting research at the university level, the SER lists lack of funds for research as one of the weaknesses (p. 54). Given that the state budgets are planned on annual bases, it is hard to have a long term financial forecast linked to the program's development. And as the annual budgets increase only in small increments (if at all), from one year to the other, dramatic changes are hardly possible.

Compliance level: Sufficiently compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *ET recommends 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.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the BA program in primary education offered by the Faculty of Education, University of Gjilan, Kadri Zeka, is *substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends to **accredit** the study program for a duration of **3 years** with a number of 100 students to be enrolled in the program.

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