

## On Legislative and Institutional Reforms in Pre-University Education System in Albania

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### **Abstract:**

**Introduction:** The analysis of the reforms in the pre-university education system carried out in Albania after the changes in the political and economic system, 1992-2022, is the object of this study.

**Methods:** The study was conducted as a "desk study". The assesment on the quality of the reforms carried out was carried out using the analysis method and comparative analysis.

**Results:** Reforms in the pre-university education system in Albania have changed its objectives, structure and content, aligning it with the systems implemented in other countries of the region and the EU.

**Limitations:** The reforms are an ongoing process whose effects require time to be evaluated.

**Conclusions:** Reforms in the pre-university education system in Albania are developed in accordance with the principles and requirements that enable its alignment with the educational systems of democratic countries and the EU. Their main objective is to prepare the new generation capable of facing the challenges of open and global society.

**Key words:** reforms, pre-university education system, Albania.

### **Introduction**

About 500 years occupied by the Ottoman Empire until the declaration of independence, on November 28, 1912, the Albanians were among the people that were brutally denied education in their native language. Being a nation with great religious diversity, Albanians did not benefit from the Tanzimat Reforms.

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They were obliged to be educated according to their religion in Turkish, Greek or Italian (Loka, 2018). Evaluating the great danger of assimilation as a consequence of the lack of education in the Albanian language, the Albanian revivalists were declared that "Albania cannot exist without the Albanians, the Albanians cannot exist without the Albanian language and the latter cannot exist without the alphabet own and no school."(Frasheri, 1899) After the declaration of independence, the Government of Vlore, 1912-1914, paid special attention to the development of education and, although the difficulties were very great, took measures so that the school year 1913-1914 could start and be realized normally (Bello, 2018). The educational policy of the government of Vlora was sanctioned in the legislation that was drafted by it "Kanuni i përtashëm i administratës civile të Shqipërisë" [The current canon of the civil administration of Albania]. Between the two world wars, primary education became compulsory in Albania (5 years in the countryside and 6 years in the city), while secondary education was extended to the main cities of the country. In 1933, private and foreign schools were also nationalized. During the period of the Second World War, Albanian education was extended on a national basis in Kosovo and other Albanian countries in the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the Second World War, the first major reform that was carried out was the organization and development of courses against illiteracy (Elezaj, 2014). From about 81.2% of the illiterate population in 1945, in 1955 it was publicly announced that total illiteracy in the population under the age of 40 had been eliminated in Albania. In the early 1950s, the first 7-year schools were opened throughout the country. In the school year 1946-1947, only 6 gymnasiums in the main cities of Albania operated in secondary education, the number of which increased very quickly. In the 60s, vocational secondary education developed rapidly. The reform of 1963 made the change in the system of pre-university education, moving from compulsory 7-year education to 8-year education. The reform named "Further revolutionizing the school" had a great transformative negative effect on the pre-university education system in Albania. Its consequence was extreme ideologizing and the development of the education system based on the principle called the "Revolutionary triangle": learning, productive work and physical and military education.

Education is the way through which human society tries to face and solve, in the most effective way, the challenges of globalization. The complexity of the issues and the phenomena that accompany the process of globalization condition the great commitment and the most effective of the society for their treatment. An important part of this commitment are the efforts that society must make for the development of the educational system. According to Lukáč et al. (2020) "Education is an important tool for improving many aspects of life, including socio-economic status or well-being." Therefore, every country and society must

draft educational policies, the implementation of which should result in the development of society's capacities to face the challenges of development and globalization. In the efforts to draft these policies and programs for their implementation, it is advisable to refer to the solutions achieved by other countries for various issues that are the subject of these policies (Burch et al., 2018; Zelina, 2020; Mandel, 2020; Ismail & Yin, 2020; Çayak, 2021).

Every country and society must draft educational policies, the implementation of which should result in the development of society's capacities to face the challenges of development and globalization. Albania is one of the countries that this process should be considered and should be developed as a priority process. The main objective of this process should be established a pre-university system that should be aligned with the pre-university system of EU countries and meet international principles and standards. As a guide in the efforts to develop this ongoing reform process, Albania has the principles, requirements and standards defined in different international documents and conventions such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD), Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM).

### **1 The reform process of Albanian pre-university education system**

In the process of reforming pre-university education in Albania, three main stages can be distinguished:

- I. The stage of correction of the principles of education. The main objective in this phase was to "cleanse" the system of pre-university education from the "inheritance" and influences of communist ideology. Among the main achievements in this phase can be singled out:
  - "liberation" of the curriculum from political manipulations and ideological deformations,
  - relative reduction of the teaching load,
  - best balance of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour that the student should acquire,
  - reexamination of the objectives and contents of social subjects,
  - the introduction of some new subjects, such as informatics, civic education, etc.
- II. The phase of preparations for fundamental change, which was developed uper to legal basis Law no. 7952, dated 21.06.1995, "For pre-university system of education".

In this phase, it was aimed to prepare the legal basis to support the deep changes in the system, necessary for its alignment with the requirements of the principles, standards and the best legislative and institutional practices of

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the EU countries. During this phase, carried out comparative analyzes of the curriculum to identify issues and problems that should be the subject of reforms. Cooperation with foreign organizations and the World Bank was deepened, with the help and expertise of which two national education strategies were drawn up and two major quality improvement projects were implemented (2000-2005; 2006-2010). The changes made in this phase affected the structure of the educational system, the curriculum and the management systems

III. The reformation phase, based on Law 69/2012, dated 21.06.2012 “For pre-university system in Republic of Albania”, amended.

The reform process at this stage aimed and aims at the development of institutional, human and infrastructure capacities, in order to align the system with the systems implemented in countries with developed democracy and with the basic principles of equality of opportunities for quality education for all.

During the last ten years, the process of reforms in the pre-university education system has been developed in accordance with the principles:

- at the center of the system is the student with his needs and interests, thus aiming for a fundamental change from the traditional system;
- students and teachers work together;
- students must acquire the knowledge and professional performances for solutions of complicated life problems and to ensure income for himself and for society.;
- support of the cultural and linguistic diversity and developments in contemporary information and communication technologies.
- make lifelong learning a way of life for everyone.

The reform of the pre-university education system has aimed and aims to create the best possible conditions for students, regardless of personal opportunities and circumstances. Its main objective is to prepare future citizens capable of participating creatively and critically in the economic, social and cultural life of the country. The future citizen must be able to adapt to circumstances and demands conditioned by the continuous changes in the field of knowledge and in society. The fulfillment of this strategic goal is expected to be achieved through the development of activities in institutions/schools, which have as main objectives:

- the formation and development of personal and national identity;
- the development of all intellectual, ethical, physical, social and aesthetic aspects necessary for the formation of the future citizen
- the demonstration of the responsibility towards themselves, towards others, towards society and towards the environment;
- the preparation for life and work, in different social and cultural contexts;

- the development and demonstrate the spirit of entrepreneurship;

In frame of the reform process, the Albanian policymaker is committed to design and implement reforms, keeping in mind the achievements, weaknesses and challenges faced by Albanian pre-university education. Through these reforms, it is intended that:

- ensure that every student fulfills the right to quality education and equal opportunities to be educated;
- create the conditions for students to build/apply scientific, technical, social, historical, artistic knowledge and key competencies, values and attitudes for a healthy life;
- enable the student to acquire the competence to learn throughout his life;
- align, as best as possible, the conditions of learning in pre-university educational institutions with the regional and European educational systems;
- support and evaluate the situation and progress in educational institutions on the basis of educational standards, internal and external evaluation;
- develop the capacities in the pre-university education system, necessary to respond to the demands of the labour market and the economic and social development of the country.
- create conditions for the implementation of a decentralized educational system, further perfecting the autonomy of educational institutions.

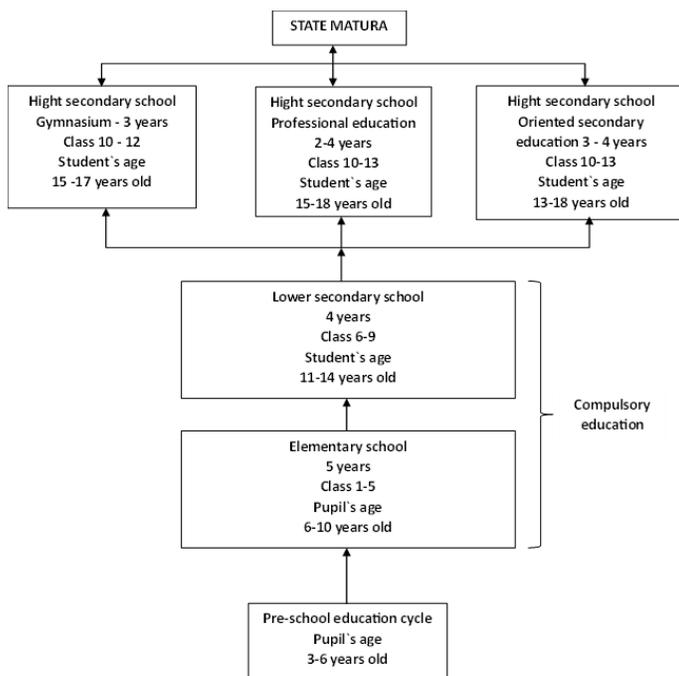
## **2 Structure of the pre-university education system in Albania**

The pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania has three levels (Figure 1): Preschool education, Basic education (primary & lower secondary) and Secondary education. Education is offered in public and private educational institutions.

Preschool education takes place in kindergartens or in preparatory classes in schools. In the kindergartens, the educational process is organized in three groups: the first group (3-4 years old); the second group (4-5 years old) and the third group (5-6 years old). Preparatory classes operate in basic education schools and are attended by 5-year-old children who have not attended preschool education. The learning process at this educational level takes place in the Albanian language, while, in the kindergartens located in areas inhabited by national minorities, it takes place in their mother language.

Basic education is offered to children over the age of 6, lasts 9 years and is compulsory. It consists of two cycles: Primary Education, from the first grade to the sixth grade. Lower Secondary Education, extends from the seventh to the ninth grade. Upper secondary education includes the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades. This level includes gymnasium, oriented secondary education and vocational secondary education, which, in some branches, also extends to the thirteenth grade.

Starting from the 2009-2010 academic year, Vocational Education (VE) is offered at three different levels. The two-year programmes, which constitute the first level, aim to equip students with the basic skills of semi-skilled workers and conclude with the awarding of a certificate of basic vocational training. One-year programmes aim to train technicians and these are provided with a vocational training certificate. The third-level VE programmes continue for another year and pave the way for higher studies. Distance education has not yet been implemented in Albania.



*Figure 1.* The system of pre-university education in Albania  
 (Ministry of Education and Sports)

In the formal aspect, the organization, types and forms of pre-university education in Albania are comparable to European standards. The quality, efficiency and effectiveness (internal and external) of this system remained a problem.

### **3 Albanian pre-university education system reforms**

#### *3.1 Legislation reforms*

Starting from the mid-90s and continuing, in Albania, an intensive legislative process is being developed, through which the construction of the pre-university education system aligned with that of the developed democratic countries and the EU is aimed at. Among the main results of this process, the following can be listed:

Law No. 7952 on Pre-University Education (1995), which defines the basic rules for student assessment, registration, standards and teacher training.

Law on Private Education (adopted in 1995-96), which defines the general principles of organization, management and operation of Private Education.

Law no. 8872 "On Education and Vocational Training" amended.

Law no. 78/2006 "On the "State Mature" exam as a mandatory test indicating the completion of secondary school and as a prerequisite for entering higher education]

Law no. 9970 "On Gender equality" (2008) through which it is aimed to respect women's rights and eliminate any kind of discrimination based on gender in education.

Law no. 69/2012 "For pre-university education system on the Republic of Albania" amended. This is the basic law that regulates the construction and operation of the pre-university education system in Albania. The law was drafted based on contemporary principles for inclusive education, the role of parents and the community in school governance, increasing the independence and autonomy of schools, curriculum development, evaluation and self-evaluation of educational institutions, etc. Law defines the goal that society intends to achieve through pre-university education. Albanian legislation guarantees the right to education for Albanian citizens, foreigners and stateless persons, without discrimination based on gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, economic or social status, age, residence, disability, or for other reasons defined in Albanian legislation. The right to education for national minorities is also addressed in Law No. 96/2017 "For the protection of national minorities in the Republic of Albania". The right to education of persons with different abilities is dealt with in Law no. 69/2012 in accordance with the principles, standards and requirements described in the documentation and international legislation.

#### *3.2 Reform for curricula development*

The main objectives of this reform is the education the students with the necessary competencies for:

- i. possess the high skills to think and act critically;

ii. identification, extraction and analysis of information from diverse sources. The reform aims to build the capacities of students and educational workers for understanding and using learning strategies, solving problems, analyzing and presenting of solutions. The reformed curriculum addresses key competences, which are designed in line with the key competences of lifelong learning, and which is applied in all EU countries. Among the main objectives of the reform in the curriculum is the change of the current conceptual model in the education system, moving to a system that works according to the principle of placing the student at the center.

### *3.3 Alter-text reform*

The object of this reform was the increase of alternative titles in the texts used in pre-university education with the aim of increasing the quality and scientific and pedagogical level of the texts. Reform envisioned the creation of more effective spaces for teachers to make decisions on how they would convey knowledge to students. The Alter-text reform encouraged the translation of texts, especially texts in the natural sciences, and overestimated their importance. Text publishing was treated as a very good business and profit opportunity. The expectations of this reform were not met.

### *3.4 Reform for decentralization in pre-university education system*

Decentralization processes in pre-university education became part of the reforms in this system especially after 2000. In 2004, a joint work platform was approved between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization, which provided for:

- a) Division of functional responsibilities in the education sector between different levels of central and local government
- b) Identification of the factors and requirements that should be fulfilled in order to increase the responsibility for the realization of the functions to be decentralized, from the central level to the local level.

The decentralization is a complex, continuous process and conditioned by many other factors that operate outside the pre-university education system. To carry it out in the Albanian pre-university system, the transfer of responsibilities and competencies from central to local institutions is planned to be realized step by steps. Currently, after the approval of Law No. 102/2020 "On regional development and cohesion", in which the principle of deconcentrating is given priority compared to the principle of decentralization in local government, the reform for decentralization in the pre-university education system is being faced with difficulty.

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*3.5 Information and communication technology (ICT) reform in education*

This is one of the reforms that is being carried out at a pace that aims to spread throughout the country. The reform aims to create equal opportunities for safe and educational use of the Internet for all students. Part of this reform is the initiative of the Albanian government “Albania in the Digital Age”, which aims to build technological infrastructure in the pre-university education system. The Albanian government has defined as a priority objective in the national education strategy “the promotion of the knowledge society, the development of human capital, and the combination of modern technology with teaching and learning in function of the economic progress of the country and a sustainable development of the Albanian society with contemporary European standards”. For the realization of this priority, the Ministry of Education has been and is engaged in the drafting of policies and the implementation of reforms, through which it is intended to increase the quality of education, to accelerate and expand the introduction of ICT in the learning process.

*3.6 Reform for teachers and school leaders*

The reform aims to increase institutional capacities and training services, necessary for the preparation and qualification of teachers and school leaders.

*3.7 Reform in educational standards in Albania*

Through this reform, it is intended that the pre-university education system in Albania be developed in accordance with the requirements of international standards, which include learning standards, content standards and achievement standards. Part of this reform is the determination and development of requirements for the implementation of input standards and output standards.

*3.8 School quality assessment reform*

Development of the reform for the competence-based curriculum and other reform processes in the pre-university education system have conditioned the need for the design of the School Quality Assessment Framework. Based on this framework, the guide "External and internal evaluation of the school" has been drawn up as a document that enabled the realization of the external and internal evaluation of the school. These are two assessment processes, which the guideline treats as complementary processes. The experiences of their implementation so far have proven the value they have for increasing the quality and effectiveness in pre-university education.

*3.9 Reform - State matura*

The basic objective of the State Matura is the effective implementation of the "Merit-Preference" principle in the process of granting the right to young people

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to register for the continuation of university studies. This reform started in 2006 with Decision no. 78, dated 8.2.2006, of the Council of Ministers "On the creation of the State Matura and admissions to public higher schools".

*3.10 Reform - School as a community center*

The realization of this reform is conditioned by the opportunities that children and young people should have to have more opportunities and support in their efforts in studies and in activities, inside and outside the teaching hours. The school as community center is being developed in accordance with the needs and social and economic situation that characterize the development of the Albanian society. They are considered as the institutions of the future in the pre-university education system, as an open system in the services it offers and cooperative with all stakeholders, in particular with local communities and parents.

*3.11 Reforms and policies to support students from marginalized groups - inclusive education*

An important part of this reform are the efforts and the achievements of drafting a legislative framework compatible with the requirements of international documents and conventions that deal with human rights for education. The implementation of this legislation is supported by the commitment of the Albanian government to develop institutional and human capacity. The incorporation into university studies of programmes for the formation of assistant teachers and the establishment of the training service for the all-inclusive teacher are among the important results achieved. The drafting of policies and the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving equal opportunities for education for all children belonging to marginalized groups, national minorities and students with disabilities are the main objectives of this reform.

## **Conclusions**

Legislative and institutional reforms in the pre-university education system in Albania have as their basic objective the construction and operation of an education system based on the principles and requirements of international documents and conventions, aligned with the education systems in developed democratic countries and the EU.

The development of an effective educational system is aimed at preparing the new generation capable of facing the challenges of developments in the open and global society.

The organizational and functional issues, performances and institutional capacities that pre-university education system should have master in Albania as a country that is governed according to the rules of an open and democratic

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society are the problems and challenges of reforms that are being carried out in Albania.

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