

# EVALUATING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUALITY INDICATORS

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** This study examines the relationship among teachers' experiences, their assessments of teaching and learning quality, and professional development (PD) in schools. It investigates how internal school assessment policies and quality assurance frameworks impact school performance and teachers' professional development needs, focusing on the Kosovo educational context.

**Methods.** The research utilises a mixed-methods approach, collecting quantitative data from 136 teachers through surveys and qualitative insights from six school prin-

cipals via interviews. Quantitative analysis involved correlation, ANOVA, and descriptive statistics (SPSS), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.

**Results.** Findings indicate that institutional support and quality assurance frameworks shape perceptions of quality, while a gap exists between bureaucratic compliance and instructional innovation. Quantitative data shows no correlation between teachers' experience and their assessment of quality, suggesting institutional socialisation.

**Conclusions.** The study underscores the need to shift from evaluating policy implementation to fostering peer-driven professional development. Effective school improvement requires context-specific policies beyond a "one-size-fits-all" strategy.

**Keywords:** teaching and learning, teacher professional development, quality assurance, internal school policy, school performance

## INTRODUCTION

Education investments have a significant influence on the development of human capital, work efficiency and professional capacities leading to improvement in school performance (Bhatnagar et al., 2022; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013).

Teachers are a key factor in shaping the learning environment and their experience is closely linked with educational quality. As education systems evolve, understanding the multifaceted relationships between teachers' experiences and their evaluations of teaching and learning quality becomes increasingly important (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Previous literature emphasises the role of teachers' experiences and reflective practices on the perception of educational quality (Harris & Jones, 2019; Zepeda, 2019). The contextual elements of municipalities necessitate a localised approach to understanding these evaluations (Baker et al., 2020).

In this context, structured assessment approaches are regarded as instruments that facilitate the improvement of educational quality, providing unambiguous guidance to systematic evaluation and continuous professional learning (Tognolini & Stanley, 2007).

This study discusses the impact of policies for internal evaluation of schools and for quality assurance systems on school performance and teachers' professional development needs. It thus contributes to the improvement of educational practices and policies.

Consequently, the research aims to analyse the two areas of School Performance Quality, such as: Teaching and Learning as well as Professional Development of Teachers (Ministria e Arsimit, Shkencës dhe Teknologjisë & Instituti Pedagogjik i Kosovës, 2016a; Ministria e Shkencës dhe Teknologjisë, 2017a), treating them in focus of teachers and school principal perceptions.

Based on this approach, the study addresses the following research questions: RQ1: What is the relationship between teachers' experience and their perception of the quality of teaching and learning and professional development? RQ2: How does the perception of the quality of teaching and learning and professional development differ based

on teachers' municipalities? RQ3: What is the impact of each indicator of the Framework for quality assurance of school performance in Kosovo on the quality of teaching and learning? RQ4: What is the impact of each indicator of the Framework for quality assurance of school performance in Kosovo on the quality of professional development? RQ5: What is the relationship between the assessment of teaching and learning, and professional development? RQ6: How do internal school assessment policies and the implementation of quality assurance frameworks influence school performance and the teacher professional development needs?

## TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE AND TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY

In the 21st century, teaching extends beyond acquiring knowledge in school and applying it at work. Modern education emphasises students actively constructing knowledge, essential to the constructivist approach. As information becomes ubiquitous, lifelong learning is crucial, requiring future teachers to possess knowledge far beyond current school curricula (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Domik & Fischer, 2011). Consequently, teacher effectiveness is evaluated based on subject knowledge, teaching skills, and student test scores (Day, 2019).

For years, research has found a positive correlation between teaching experience and teacher effectiveness. More experienced teachers have been shown to contribute significantly to student achievement and overall school improvement (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Odanga & Aloka, 2024; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Matthew Wiswall (2013) highlights two possible outcomes regarding teacher effectiveness based on experience. If effectiveness improves with experience, retaining teachers and rewarding them for longevity is essential. However, if teacher quality remains constant, compensation and promotion should focus on identifying and keeping teachers with the best natural abilities, rather than solely on experience.

If we shift our attention to the quality of teaching, we can define that the constructivist approach governs the learning process by increasing the need to develop higher-order thinking skills, leading to information processing, and thus enabling individuals to challenge and navigate life (Huang, 2002). Therefore, the constructivist approach focuses not only on learning and teaching environments based on outcomes but also on integrating these practices into teachers' professional development, requiring the construction of their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, thereby impacting students' knowledge creation (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012).

## TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Teacher professional development (PD) is widely implemented across many countries with the shared goal of improving student learning (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014).

To be successful, a teacher must actively seek to improve their teaching practices. Therefore, professional development today not only promotes teaching and knowledge acquisition but also inspires teachers to think critically about their previous teaching practices and to develop new approaches and methods in the education (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

The constructivist approach redefines the teacher's role as a designer of the learning environment, a guide, and an organiser of the learning process (Jia, 2010). This approach emphasises the continuous improvement of cognitive skills, highlighting the necessity for ongoing professional development that aligns with reform initiatives and enhances teaching quality (Guskey, 2003; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991).

In terms of school performance, literature often associates such achievements with management support by motivating teachers to improve their skills thematic evaluation and continuous professional learning (Li et al., 2023). Before discussing the role of management, the school's conditions for Qualifying Personality Development (QPD) are highlighted, especially communication, interaction, and leadership. (Rahman, 2022). Based on Nico Alexander Vizano (2020), as teacher performance is considered essential in education, teachers must continuously seek ways to enhance themselves. This creates a triangle necessary for achieving the image of a 21st-century school, underscoring the undeniable role of management in motivating and meeting teachers' needs to improve both teacher and school performance.

Christopher Rhodes and Sandra Beneicke (2003) emphasize that management helps professional development by identifying the causes of low performance, be it organisational, managerial, team or individual. Teachers and school leaders need to talk to each other well to identify professional needs and plan appropriate training.

Various authors offer different methods for identifying teachers' professional development needs, considering factors such as curriculum, teaching experience, and school roles (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Zein, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019, as cited in Fang et al., 2021). According to İnayet Aydin et al. (2021), to meet these requirements, a broader perspective is needed that includes the role of policymakers along with existing analytical frameworks.

Modern teaching refers to continuous professional development and reflective and constructive practices, where teachers facilitate learning. Ultimately, improving school performance relies on the ability of management to motivate staff and collaborate with policymakers to address professional needs holistically (Deer & Heringer, 2023). Based on the research of Coral Mitchell and Joyce B. Castle (2005), a favourable school climate is vital for creating strong staff relationships. Additionally, it is the principal's obligation to establish a pleasant and exciting learning environment in the school. Participation in professional development promotes teachers' abilities, teamwork, and classroom management, leading to a school atmosphere where pupils feel comfortable and equipped with important life competencies (Alsaied et al., 2026; Dacholfany et al., 2024).

## INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The “Strategic Education Plan 2017-2021” identifies several challenges and opportunities in education, particularly in Teaching and Learning, and Teacher Professional Development (Ministria e Arsimit, Shkencës dhe Teknologjisë [MASHT], 2016). Professional development is highlighted as a key programme area and strategic objective in both the 2011-2016 and 2017-2021 plans (MASHT, 2011; MASHT, 2016). The “Education Strategy 2022-2026” (2022), focuses on five priority areas, with pre-university education addressing four thematic areas, including Teachers. A key challenge remains the preparation of pre-service teachers and the declining participation in professional development activities, mainly due to budget constraints and failure to implement the teacher licensing system. In the pre-university education area, professional development is addressed under strategic objective 2, specifically in objectives 2.8 and 2.9.

A major issue identified in pre-university education is the “low quality of education due to the lack of consolidated mechanisms for quality assurance and effective teaching.” The general objective is to “improve the quality of pre-university education by consolidating quality assurance mechanisms and providing effective teaching” (MASHT, 2022). This emphasises the need for continuous effort to achieve effective teaching and highlights dissatisfaction with the current state of professional development. Investing in this area would increase opportunities for professional growth, improving teaching quality and overall pre-university education quality, thus fulfilling the requirement for consolidating quality assurance mechanisms.

The Administrative Instruction no. 4/2017 on the Performance Evaluation of Educational Institutions in Pre-University Education highlights the necessity of evaluating school performance to enhance the quality of educational institutions. Point 3 states that “the quality areas of the institution/school are key segments that will serve as reference points for evaluating the performance of educational institutions in Kosovo, ensuring coherence between the self-assessment and external evaluation processes.” It also identifies internal evaluation as a way to monitor quality standards (MASHT, 2017b).

## INFLUENCE OF INTERNAL SCHOOL ASSESSMENT POLICIES

The document promoting the research purpose, “Strategic Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance,” emphasises the interaction between the main principles of Kosovo’s Pre-University Education Curriculum Framework (KKAP) and school performance quality areas. Two quality fields related to this research are: 3. Teaching and Learning, and 4. Teacher Professional Development.

Teaching is seen as facilitating learning, which happens everywhere—classrooms, nature, home, or other environments. The document also highlights that professional development for teachers leads to improving both teacher competencies and school

performance (MASHT & Instituti Pedagogjik i Kosovës, [IPK], 2016a). The School Self-Evaluation Guide (2016b) assists school teams in conducting internal evaluations to promote school development in alignment with the Strategic Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance.

The study by Elmedina Nikoçević-Kurti and Lirika Bërdynaj-Syla (2024) underlines the necessity for teachers to get continuous training that increases professional growth and fosters cooperation among instructors with the purpose of exchanging effective practices that improve teaching quality. Additionally, the *Udhëzues – zhvillimi profesional i mësimdhënësve me bazë në shkollë* (Guide – school-based teacher professional development) (MASHT, 2026) reinforces the need for teacher development, support, and recognition to foster lifelong learning capacities in students. It stresses that professional development is one of the most influential factors in improving teaching and learning quality (MASHT, 2017a).

Supporting teacher growth to foster lifelong learning, the Strategic Framework for Professional Development stresses that “one of the most direct factors in improving the quality of teaching and learning is the professional development of teachers” (MASHT, 2017a).

*Policy enactment in school settings*: Local actors, such as principals and teachers, “interpret” and “adapt” policies based on the context (resources, school culture, location) rather than just “implementing” them like robots. According to Stephen J. Ball, et al. (2011) and policy enactment theory, school actors interpret and adapt policies based on local material and discursive contexts, leading to diverse implementations of quality assurance frameworks.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on documents from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MASHT), such as the *Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance in Kosovo* and the *Guide for Internal School Evaluation*. Therefore, from an epistemological standpoint, the paper first constructs a theoretical framework, which is divided into two types: Type A, based on literature and different scientific approaches from various authors, and Type B, which further develops a different perspective to analyse the key issues of the paper. This latter perspective is grounded in the pedagogical documents (policies) of MASHT, thereby allowing for a discursive construction of educational policy problems (Anderson & Holloway, 2020). The paper then proceeds with empirical research.

### Empirical Research Design

The study uses a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to increase the depth and comprehensiveness of the analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Qerimi et al., 2023).

## Quantitative Design

Based on *the Guide for Internal School Evaluation* (2016), *the Professional Development Needs Assessment – Survey Instrument* (Hanover Research, 2020), and Pritha Bhandari (2023), the quantitative approach measures teachers' perceptions through a survey technique. The questionnaire was created using criteria for school performance quality and quality areas. The questions are designed to assess a number of factors from two quality domains: Teaching and Learning (Area 3) and Teacher Professional Development (Area 4). All items were measured on a five-point Likert agreement scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting a more favourable evaluation of the respective quality indicator. The same five-point scale was applied uniformly across both quality domains to enable direct comparison and aggregation of indicators within and across scales.

*Procedure:* After entering the questionnaire data into an Excel table, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) (Pallant, 2020) was used to perform additional analyses, including correlation analysis, the ANOVA test, and descriptive analysis.

The questionnaire has 11 questions overall. The first 9 are for demographics, while the last 2 are on content. The two aggregated constructs used in the analyses, namely Teaching and Learning and Professional Development, were computed as the mean of their constituent Likert-type items (12 items for Teaching and Learning, and 11 items for Professional Development). To confirm that these aggregate scores represent internally consistent measures of their respective constructs, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale using SPSS. The Teaching and Learning scale yielded  $\alpha = .82$ , and the Professional Development scale yielded  $\alpha = .89$ . Both coefficients exceed the conventional threshold of .70 recommended by Jum Nunnally and Ira Bernstein (1994) and approach or exceed the .80 threshold commonly cited as evidence of good reliability for research instruments (DeVellis, 2017). These results indicate that the items within each scale are measuring a coherent underlying construct, supporting the validity of using the aggregated scores in the correlation and ANOVA analyses reported below. Reliability statistics are summarized in Table A3.

To confirm that each aggregated scale reflects a factorable structure, an EFA (Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation) was conducted on the 12 Teaching and Learning items and the 11 Professional Development items. Both scales met standard assumptions, with meritorious-to-good sampling adequacy (KMO = .80 and .86, respectively) and significant Bartlett's tests ( $p < .00$ ). The Professional Development scale produced a clean two-factor solution explaining 60.3% of the variance (first factor: 49.7%), with all items loading substantively and the two factors strongly correlated ( $r = .72$ ), supporting use of a single aggregate score. For Teaching and Learning, the first factor was clearly dominant (32.9% of variance), but the Henry F. Kaiser criterion extracted three additional factors with eigenvalues marginally above 1.00 and the rotation did not fully converge, indicating an unstable over-extraction. Combined with the high

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (.82), this supports treating the scale as a single aggregate measure while flagging the underlying structure for future confirmatory analysis. Summary results are reported in Table A4.

### ***Sample Size***

The sample for this study was purposive (McCombes, 2019) and 137 teachers from primary schools in several municipalities of Kosovo, such as Prishtina, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Gjilan, etc., were selected in order to meet the study objectives. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

## **Qualitative Design**

The qualitative method employed a 10-item interview protocol for school principals that was aligned with the research objectives and questionnaire. The focus was on three key areas: a) school performance quality, b) teachers' professional development needs, and c) teaching and learning.

*Procedure:* The interview data was organised into a table, presenting the responses for each question to ensure a more rational systematisation of the data. An index was then established to extract important data for exploration. The data in the table was coded, key issues identified from the responses, and analysed by creating and categorising schemes and themes. These were further examined through thematic analysis (Naeem et al., 2023) and discussed in subsequent sections.

### ***Sample Size***

Six primary school principals of the schools that participated in the quantitative phase were interviewed with the help of a semi-structured interview protocol. Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Leavy, 2017).

## **DATA RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

This section includes the analysis of data to answer our research questions. Results were gathered by a total of 136 teachers in different schools in four municipalities in Kosovo, namely Prishtine (42%), Gjakove (37%), Mitrovica (15%) and Gjilan (6%). The majority of respondents have finished their Bachelor's studies (70%), while the remainder have finished their Master's studies (30%). Most respondents (64%) are 40 years old or older, 27% are between 30 and 40, and the rest (9%) are under 30. Detailed descriptive statistics are presented in Appendix A (Table A1).

A correlation analysis was conducted, to answer the research question (RQ1): “What is the relationship between teachers’ experience and their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning and professional development?”. Questions measuring the concepts of teaching and learning and professional development were computed into two scale variables, which were then used for the analysis.

The correlation analysis in Table 1 shows that there is no correlation between teachers’ experience and their assessment of teaching and learning ( $r = -.05, p > .5$ ) or between teachers’ experience and their assessment of professional development ( $r = -.08, p > .05$ ). The absence of a significant correlation suggests that educators’ views on professional development may not be exclusively influenced by experience. This outcome challenges the belief that extended teaching tenure necessarily influences views of professional development involvement.

**Table 1**  
*Correlation Analysis for RQ1*

		1	2	3
Years of experience	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Professional development	Pearson Correlation	0.08	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.37		
Teaching and learning	Pearson Correlation	-0.05		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.54		
N		135	136	136

*Note.* \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Source.* Own research.

Furthermore, to answer the second research question (RQ2): “How does the assessment of the quality of teaching and learning and professional development differ based on teachers’ municipalities?” we ran an ANOVA test to examine potential differences between three main municipalities (where the sample size allows)—namely, Gjakove, Mitrovice, and Prishtine—regarding their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and professional development. Initially, we do not see any differences between the three municipalities regarding their rating of professional development [ $F(2,124) = 0.74, p = .48, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ ].

However, there are significant differences between the three municipalities regarding their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in their schools [ $F(2,123) = 4.88, p = 0.00, \text{partial } n^2 = .07$ ]. This effect size falls in the small-to-medium range, indicating that approximately 7% of the variance in teachers’ evaluations of teaching and learning quality is attributable to between-municipality differences. While the effect is modest in magnitude, it is statistically robust and meaningful in the context

of educational evaluation, where between-school and between-municipality variance in policy enactment is typically small but consequential.

Looking into the mean score of each municipality (see Appendix A, Table A2), we conclude that teachers from Gjakove evaluate the quality of teaching and learning as being the highest ( $M = 4.56$ ). This is then followed by teachers from Mitrovice ( $M = 4.44$ ) and Prishtine ( $M = 4.35$ ). This means that rather than professional development, which is often more standardised, teachers' perceptions of teaching quality are more influenced by local factors such as administrative support, school culture, and resource availability. This undermines one-size-fits-all PD methods and underscores the necessity to adjust policies to local situations.

**Table 2**

*One-way Analysis of Variance results for RQ2*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial n2
Teaching and learning	Between Groups	1.23	2	0.62	4.88	.00	.07
	Within Groups	15.66	124	0.13			
	Total	16.89	126				
Professional development	Between Groups	0.52	2	0.26	0.74	.48	.01
	Within Groups	43.15	124	0.35			
	Total	43.66	126				

*Note.* Partial n2 interpreted following Jacob Cohen (1988): .01 = small, .06 = medium, .14 = large effect

*Source.* Own research.

The analysis addressing the third research question (RQ3) “What is the impact of each indicator on the quality of teaching and learning” shows that the overall quality of teaching and learning is evaluated quite high ( $M = 4.56$ ). Teachers agreed most with the statement, “The school is committed to the continuous improvement of the teaching process” ( $M = 4.71$ ), followed by “Parents are informed about achievements, developments, and the schedule of their children” ( $M = 4.64$ ), reflecting strong organisational support and communication. Importantly, the statement “Teachers plan their work in accordance with curriculum requirements” received a high mean score ( $M = 4.63$ ), indicating teachers' consistent adherence to formal planning and documentation. However, the lowest agreement was with “Teaching content is inspired by real-life and current events” ( $M = 4.07$ ), revealing challenges in applying curriculum content to real-life contexts. Detailed descriptive statistics for all indicators are presented in Appendix B (Table B1). In this contrast, we see a gap between formal curriculum alignment and practical implementation in the classroom. While strong communication with parents and ongoing professional development support high teacher quality outcomes, lower ratings of real-world relevance suggest deficiencies in teacher preparation or

accessible resources. Therefore, this model reveals distinct cultures of professional development—from innovation to compliance—that need to be considered when designing strategies for student-centered teaching techniques.

Similarly, the fourth research question (RQ4) is: “What is the impact of each indicator on the quality of professional development?”. The overall quality of professional development is perceived as high ( $M = 4.21$ ), though somewhat lower than the quality of teaching and learning ( $M = 4.56$ ). Teachers agreed most with the statement, “The school receives evidence from the monitoring of the impact of PD in raising the quality and effectiveness of teaching for the development of key competencies” ( $M = 4.41$ ), indicating strong commitment to formal monitoring processes. In contrast, the lowest agreement was for the statement, “Collegial mentoring practices are implemented in the school” ( $M = 3.93$ ), highlighting a clear gap in peer collaboration and support. This contrast highlights a key tension: collegial mentorship and collaborative learning practices—organic, culture-driven processes—are not well implemented in schools, despite formal administrative supervision of professional development. These results imply that rather than being seen as a vehicle for real professional development, quality assurance in Kosovo’s educational system is mostly seen as a compliance duty. To improve the influence of professional development on teaching effectiveness, this imbalance must be addressed by promoting both formal and informal teacher development practices. The full descriptive statistics of all indicators related to professional development quality are provided in Table B2 in the Appendix B.

Lastly, we assessed the relationship between the quality of teaching and learning and professional development as two distinct categories that point to the school’s performance overall to answer our final research question RQ5: “What is the relationship between the assessment of teaching and learning, and professional development?”. A correlation test revealed positive significant results,  $r = 0.65$ ,  $N = 136$ ,  $p < .001$ . This indicates that the higher the teachers evaluate professional development, the higher they tend to evaluate teaching and learning, seeing these two concepts as going hand-in-hand. This underscores the importance for integrated strategies in school improvement programmes and supports the conceptual notion that professional development and teaching are linked.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Analysis for RQ5*

		1	2
Professional development	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Teaching and learning	Pearson Correlation	.65**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	136	136

*Note.* \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Source.* Own research.

## FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

To enhance the research depth and supplement the quantitative results (Bicaj & Buza, 2020; Mey, 2022), the interview findings address RQ6: How do internal school assessment policies and the implementation of quality assurance frameworks influence school performance and the professional development needs of teachers?

The interview data was processed through thematic analysis, as can be seen in the codes and excerpts in Table C1 (Appendix C). This process highlighted four main themes: (a) internal evaluation policies; (b) implementation of quality framework criteria; (c) assessment of teachers' professional development needs; and (d) improvement of quality areas for school performance.

Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 from the interview protocol were used to analyse the first identified issue. Furthermore, questions 5, 6, and 7 provide responses for analysing the second issue that emerged from the findings. Additionally, questions 8 and 9 were utilised to address the third issue, while question 10 summarises the data for the fourth identified issue.

### **Policies for Internal School Assessment towards improving school performance**

Based on the findings from the interview (see Table C1) data with school principals in Kosovo, regarding the first issue, we see that the qualitative finding highlights the structured process schools follow for internal performance assessment, aiming to improve school quality. Internal assessments are guided by the Framework for Ensuring School Performance Quality and coordinated by a quality coordinator. The process culminates in a Self-assessment Report, which is regularly reviewed and used to inform the school's Development Plan based on recommendations for improvement. So, this process aligns with quality assurance practices in education, fostering both accountability and the pursuit of school improvement. The emphasis on regular review and external validation ensures that the schools maintain a focus on sustained growth and performance enhancement. Consequently, this process shows how school leadership uses SWOT analyses and Development Plans to adapt national quality frameworks to local realities, while highly relying on formal documentation like Self-assessment Reports and monitoring logs for policy compliance.

### **Implementation of Quality Criteria Based on the Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance**

The findings for the second issue highlight how school principals are working to implement quality field criteria based on the Framework for Quality Assurance of School

Performance. The principals emphasise that the quality areas serve as fundamental pillars for school management, self-assessment, and planning for improvement. Specifically, the areas of “Teaching and Learning” and “Teacher Professional Development” are seen as central to driving progress. Principals note that while some challenges exist in aligning with certain indicators, most criteria are being met successfully. The positive impact of teacher professional development is underlined, as it directly enhances teaching quality, classroom management, and student potential. Moreover, professional development supports the integration of modern methods and technology, contributing to overall school performance improvements. This structured approach towards internal assessments reflects a commitment to continuous development and aligning educational practices with strategic goals. So, this approach suggests that while national standards are met, the implementation is heavily centered on the ‘organisational pillars’ of management, positioning quality assurance as a strategic administrative function.

### **The Assessment of Teachers’ Needs for Professional Development and Improvement of Quality Areas at Enhancing School Performance**

Interview findings reveal a structured approach to assessing professional development needs to enhance school performance. Through regular monitoring and peer mentoring, management evaluates teachers and collaborates with them to design tailored action plans. Needs are identified using questionnaires, self-assessments, development discussions, monitoring reports, and professional files. This ongoing assessment aligns professional growth with school strategic goals, fostering continuous improvement and accountability. However, the findings suggest that mentoring is primarily management-initiated—often triggered by specific observation gaps—rather than an organic, peer-led collaborative practice. This highlights a top-down model where management-led ‘Action Plans’ serve as the primary vehicle for teacher professional growth, often linked to formal monitoring reports and professional files.

### **Improvement of Quality Areas at Enhancing School Performance**

As we can see from the table above, it highlights a strong commitment to improving school performance by activating all available mechanisms and resources. The school emphasises a collaborative approach, involving the quality coordinator, school leadership, and external stakeholders to monitor and enhance teaching quality. Regular meetings with the student council, parents, and school governing bodies ensure that feedback is incorporated into the action plans for improvement. When internal resources are insufficient, the school seeks external support from the Municipi-

pal Education Department and the Ministry of Education. Professional development is prioritised, with continuous teacher training efforts, such as the upcoming “School-Based Teacher Professional Development” program. This systematic approach fosters a culture of growth, collaboration, and proactive problem-solving, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education. A change in strategic management is indicated by the reference to the forthcoming “School-Based Teacher Professional Development” programme. It proposes a move away from isolated, one on one training sessions to a more group based, cooperative model designed to concurrently enhance the pedagogical capacity to the entire teaching staff.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the collected data, an empirical framework was developed focusing on the perceptions of educational staff and school principals. This mixed-methods synthesis explains how local contexts and management practices either support or hinder quality assurance and professional development in Kosovo, as outlined in Table C2 (see Appendix C).

Using policy adoption and agency frameworks, the discussion highlights teacher data and school principals’ insights to present how local contexts, management, and institutional cultures either facilitate or hinder quality assurance and professional development in Kosovo.

### **The Decoupling of Experience and Perception**

While literature suggests experience enhances a teacher’s critical lens, our quantitative analysis (RQ1) found no significant correlation between tenure and quality assessments (Table 1). This “perceptual homogeneity” indicates that institutional socialization overrides experience. Principal interviews (Table C1, Theme 1) confirm this, detailing structured internal assessments where teachers—regardless of tenure—align their perceptions with official Self-Evaluation Reports and Development Plans under a “shared mission” (Sung, 2016).

### **Contextual Variations and Localised Policy Enactment**

The significant differences found between municipalities (RQ2)—with Gjakova showing the highest mean ( $M = 4.56$ ) (Table A2 and A3)—support the “policy enactment” theory (Ball et al., 2011). The qualitative data shows that while all schools use the same national indicators, the *interpretation* of these areas is localised. Principals

in Gjakova highlighted strong “Municipal Evaluation Team” involvement and “KosEd” reports. This suggests that educational quality is not a static result of national mandates but is “translated” through local administrative support and relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2022).

## The Compliance-Learning Paradox

A critical tension exists between institutional efficiency and pedagogical reality (RQ3 & RQ4).

- The Performance: Quantitative data showed high scores for “monitoring of PD impact” ( $M = 4.41$ ); (Table B2). Qualitative data (Theme 3) confirms this: principals report rigorous monitoring through questionnaires, professional files, and monitoring reports.
- The Reality: However, teachers reported the lowest agreement on “collegial mentoring” ( $M = 3.93$ ) (Table B2) and “real-life application” ( $M = 4.07$ ); (Tab. B1).
- This implies that teachers in Kosovo can react defensively to systems of accountability, exercising their agency by either accepting or rejecting required training. This illustrates a culture that is primarily focused on compliance, where schools fulfil bureaucratic standards for quality assurance, but these procedures never result in significant improvements in instructional strategies. In this regard, recent literature has emphasised the significance of relevance in curriculum design, arguing for more useful, real-world connections to help students see the value of their learning (Darling-Hammond, 2024) as well as the need to revise curriculum to better support a competency-based approach (Rexhaj et al., 2026). According to Gert Biesta et al.’s (2015) ecological model of teacher agency, low mentoring scores indicate that management-imposed “Action Plans” (Theme 3) are often perceived as accountability burdens rather than opportunities for collaborative, peer-driven professional growth. Addressing this gap calls for the implementation of more robust mentoring systems that foster peer support and facilitate the exchange of knowledge among teachers (Hobson & Mullen, 2023). This indicates that professional development needs to shift from individual training to more collective, collaborative learning approaches, since according to Rexhep Krasniqi (2022) teachers should be offered opportunities to receive information based on their interests and needs. This active agency helps to explain the observed differences, trade-offs, and inconsistencies in PD enactment by highlighting the significance of viewing professional development as a contextual and negotiated practice rather than a linear, compliance-driven process (Kirby & McLaughlin, 2016).

## Integrated School Performance and Management Agency

The study’s framework is verified by the strong correlation ( $r = 0.65$ ) between PD quality and teaching quality (RQ5). Principals actively “activate all school mecha-

nisms,” such as parent meetings and student council feedback, to improve these areas, according to qualitative findings (Theme 4).

Qualitative findings (Theme 4) show that principals actively “activate all school mechanisms,” including parent meetings and student council feedback, to improve these areas. This holistic approach aligns with Christopher Chapman and Pamela Sammons (2013), who argue that structured assessment frameworks enhance performance by ensuring accountability through defined indicators.

The transition from “individual training” to “school-based professional development” (as mentioned by principals regarding the 50-hour workshops) marks a shift toward collective learning. As emphasised by Richard Dufour and Michael Fullan (2012, as cited in Postholm, 2018), purposeful collaboration among teachers is a primary driver of professional development and the continuous improvement of teaching practices. In this context, consequently, teachers must adapt to increasing educational demands to foster lifelong learning (Qarkaxhija et al., 2021), requiring management to bridge the application gap by shifting PD from generic skills to context-specific, curriculum-aligned training focused on collaborative classroom challenges.

This aligns with Huang’s (2016) view of continuous learning as a core teacher duty and a crucial factor in school improvement. Similarly, Fadil Latifi and Hysen Kasumi (2022) underline that the application of varied teaching approaches is a vital aspect in establishing sustainable student learning. As Linda Darling-Hammond and Maria E. Hyler (2020) suggest, such a comprehensive approach offers instructors with tangible ways to strengthen pedagogical practice and increase student results, reflecting a broader shift toward integrated school performance.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals a complex interaction between teaching quality, professional development (PD), and internal assessment policies in Kosovo. Triangulating teachers’ views with management actions yields two key findings that are relevant to policy implementation and development theory.

First, teaching quality does not correlate with experience; rather, it is shaped by institutional support and local policy implementation. The significant municipal differences – the highest scores in Gjakova – suggest that national frameworks are translated through local administrative support and relational trust.

Second, the research delineates a “compliance-learning dilemma.” A significant theoretical contribution of this study is the identification of a disparity between bureaucratic efficiency and educational advancement.

Schools are competent at collecting professional files and keeping track of how professional growth affects students, but there isn’t much natural collegial mentoring

or actual material application. This suggests that performative conformity may inadvertently overshadow genuine instructional innovation in Kosovo's existing quality assurance approaches.

Third, rather than being the fault of a single teacher, the structural outcome of top-down, management-led "Action Plans" is what causes the discrepancy between formal curriculum alignment and classroom reality. To bridge the gap between classroom theory and student reality, the system must shift its focus from evaluating whether policies are implemented to how they may encourage group, peer-driven professional development.

This study ultimately advocates for an all-encompassing approach to improving education. These findings provide a road map for transforming quality assurance from a bureaucratic procedure into a catalyst for actual progress in education. Instead of a "one-size-fits-all" strategy, this study advocates using structured assessments to empower teacher agency through context-specific, collaborative learning.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table A1**  
*Sample Characteristics*

	N	%
Age		
Up to 30 years old	12	9.0
31 to 40 years old	36	27.1
40-50 years old	49	36.8
More than 50 years old	36	27.1
More than 30 years old	22	5.2
Study level		
BA	93	70.5
MA	39	29.5
Municipality		

	N	%
Prishtine	57	41.9
Gjakove	50	36.8
Mitrovice	20	14.7
Gjilan	9	6.6

Source. Own research.

**Table A2**

*Mean Scores for Municipalities - RQ2*

Teaching and Learning		
Municipalities	M	SD
Gjakovë	4.56	.36
Mitrovicë	4.44	.30
Prishtinë	4.35	.37
Total	4.45	.37

Source. Own research.

**Table A3**

*Internal Consistency Reliability for the Aggregated Scales*

Scale	k	M	SD	$\alpha$
Teaching and Learning	12	4.56	1.00	.82
Professional Development	11	4.21	0.58	.89

Note.  $k$  = number of items;  $M$  = scale mean;  $SD$  = standard deviation;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Both scales were measured on a 5-point Likert agreement scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Source. Own research.

**Table A4**

*Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Two Aggregated Scales*

Scale	k	KMO	$\chi^2$	df	p	Factors	% Var. F1	% Cum.
Teaching and Learning	12	.81	349.69	66	< .00	4	32.93%	62.78%
Professional Development	11	.86	603.69	55	< .00	2	49.70%	60.27%

Note.  $k$  = number of items; KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy;  $\chi^2$  and  $df$  refer to Bartlett's test of sphericity; Factors = number of factors with eigenvalue > 1 retained from Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation; % Var. F1 = variance explained by the first factor; % Cum. = cumulative variance explained by all retained factors.

Source. Own research.

## APPENDIX B

**Table B1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Average Ratings of Indicators for Teaching and Learning Quality – RQ3*

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
The school is committed to the continuous improvement of the teaching process	133	3	5	4.71	0.55
Parents are informed about achievements, developments, and the schedule of their children	136	3	5	4.64	0.55
Teachers consider the achievement of the main competencies during the planning of activities in the classroom	134	3	5	4.63	0.54
Development of students' critical thinking skills is a priority for teachers	136	3	5	4.63	0.52
During the lesson, assessment is applied to encourage and motivate students to learn	136	3	5	4.60	0.58
The teacher manages to create an encouraging atmosphere that helps achieve learning outcomes for the relevant curricular field	136	3	5	4.59	0.54
The school evaluates the performance of teachers and has evidence of regular evaluation of teachers	135	3	5	4.50	0.61
Formative assessment is used to support students in planning their learning and identifying the different needs of students	136	3	5	4.43	0.62
The learning process is attractive for students because it reflects their interests and previous experiences	136	2	5	4.26	0.73
Teachers' challenges are included in the school's development plan	135	2	5	4.22	0.77
Teaching practices for teaching improvement are based on the reflection of personal performance	134	1	5	4.10	0.81
Teaching content is inspired by real-life and current events	136	2	5	4.07	0.74
Overall Teaching and Learning	136	1	5	4.56	1.00

*Source.* Own research.

**Table B2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Average Ratings of Indicators for Professional Development (PD) Quality – RQ4*

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
The school receives evidence from the monitoring of the impact of PD in raising the quality and effectiveness of teaching for the development of key competencies	135	2	5	4.41	0.7
The professional development portfolio is applied based on the criteria for the preparation and supervision of the teacher's portfolio	134	3	5	4.38	0.68
The school has a systematic approach to professional development that helps achieve the school's mission and develop the students' competencies	134	2	5	4.31	0.70
The school has evidence of identifying the individual needs of teachers for professional development	135	1	5	4.28	0.78
The teacher has an individual development plan and applies procedures for self-assessment of their own needs for PD	133	2	5	4.28	0.80
The school uses the monitoring findings for planning the professional development of teachers	133	2	5	4.24	0.78
The school uses its internal capacities for the mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers and there is evidence of monitoring this process	136	1	5	4.21	0.93
The school uses its own human resources for the professional development of teachers	133	1	5	4.16	0.89
Student performance is taken into account in the identification of teachers' needs for PD	135	1	5	4.10	0.89
The school has taken initiatives to establish cooperation and exchange experiences with other schools	128	1	5	4.02	0.92
Collegial mentoring practices are implemented in the school	135	1	5	3.93	1.01
<i>Overall Professional Development</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.21</i>	<i>0.58</i>

Source. Own research.

## Appendix C

**Table C1**  
*Analysis of Qualitative Approach Findings*

Themes	Codes	Statements Examples
Policies for Internal School Assessment towards improving school performance	Schools conduct internal assessments through the quality coordinator, following the Framework for Ensuring School Performance Quality's areas and indicators The results of the school performance assessment are presented in the Self-assessment Report There is a Development Plan in schools based on recommendations for improvement	<i>"The entire process is implemented through the internal assessment process, which is divided into quality areas with quality indicators, with the help of the quality coordinator and the formed team"</i> . <i>"Yes, our school has a self-assessment report led by colleagues. The school assessment was then conducted by the municipal evaluation team and KosEd, from whom we received the assessment report"</i> . <i>"Yes, it is reviewed every two to three years to conduct a SWOT analysis and assess whether the improvements and recommendations from that period have been achieved"</i> .
<i>Implementation of Quality Criteria Based on the Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance</i>	Quality areas - the organisational pillars for school management, self-assessment, planning, and improvement interventions Gut related Quality areas: "Teaching and Learning" and "Teacher Professional Development"	<i>"By setting some indicators and criteria from the areas as strategic objectives of the School Development Plan"</i> . <i>"There are some challenges and mismatches with the requirements and indicators, but most indicators in our school can already be met"</i> . <i>"We are now in the final stage of the school's internal assessment, showing good performance"</i> . <i>"Teacher professional development improves teaching and learning by enhancing teacher quality, leading to better classroom management, fostering a positive environment, maximizing student potential, and promoting the use of modern methods, technology, and assessment techniques"</i> .

Themes	Codes	Statements Examples
The assessment of teachers' needs for professional development and improvement of quality areas at enhancing school performance	Monitoring and drafting of the action plan based on the needs of teachers Assessment of daily work needs through questionnaires and various instruments	<p><i>"Teachers are monitored throughout the school year. When deemed necessary by school management, certain teachers receive mentoring from colleagues within the school. After each lesson observation, the principal, in coordination with the teacher, creates an action plan based on the teacher's professional development needs".</i></p> <p><i>"Based on the needs identified in daily work, development discussions, and the completed instrument (self-assessment) by the teacher".</i></p> <p><i>"Based on the monitoring report from the school principal and the teachers' professional files".</i></p> <p><i>"Through questionnaires, monitoring, and evaluation".</i></p>
Improvement of quality areas at enhancing school performance	Maximum effort for improvement through the activation of all school mechanisms	<p><i>"Our school, through the quality coordinator, monitors professional activities, holds monthly meetings, reviews and analyses the student council meeting minutes, parent meeting minutes, and evaluates the coordinator's report. Based on monitoring findings, meeting minutes, and student requests, in coordination with the School Governing Council, we draft an action plan for improvements where needed. We first utilise all internal resources, and if insufficient, seek assistance from the The Municipal Education Department and the Ministry of Education".</i></p> <p><i>"Provides unwavering support in all areas of need, organises training for development, encourages in various ways to motivate; rewards teachers and students for their work; fosters healthy collaboration, involves parents in different educational activities; seeks support from various institutions for necessary investments to ensure more modern and attractive teaching".</i></p> <p><i>"Our school's primary focus is the continuous improvement of the teaching process, consistently enhancing teachers' capacities through various training, particularly for professional development. Soon, our school will host the training "School-Based Teacher Professional Development," consisting of eight workshops (50 hours), which is approved by the State Council for Teacher Licensing".</i></p>

Source. Own research.

**Table C2***The Issues According to the Quantitative Approach and to the Qualitative Approach*

<b>Quantitative approach</b>	<b>Qualitative approach</b>
<b>Educational staff perception</b>	<b>School principals perception</b>
Relationship Between Teachers' Experience and Assessment Quality	Policies for Internal School Assessment towards improving school performance
Assessment Differences Based on Municipalities	Implementation of Quality Criteria Based on the Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance
The effect of Quality Assurance Indicators on Teaching and Learning	The assessment of teachers' needs for professional development and improvement of quality areas at enhancing school performance
The effect of Quality Assurance Indicators on Professional Development	Improvement of quality areas at enhancing school performance
Relationship Between Teaching and Learning and Professional Development	

Source. *Own research.*