



# **Curriculum Movements in Higher Education**

**(The Iranian Experience)**

**Kourosh Fathi Vajargah(PhD)  
Professor of Curriculum Studies  
Shahid Beheshti University, Iran**

# **Background and process of holding this event**

- ☐ **It is necessary to review the evolution of curriculum in Iran, I called it here as Curriculum movements**
- ☐ **By Curriculum movement, I mean to categorize the assumptions underlying the curriculum reforms and revisions during the time**

# **Background and process of holding this event** (continue)

- ❑ It may be possible to classify the history of higher education curriculum in Iran within one of curriculum discourses as follow:**
  - ❑ Nationalisation Discourse**
  - ❑ Cultural/Religious Discourse**
  - ❑ Formalized/ Systematic Discourse**
  - ❑ Decentralization Discourse**
  - ❑ Decolonization Discourse**
  - ❑ Blaming Discourse**

# Nationalisation Discourse

- ❑ **Under the monarchy, Iran's curriculum promoted a secular, pre-Islamic, and purely nationalist Persian identity.**



# Cultural / Religious Discourse

- ❑ In contrast, the Islamic Republic's curricula teach students that they are Muslims and members of a worldwide community of believers





# **Cultural / Religious Discourse**

(continue)

- ❑ This period is characterized by a set of concepts such as Islamization of curricula, cultural revolution and ideology.**
- ❑ Curriculum has been subject to ideology based changes based on a fragmented approach in practice**

# **Formalized / Systematic Discourse**



- **In this era, the curriculum system was established in a concentrated manner in Iran.**
- **Unanimous curriculum era within which, curricula( as written documents) in Iran at the level of central offices and in a united form were designed and usually were implemented at universities unchanged for many years.**

# Formalized / Systematic Discourse

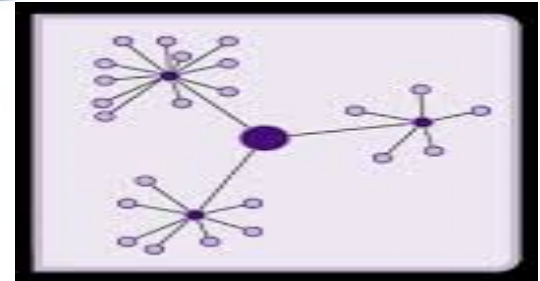
(continue)



- **Although these kinds of curricula were not faculty proof curriculum, conspicuously changes in them were forbidden. Of course at the level of implementation, professors and teachers were free to do changes.**



# Decentralization Discourse



- **This period is characterized by a set of concepts such quality control, faculty members engagement in curriculum decision making, competency based curriculum**

# **Decentralization Discourse**

## **(continue)**

**□Curriculum change has been slow due to the mentioned centralization but the decision of MSRT to decrease the centralization and give responsibility of curriculum to universities (Regulation 1809 of Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 2000 provided the opportunity for curriculum change**

# **Decentralization Discourse**

## **(continue)**

**❑ Studies indicate that the implementation of this regulation although followed by many achievements was not successful, because of faculties 'inappropriate literacy on curriculum and their reluctance to be engages in this process.**

# Decolonization Discourse



❑ The fourth era that became more serious from mid 2000s can be called “the period of curriculum customization” and efforts to “decolonize curriculum” especially in humanities.

# **Decolonization Discourse**

(continue)

**□ Because of lack of trust on all universities, this trend mainly followed at the central offices or universities and in special committees. Unfortunately, it stopped at a point not more than changing the syllabuses. Therefore, although it had an excellent thought it was followed with limited methods and views in action**



# Blaming Discourse



**Recently all of us blaming the past for all the wrongs: blame game!**

**We** are blaming people, policies, and structures, hidden and overt orientations for the last decade.

**There** are some lessons to be learned from the past and move forward



# **Factors affecting the failure of curriculum movements in higher education**

# **1. Higher education curriculum is a new area of study:**

**The curriculum design and change in higher education is a new, dynamic area which has been ignored in higher education and curriculum studies**

**(continue)**

**Curriculum studies in primary and secondary education has a long history and tradition and it is normal to have a wide and diverse literature and various thinking camps in curriculum field.**

**Even some outstanding scholars have tried to show the insufficient attention to practice in curriculum debates**

**(continue)**

**There is a very different story in curriculum debates in further and higher education. As a fundamental component of higher education, curricula have always received a fair amount of attention in practice. Postsecondary institutions have been forced to deal with curricula in order to survive**



**(continue)**

**There** is a literature on how to prepare the curriculum in higher education and a few scholars have attempted to develop curriculum frameworks and models at university level

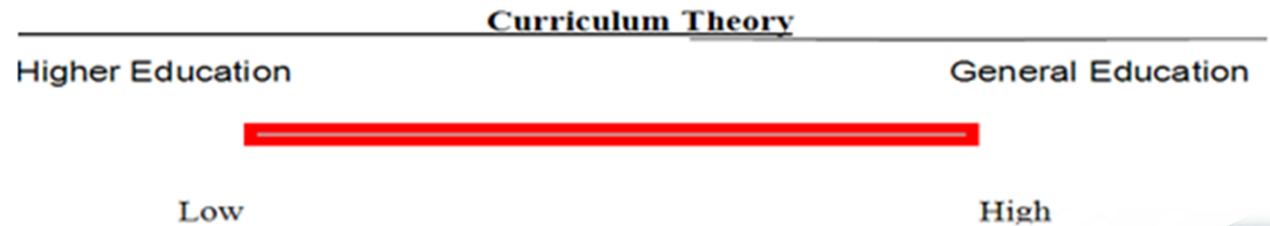
**Much** university curriculum literature focuses on disciplines and is published in specialty journals

(continue)

**The** diversity and complexity of higher education settings makes it difficult to produce a general model or framework with broad applicability in different fields and situations. That is to say what is really missing is theorizing and conceptualizing the curriculum decision making in this sub specialist area of higher education

# (continue)

Degree of attention to Types of Curriculum Studies	Theorizing/ conceptualization	Practice and application
General Education	High	Low
Higher education	Low	High



**❑Published books in this area of study do not exceed the number of fingers**

**❑Authors seem to name the field in an interesting way:**

**❑Barnet's book entitled "Engaging Curriculum in Higher Education".**

**❑Prof. Hicks has an article which has been welcomed by an increasing number of people. The title of his article is "Higher Education Curriculum in Australia: Hello".**

**❑My Personal experience: the possibility of considering curriculum in higher education discussion**

## **Recent developments in Iran**

- 1. SIG on” Higher Education Curriculum” in  
ICSA**
- 2. We have had PhD level of this field in  
Shahid Beheshti University(SBU) and  
we have had many graduates, too.**
- 3. Special quarterly journal with this  
name.**



## **2. Lack of theoretical knowledge and models based on scientific researches**

**One** of the most important challenges of higher education systems is continuous curriculum change.

**However some works about curriculum design and change have been published so far, According to their theoretical origins and their field application, each of these model has a clear meaning and concept; so that, they cannot be applied to the contexts except their original ones without any difficulty and defects.**

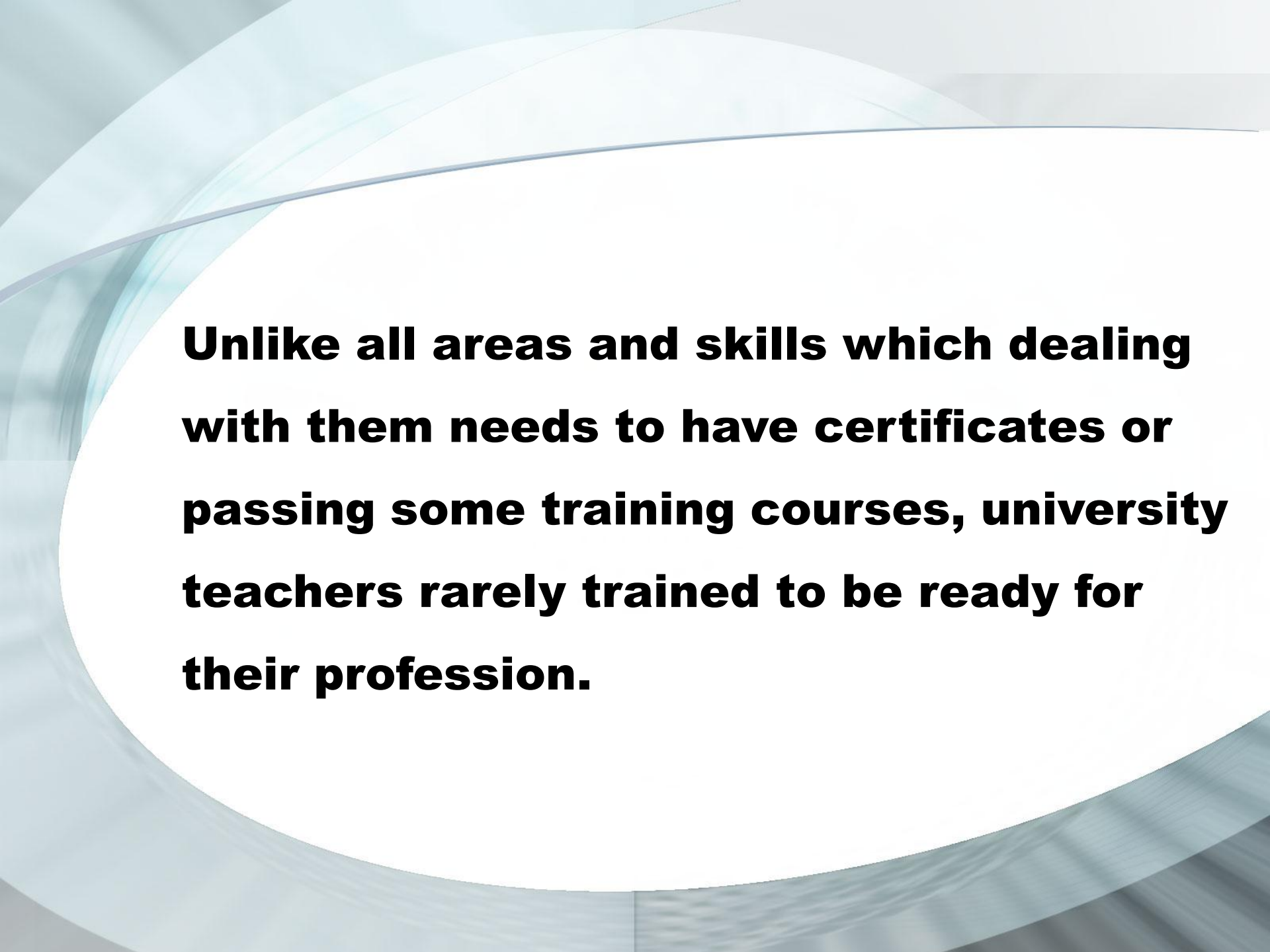
**In conclusion, these models cannot directly be applied to higher education disciplines because the contexts and planning of public education and higher education are different and higher education disciplines are professional;**

### 3. Curriculum literacy/ Faculty members pedagogical Literacy



**The teaching and learning role of faculty members reflects their centrality in addressing the primary educational mission among colleges and universities. Faculty members are expected to provide instruction, responsibilities include classroom teaching, Academic Advisement, Curriculum Development, Academic Program Review and Course Duplication Review.**



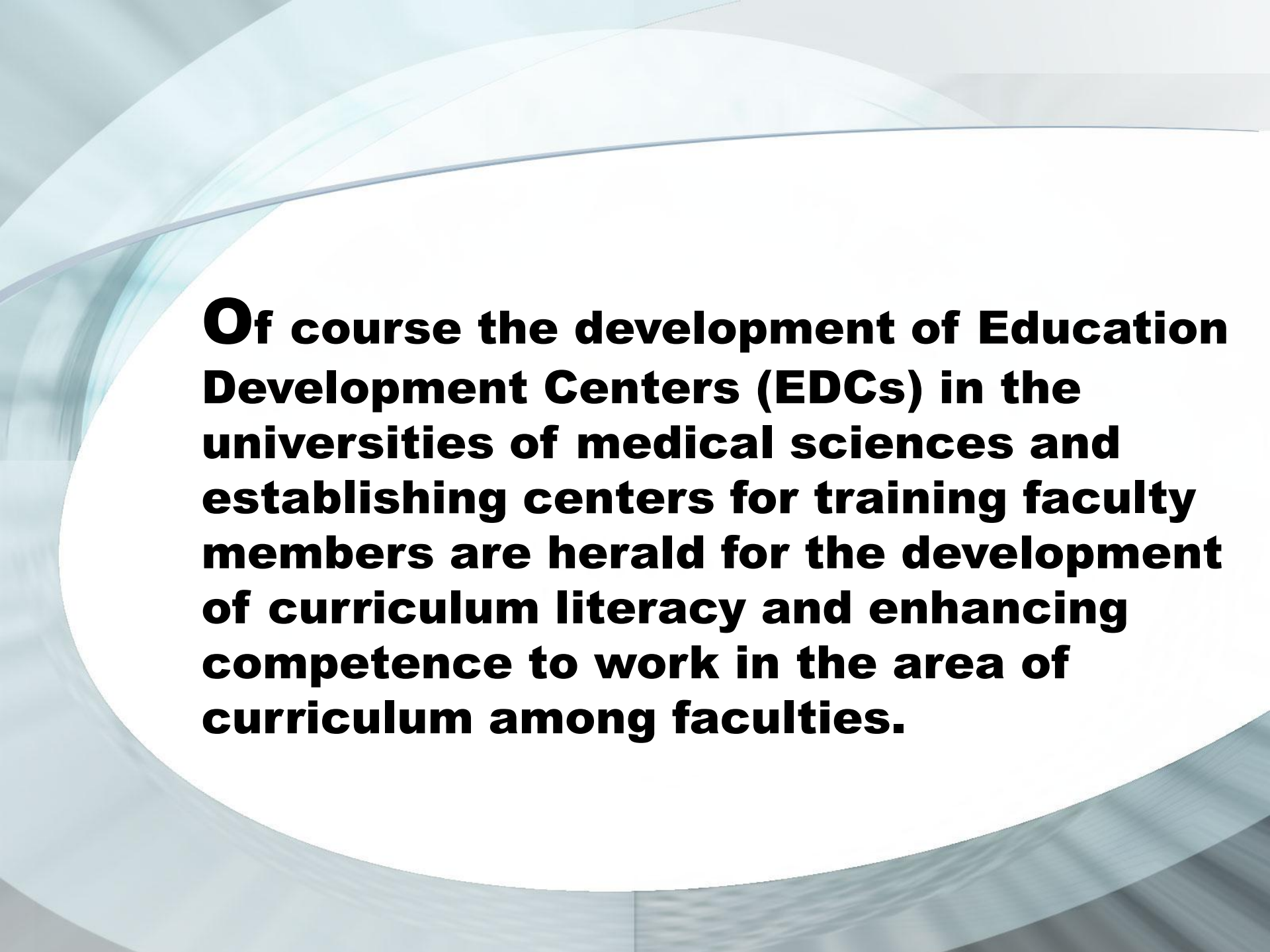


**Unlike all areas and skills which dealing with them needs to have certificates or passing some training courses, university teachers rarely trained to be ready for their profession.**

<b>Workshop Year</b>	<b>Curriculum Development</b>	<b>Technical &amp; Engineering</b>	<b>Foreign Langua ges</b>	<b>ICT</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>	<b>Other workshops</b>
<b>2007</b>	—	<b>1586</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>1367</b>	<b>2804</b>	<b>1697</b>
<b>2008</b>	—	<b>1415</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>1917</b>	<b>2507</b>	<b>1238</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>1476</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>1606</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>1612</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>1201</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>2096</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1498</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>1192</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>1529</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>6212</b>	<b>2280</b>	<b>5399</b>	<b>4858</b>	<b>7621</b>	<b>8165</b>

**(Source: MSRHE, 2011)**

**Those who have attended was just around 2 % of the academics force. This figure is relatively small and it seems there is a long way to go! According to a study, only 5 percent of faculties have passed teaching and curriculum courses, so how can we expect them to be champions and agents of curriculum change in higher education?**



**Of course the development of Education Development Centers (EDCs) in the universities of medical sciences and establishing centers for training faculty members are herald for the development of curriculum literacy and enhancing competence to work in the area of curriculum among faculties.**

## **4. Lack of curriculum culture**

**Another factor is lack of the culture in terms of curriculum by faculties and students in the setting of higher education. There is not a serious motivation among faculties and experts to deal with the curriculum. There is not a position for curriculum activities in the procedures of faculty members' promotion system. It seems that this factor has a role in the failure of curriculum transformations in Iran.**

The background features a large, light blue semi-circle on the left side, which is partially overlaid by a darker grey semi-circle. To the right of these shapes is a circular, textured pattern resembling a globe or a lens, with various shades of blue and green. The overall aesthetic is modern and abstract.

**Thank you for your attention**

**[www.kouroshfathi.com](http://www.kouroshfathi.com)**

**[kouroshfathi@hotmail.com](mailto:kouroshfathi@hotmail.com)**