

Curriculum between social justice and global standardization: A critical analysis of reform in primary education

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Abstract

Curriculum reforms increasingly operate in transnational policy environments shaped by standardization, measurability, accountability, and international comparison. This article examines Kosovo's primary curriculum reform to determine how performance rationality and justice rationality are positioned within its policy architecture.

The study applies qualitative critical policy analysis to the Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education, the Core Curriculum for Preparatory Grade and Primary Education, and the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute's report on curricular overload. Coding was guided by performance rationality, Fraser's dimensions of redistribution, recognition, and representation, and epistemic justice. Cross-document comparison showed that competencies, learning outcomes, indicators, and assessment expectations are specified as operational mechanisms, whereas commitments to equity and inclusion are expressed mainly as principles. Recognition is the most visible justice dimension; redistribution and representation have fewer explicit implementation mechanisms. Alignment with European competence frameworks provides coherence and international legitimacy, but the limited specification of contextual adaptation creates a risk of epistemic dependence. The article concludes that common standards are compatible with social justice only when

redistribution, participation, contextual responsiveness, and epistemic plurality are built into curriculum implementation and assessment.

Keywords: *primary education; curriculum reform; social justice; global standardization; performance rationality; epistemic justice; Kosovo*

Introduction

Curricular reforms of recent decades have taken place within a global policy regime where standardization, measurability, and international comparability have become the dominant language of educational quality. Discourses of key competencies, learning outcomes, and accountability have been institutionalized as the rationality of reform, positioning the curriculum as a technical instrument for improving performance. These developments are not merely technical shifts in curriculum design; they are embedded in broader transformations in educational governance in which comparison, accountability, and measurable performance increasingly shape what counts as educational quality.

However, as the critical tradition of curriculum studies emphasizes, the curriculum is not simply an organizational architecture of content, but a normative field where knowledge, power, and ideology are intertwined (Apple, 2004; Pinar, 2012). Any curricular reform is, in this sense, a political project that determines not only what should be taught, but also which forms of knowledge are legitimized and what kinds of educational subjects are expected to be formed. Global standardization produces a pedagogical universalism that is often presented as neutral, technical, and necessary. Yet this universalism masks specific epistemological assumptions and particular models of academic success. It normalizes forms of knowledge and performance that appear universal while being rooted in particular cultural and

socio-political traditions. From a critical policy perspective, such processes can be understood within broader forms of performative and neoliberal educational governance, in which standards, measurable outcomes, and international comparability increasingly function as mechanisms for defining and regulating educational quality. Herein lies the fundamental tension of contemporary curriculum studies: if equity is reduced to applying the same standards to everyone, then there is a risk of producing formal equity without addressing the structural inequalities that actually affect learning opportunities (Fraser, 2008).

Fraser's three-dimensional framework of social justice – redistribution, recognition, and representation – provides an analytical tool for shifting the debate from performance to substantive justice. Redistribution requires addressing the material and structural conditions of learning; recognition requires legitimizing diverse identities and experiences; representation requires real participation in decision-making processes. When the curriculum is analyzed through this lens, it can no longer be understood as a technical mechanism for organizing content, but as a structure that produces or limits justice. In this debate, the epistemic dimension becomes as important as the distributive one.

Discussions on the decolonization of knowledge and epistemic justice emphasize that it is not enough to redistribute access to knowledge; it is necessary to examine the very definition of legitimate knowledge (Santos, 2014). The question of whose knowledge counts (Young, 2008) becomes essential in the context of reforms oriented by global models. When competencies and standards are transferred as universal models, without critical reflection on the context, there is a risk of reproducing epistemological hierarchies and marginalizing local perspectives. This risk is particularly relevant in education systems positioned within transnational processes of policy borrowing and European harmonization, where alignment with

dominant policy frameworks may provide international legitimacy while simultaneously narrowing the space for contextual and epistemological plurality. Primary education is a particularly sensitive terrain for these tensions. At this stage, basic understandings of academic merit, ability, and belonging are established. Standardized curricular structures and assessment practices contribute to the construction of institutional expectations that can naturalize differences in performance as individual differences, obscuring their social dimension (Apple, 2004). Standardization is thus not only a matter of organizing content, but a shaping mechanism of educational subjectivity.

Drawing on the critical curriculum literature, social justice theory, and debates over epistemic justice, this article conceptualizes curriculum reform not as a linear process of implementation but as an ethical and political project. Through a critical analysis of primary education reform documents in Kosovo, the study examines how the universalism of standards interacts with aspirations for equity, inclusion, and epistemological pluralism. More specifically, it examines how the operational architecture of competencies, learning outcomes, and assessment is positioned in relation to the normative commitments to social justice articulated within the reform.

The contribution of the article lies in the reconceptualization of curriculum reform as a terrain where two rationalities interact in a structurally unequal relationship: the rationality of performance and the rationality of justice. By treating this tension as structural rather than accidental, the article contributes to international debates on curricular justice and on the ways in which curricula can be reformulated to move beyond formal equality towards substantive and epistemically pluralistic forms of justice. In doing so, the study also raises a broader critical question about whether globally circulating models of standardization can accommodate social

and epistemic justice without reconsidering the power relations embedded in the definition of legitimate knowledge, performance, and educational quality.

Literature Review

Contemporary curriculum reforms are taking place within a transnational policy field in which standardization, measurability, and international comparability have become dominant elements of the policy vocabulary of educational quality (Meyer & Benavot, 2013; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Verger et al., 2018). This normalization of standards and indicators produces what Ball (2003, 2012) defines as a performative culture, where education is governed through indicators, auditing, and accountability. In this rationality, the curriculum is treated as a mechanism for producing results, while quality is reduced to reportable performance (Hopmann, 2008; Sahlberg, 2011). Biesta (2009, 2010) argues that an excessive emphasis on measurement and effectiveness can displace normative consideration of the purposes of education, thereby weakening its ethical, democratic, and emancipatory dimensions. This shift is closely linked to the spread of a global model of reform that Sahlberg (2011) conceptualizes as GERM (Global Education Reform Movement), while Lingard (2010) and Rizvi & Lingard (2010) analyze as part of the neoliberal governance of education. From this perspective, standardization is not merely a technical strategy for improving educational coherence, but also a mode of governance through which particular definitions of quality, success, and legitimate performance acquire institutional authority. In this context, social justice is often narrowed to formal equality through the same standards for all (Gewirtz, 2006), while structural inequalities related to social class, ethnicity and cultural capital remain intact (Reay, 2017; Gillborn, 2008).

Critical curriculum studies understand this process as a matter of power and legitimate knowledge. Critical curriculum studies conceptualize the curriculum not as a neutral representation of society but as a way of organizing knowledge that can produce and reproduce hierarchy (Apple, 2004; Bernstein, 2000). As Bernstein (2000) points out, the classification and framing of knowledge structure the modes of access and legitimacy within the school. Along the same lines, Bourdieu (1977, 1990) argues that the education system reproduces forms of cultural capital by presenting them as individual merit. The debate over “powerful knowledge” (Young, 2008; Young & Muller, 2010) further complicates this discussion. While access to powerful knowledge is seen as a condition for justice, critics point out that the definition of “powerful” is itself a normative act (Wheelahan, 2010; Moore, 2013). In this sense, the claim that a “common curriculum” guarantees equity remains problematic (Priestley, 2011, 2026; Deng, 2018). As Priestley (2026) argues, curricular equity is not automatically achieved through uniformity, but requires reflection on the ways in which standardization can mask real differences in experiences and participation.

The literature on the globalization of education policy has shown that policy borrowing and policy transfer may result in formal adoption without substantive contextual transformation (Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). This is directly related to the tension between the universality of standards and local contexts (Takayama, 2013; Waldow, 2009). In countries with a history of transition or epistemic periphery, this tension becomes even more pronounced (Connell, 2007; Santos, 2014). This tension is particularly relevant in contexts undergoing European integration and policy harmonization, where alignment with transnational frameworks may function simultaneously as a strategy of modernization and as a source of dependence on externally legitimized models of educational knowledge and reform.

The debate on social justice has been deepened through frameworks that link equity to recognition and representation (Fraser, 2008; Young, 1990). Gewirtz (2006) argues that education policies often operate with reduced concepts of justice, privileging technical redistribution over structural transformation. In the field of curriculum, this means that references to inclusion and equity can remain declarative in the absence of structural change (Slee, 2011; Artiles, 2011). The literature of the last decade also moves the analysis to the level of practice through the concept of “curriculum making” (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015; Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). Coker, Kalsoom and Mercieca (2024) show that the agency of the teacher in the micro-curriculum is the place where justice is either reproduced or challenged. This perspective is related to the idea of teacher agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007) and to the role of professionalism in a performative context (Mockler, 2011).

In parallel, the debate on the decolonization of the curriculum has gained new weight (Andreotti, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Govender, 2023). Connell (2007) and Santos (2014) argue for the need for epistemological pluralism to avoid the reproduction of global hierarchies of knowledge. These approaches are related to the concept of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), which in recent literature is directly applied to the curricular context (Babu et al., 2025). Another important analytical line is related to studies on performativity and bounded professionalism (Ball, 2012; Langelotz & Beach, 2024). These studies show that global standardization is not only a matter of document design, but also of the policy ecosystem that shapes the professional identity of the teacher (Sachs, 2016).

In this sense, curricular justice should be seen as an issue that includes not only content, but also the structural conditions of implementation. Taken together, this literature suggests that the tension between standardization and equity is not an

accidental aberration but a structural feature of contemporary curriculum reforms. Uniformity of standards can produce coherence and comparability, but without redistributive, recognitional, representative, and epistemic mechanisms, it risks producing formal equality and substantive injustice. However, less attention has been paid to how these competing rationalities are organized within the internal architecture of curriculum reform itself: how competencies, learning outcomes, and standards operate as institutional mechanisms, while commitments to equity and inclusion may remain primarily normative. This study addresses this analytical gap by examining curriculum reform in Kosovo as a concrete site where global policy harmonization, performance rationality, and claims to social and epistemic justice intersect.

Recent scholarship extends these established critiques in several directions. Langelotz and Beach (2024) examine how performative governance operates through professional-development markets, while Yoon (2024) revisits the GERM thesis in relation to intensified neoliberal reform. Research on curriculum making emphasizes teachers' agency in interpreting policy and in reproducing or challenging curricular injustice (Coker et al., 2024). Studies of epistemic injustice and curricular justice further examine whose knowledge is legitimized and how common curricular expectations interact with unequal educational conditions (Babu et al., 2025; Priestley, 2026; Riddle et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Contemporary debates approach the tension between global standardization and social justice from distinct perspectives. Ball (2003) conceptualizes performativity as a technology of governance that regulates institutions and professional identities through targets, comparison, and accountability. Biesta (2009) examines how

measurement can displace normative deliberation about the purposes of education, while Sahlberg (2011) identifies standardization, competition, and test-based accountability as features of the transnational reform pattern described as GERM.

On the one hand, the rationality of competencies, learning outcomes and accountability constructs a measurable and comparable architecture of educational success. This rationality is situated within broader forms of performative and neoliberal educational governance in which standards, comparison, and accountability increasingly shape the institutional definition of quality. On the other hand, the discourse of social justice articulates demands for equity, inclusion, recognition and epistemological pluralism (Fraser, 2008; Santos, 2014).

As critical curriculum theory emphasizes, the organization of knowledge and the formulation of standards are not neutral processes, but produce certain forms of legitimacy and subjectivity (Apple, 2004; Bernstein, 2000). In this sense, standardization functions as an organizing logic that structures competencies and assessment mechanisms, while social justice can remain at a declarative level if it is not integrated into the operational design of the curriculum. The analytical framework therefore examines not only whether social justice appears in policy discourse, but whether redistribution, recognition, representation, and epistemic plurality are embedded in the operational architecture of curricular design. To conceptualize this interaction, this study proposes a theoretical model that presents curriculum reform as a space of tension between two rationalities: the rationality of performance and the rationality of justice. The model does not treat these as binary alternatives, but as coexisting projects that are asymmetrically organized within the curricular architecture.

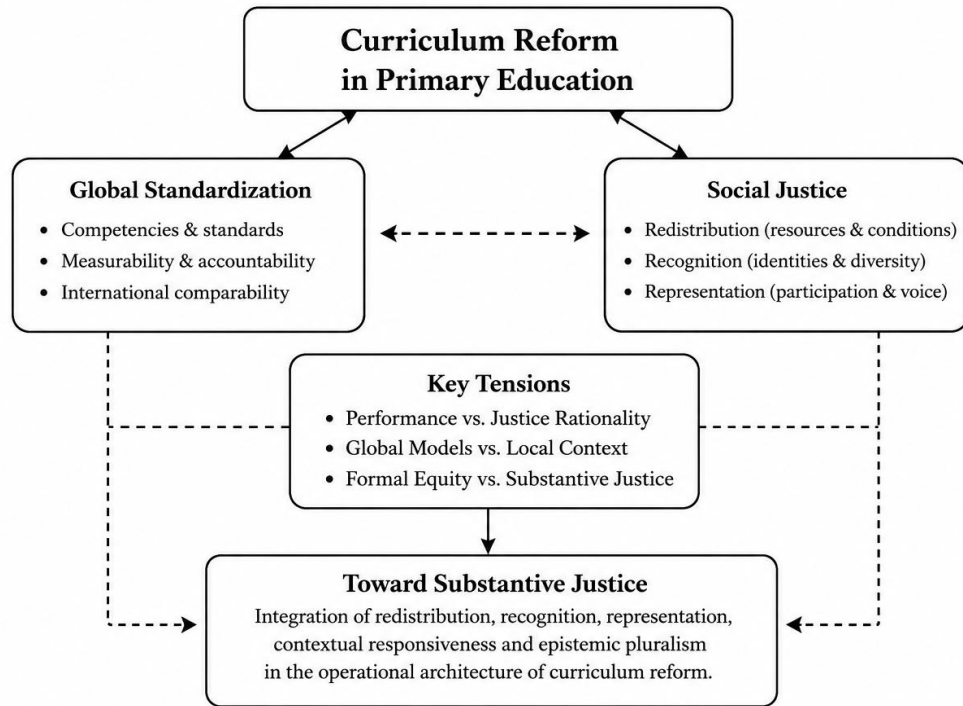


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of curriculum reform between global standardization and social justice*

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that guides the analysis. It presents curriculum reform as a field of tension between global standardization and social justice. These competing rationalities generate tensions between performance and fairness, global models and local context, and formal equity and substantive justice. The framework proposes that substantive justice requires the integration of redistribution, recognition, representation, contextual responsiveness, and epistemic pluralism into the operational architecture of curriculum reform.

Methodology

This study used qualitative critical policy analysis to examine how global standardization and social justice are articulated and positioned within Kosovo's

primary-education curriculum architecture. Critical policy analysis was appropriate because the research question concerns not only the explicit content of policy, but also how policy categories define legitimate knowledge, quality, participation, and success.

The empirical corpus comprised three documents: the Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo (MEST, 2016b), the Core Curriculum for the Preparatory Grade and Primary Education (MEST, 2016a), and Curricular Overload in Primary and Lower Secondary Education in Kosovo: Reality or Perception? (KPI, 2022). Purposive selection followed three criteria: national or institutional authority, direct relevance to Grades 1-5, and a distinct role in the reform process. The Framework states the reform's overarching principles; the Core Curriculum translates those principles into competencies, learning outcomes, and assessment expectations; and the KPI report evaluates tensions that arose during implementation. The three documents were treated as complementary rather than equivalent sources.

The unit of analysis was a policy segment: a sentence, paragraph, competency formulation, learning-outcome statement, principle, or institutional interpretation that conveyed a complete claim about curriculum purpose, expectations, implementation, or participation. Context surrounding each segment was retained so that isolated phrases were not coded without reference to their section and function in the document.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, each document was read in full and relevant segments were identified using descriptive labels such as competencies, learning outcomes, indicators, assessment, inclusion, equality, resources, participation, local knowledge, and curricular overload. Second, these segments were coded deductively through the theoretical framework. Performance rationality was assigned when a segment specified common competencies, measurable

outcomes, indicators, assessment, comparability, or achievement expectations. Redistribution referred to resources, differentiated support, material conditions, or compensatory measures; recognition to diversity, identity, inclusion, gender equality, non-discrimination, or special educational needs; representation to participation by teachers, students, parents, or communities in curriculum interpretation and decision-making; and epistemic justice to the selection and legitimacy of knowledge, local perspectives, contextual adaptation, or reliance on externally authorized models.

A segment could receive more than one code when it connected different rationalities. For example, a statement linking equal opportunity to individual needs was coded as recognition and redistribution, while a common learning-outcome requirement was coded as performance rationality. Coding absence was not inferred from a single passage. Claims about weak operationalization were made only after comparing (a) the presence of a justice principle, (b) the degree of procedural specification attached to it, and (c) the presence or absence of responsible actors, resources, differentiated measures, or accountability provisions. Third, a cross-document matrix compared how each category appeared in the Framework, the Core Curriculum, and the KPI report. The analysis distinguished normative statements, which name a value or aspiration, from operational provisions, which specify an instrument, responsibility, resource, procedure, or assessment mechanism.

The conclusion that social justice remains mainly normative was derived from the repeated presence of equity and inclusion principles alongside fewer concrete implementation mechanisms. Recognition was judged more visible than redistribution and representation because diversity and inclusion were named repeatedly, while differentiated resource commitments and continuing participatory structures were less explicitly specified. The risk of epistemic dependence was

treated as an interpretive risk, not a demonstrated outcome: it was inferred from close alignment with European competence models combined with limited explicit provision for local knowledge and contextual adaptation.

To support analytical rigor, the same code definitions and normative-operational distinction were applied across all three documents. Interpretations were checked against the full passages and against disconfirming evidence, including the Framework's references to equitable resource distribution and individual needs.

The analysis therefore does not claim that justice is absent; it examines the uneven degree to which its dimensions are translated into operational curriculum arrangements. Table 1 illustrates the path from documentary evidence to code and interpretation.

Table 1. Illustrative coding and cross-document interpretation

Document	Documentary segment	Initial code	Theoretical category	Analytical interpretation
Curriculum Framework	Equal opportunities for all students to learn according to individual needs	Equal opportunity; individual needs	Recognition; redistribution	A clear justice commitment is present, but the statement does not itself specify funding, staffing, or accountability mechanisms.
Curriculum Framework	Learning resources should promote human rights, social justice, and inclusion and avoid prejudice and stereotypes	Inclusive resources; non-discrimination	Recognition; epistemic justice	The curriculum sets a normative criterion for resources and legitimate representation of difference.
Core Curriculum	Inclusion is framed as equal opportunity, while progress is organized through common learning outcomes	Inclusion; common outcomes	Recognition; performance rationality	Justice and performance coexist, but differentiated support for reaching the common outcomes is less procedurally specified.

Document	Documentary segment	Initial code	Theoretical category	Analytical interpretation
KPI report	At least ten subjects from Grade 1; three subjects added in Grades 1-2 without additional weekly hours	Curricular overload; accumulated expectations	Performance rationality; redistribution	Common demands increased without an equivalent increase in time or support, producing unequal pressure where conditions differ.
Across the Framework and Core Curriculum	European competence alignment is explicit; provisions for local knowledge and contextual adaptation are less explicit	Policy alignment; limited contextual specification	Epistemic justice	This pattern supports a cautious claim of risk of epistemic dependence, not proof that dependence has occurred.

Findings

1. Standardization as a structuring logic of reform: social justice on the discursive periphery

The Framework and Core Curriculum organize the reform through key competencies, curriculum learning outcomes, subject outcomes, indicators, and assessment expectations (MEST, 2016a, 2016b). These elements specify what students should achieve and provide a common structure for planning and assessment. By contrast, equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination appear primarily among the reform's guiding principles. This difference in documentary function is the first basis for distinguishing an operational performance architecture from a more normative justice discourse.

The KPI report makes the operational pressure of this architecture more concrete. It describes the Framework as being based on competencies that refer to European competences (KPI, 2022, p. 77). It also reports that pupils encounter at least ten subjects from Grade 1 and that three subjects were added in Grades 1 and 2

compared with the pre-2016 curriculum, although weekly teaching hours did not increase (KPI, 2022, pp. 77, 84-85). These details do not show that competencies are inherently unjust. They show that common and expanded expectations were specified more clearly than additional time, resources, or differentiated support. In the coding framework, the former were classified as performance rationality, while the latter would constitute redistributive mechanisms. Their uneven specification supports the conclusion that performance rationality has the stronger operational position.

2. Harmonization with European competences: international legitimacy and risk of epistemic dependence

The Core Curriculum explicitly links Kosovo's reform to European key competences and translates that alignment into common learning outcomes (MEST, 2016a; European Union, 2018). On page 14, it defines inclusion as equal opportunity to participate in quality education and, in the same section, presents competency outcomes as expectations to be achieved progressively across schooling. The two commitments are compatible in principle. The analytical question is whether the common outcomes are accompanied by sufficiently explicit mechanisms for learners and schools that begin from unequal conditions. The documents mention individual needs, equity, and inclusion, but provide less detail on differentiated funding, staffing, infrastructure, local adaptation, or accountability for compensatory support. The analysis therefore identifies a tension between common expectations and the limited procedural specification of contextual support.

3. Social justice as an explicit value, but not as an operational architecture

Social justice is explicitly present in the documents through references to equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, gender equality, and support for students with special educational needs (MEST, 2016a, 2016b). The issue is not whether these commitments exist, but how each dimension of justice is institutionalized.

Applying Fraser's (2008) framework reveals different levels of documentary visibility and operational detail across redistribution, recognition, and representation.

Redistribution appears in the Framework's acknowledgement that participation, completion, and gender equality depend on equitable resource distribution and on addressing dropout among children from poor and marginalized families (MEST, 2016b, p. 10). The Framework further states that the competence-based approach should provide equal learning opportunities according to individual needs (p. 26). These passages are important counter-evidence to any claim that redistribution is absent. Yet they do not specify binding allocations, staffing levels, infrastructure standards, or lines of accountability. The KPI report's evidence of additional subjects without additional weekly hours (2022, pp. 84-85) illustrates why such mechanisms matter. Redistribution is therefore coded as normatively present but less operationally specified than common curricular expectations.

Recognition is the most visible justice dimension. The Framework requires learning resources to promote human rights, social justice, and inclusion and to avoid prejudice, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes (MEST, 2016b, p. 53). The Core Curriculum likewise names diversity, gender equality, non-discrimination, and special educational needs (MEST, 2016a). These provisions establish criteria for whose identities and experiences should be respected. Their limitation is not silence about difference, but the weaker connection between these

principles and the detailed organization of competencies, outcomes, and assessment.

Representation is less explicit. In the selected documents, teachers, students, parents, and communities appear as stakeholders in education, but the documents provide limited detail on permanent procedures through which they can revise curricular priorities, contest definitions of success, or participate in continuing curriculum governance. Because the corpus does not include consultation records or implementation regulations, this finding is restricted to the documentary architecture analyzed here; it should not be read as proof that participation never occurs in practice.

The epistemic-justice code captured references to the source and legitimacy of curricular knowledge. European competence alignment is explicit and offers coherence and international recognition. The selected documents provide less explicit guidance on how local knowledge, community perspectives, and contextual differences should shape competency interpretation. This imbalance does not demonstrate epistemic dependence. It identifies a risk: externally legitimized models may be treated as universally sufficient when mechanisms for contextual adaptation and epistemic plurality are not equally specified.

Across the three documents, the comparison therefore yields a consistent pattern. The Framework states broad principles and acknowledges unequal conditions; the Core Curriculum operationalizes reform mainly through competencies, outcomes, and assessment; and the KPI report documents overload and implementation pressure. Read together, they support three bounded conclusions: justice is present but often stated normatively; recognition is more visible than redistribution and representation; and European alignment creates a potential, rather than proven, risk of epistemic dependence. These conclusions arise from the content and function of

the policy provisions, not from treating the theoretical framework as evidence in itself.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how performance rationality and social justice are positioned within Kosovo's primary curriculum reform. The cross-document analysis shows an asymmetry of specification. Competencies, learning outcomes, indicators, and assessment expectations are formulated as instruments for planning and evaluating achievement. Equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination are clearly endorsed, but fewer provisions identify the resources, responsibilities, participatory procedures, and contextual adaptations needed to enact them. The finding is therefore not that the curriculum rejects social justice. It is that justice commitments and performance mechanisms occupy different levels of the policy architecture. Recognition is most visible in provisions on diversity and non-discrimination. Redistribution is acknowledged through references to equitable resources and individual needs, but concrete allocation and accountability mechanisms are less explicit. Representation receives the least procedural detail in the selected corpus. European competence alignment provides coherence and legitimacy, while its combination with limited specification of local adaptation creates a possible risk of epistemic dependence. The KPI evidence on curriculum overload demonstrates how common expectations may create unequal pressures when time and resources are not adjusted.

The brief examples from England and Denmark further indicate that national standards can coexist with explicit duties to differentiate teaching and provide additional support (Department for Education, 2014; Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2024). The central policy question is therefore not whether

common standards should exist, but which institutional conditions make them attainable under unequal circumstances. Conceptually, the study describes curriculum reform as an asymmetric coexistence of performance and justice rationalities. Substantive justice requires the latter to be expressed not only as a value, but through the mechanisms that organize knowledge, participation, support, assessment, and educational success.

Implications for Curriculum Theory and Policy

For curriculum theory, the findings show why justice should be analyzed at two levels: normative commitment and operational design. A curriculum may recognize equity and diversity while still organizing success through common outcomes that assume unequal learners and schools can respond under similar conditions. Critical curriculum analysis should therefore examine who defines legitimate knowledge, how achievement is measured, whose participation influences curricular priorities, and which material supports make access possible (Apple, 2004; Fraser, 2008). This distinction avoids equating the presence of inclusive language with its institutional realization.

For policy, harmonization with European competence frameworks need not be abandoned. It can support coherence, mobility, and international legitimacy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The required change is to connect common expectations to explicit context-responsive duties. Curriculum and implementation guidance should specify how outcomes may be adapted without lowering educational entitlement; how schools serving disadvantaged communities receive additional time, staffing, learning materials, and specialist support; and who is accountable for providing these conditions. Participation should be strengthened through recurring mechanisms by which teachers, students, parents, and communities can

contribute to curriculum review. Assessment guidance should include critical, civic, ethical, and collaborative dimensions alongside readily measurable outcomes. From an epistemic perspective, curriculum review should document how local histories, languages, experiences, and knowledge traditions are included and how they enter dialogue with transnational frameworks (Connell, 2007; Santos, 2014). Teacher professional development should prepare teachers to interpret competencies responsively rather than treat the curriculum as a closed technical package. These measures would retain shared educational expectations while making redistribution, recognition, representation, and contextual adaptation part of implementation rather than leaving them solely as stated principles.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations arising from its documentary and interpretive design. First, the empirical corpus was limited to three policy and institutional documents that represent the conceptual framework, its operational translation into primary education, and an institutional assessment of curriculum overload.

Although these documents are central to the reform, they do not capture the full range of regulations, subject curricula, local implementation guidelines, or school-level practices through which curriculum policy is enacted. Second, the analysis did not include interviews, classroom observations, or the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, and curriculum policymakers. The conclusions therefore concern the architecture and discourse of the selected documents rather than the ways in which standardization and social justice are interpreted, negotiated, or resisted in educational practice. Third, the analysis was guided by a critical theoretical framework and should be understood as an interpretive account rather than a neutral or exhaustive evaluation of curriculum reform. The brief references to

England and Denmark are illustrative rather than the product of a systematic cross-national comparison. Consequently, the study does not claim that differences in curricular architecture directly produce differences in educational achievement or equity.

Future research should extend the documentary corpus to include subject curricula, assessment regulations, implementation guidelines, resource-allocation policies, and school-level curriculum plans. Documentary analysis should also be combined with teacher interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of assessment practices to examine how common competency expectations are adapted under unequal school conditions. The perspectives of students, parents, communities, and policymakers would be particularly important for investigating the dimension of representation identified in this study. A systematic comparative study involving Kosovo and other European education systems could further examine how common standards are combined with differentiated support, local flexibility, and redistributive mechanisms. Such research would connect the policy architecture examined here with the practical conditions through which curricular justice is enabled or constrained.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethics approval Not applicable as the article is a conceptual/theoretical paper that draws essentially from secondary sources.

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