

## **The Reform Process Of The Albanian Educational System: Its Problems And Challenges**

**PhD. Merita Isaraj<sup>a</sup>, Assoc. Prof. Jaho Cana<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a,b</sup> “Eqrem Çabej” University, Gjirokastër, Albania

<sup>a</sup> isarajmerita2@gmail.com, <sup>b</sup> jaho.cana@yahoo.com

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**Abstract:** Albanians belong to the population who are particularly differentiated by their education. For many years Albanians were categorically denied the right of education in their mother tongue by the former Turkish Empire. Accordingly, the first school in Albanian goes back to the last decade of XIX-th century. In this aspect we can mention that until 1945 the existence of high schools was very low in number, while as far higher education is concerned, it was not existent at all.

After 1945, the communist governing authorities undertook fundamental investment in education by opening primary and high schools nationwide, as well as the first University in 1957. However, despite the important results it achieved, it was absolutely politicized.

After the fall of communism, the educational system faced new challenges. The imperative problem was a deep reform to meet the requirements of the new historical reality. Consequently, after 1991 the education system in Albanian was involved in deep reforms such as keeping away from politics, reconsideration of textbooks, teaching plans or programs, management mode of school, respecting the children rights etc. All these radical and large scale reforms were not only helpful, but considerably influenced the rise of teaching and learning quality. Anyhow, in some cases the reform application did not always produce the expected results. They influenced the progress of the teaching process. Therefore, it is crucial that the educational system in Albania should seriously consider the long-term influence of these problems by the compilation of accurate and strategies about pre- university education.

**Keywords:** education, reform, system, strategy, educational issues, challenges

### **1. Introduction**

Albanians belong to the population who are particularly differentiated by their education. This statement has its historical explanations. For many years Albanians were categorically denied the right of education in their mother tongue by the former Turkish Empire. Accordingly, the first school in Albanian was opened at a later period and it goes back to the last decade of XIX-th century. Even after the Independence declaration in 1912, the following governments did not show a full devotion and support to the educational policies which appeared to be limited and the investments in these vital sectors were almost inconsiderable. In this aspect we can mention that until 1945 the existence of high schools was very low in number, while as far as higher education is concerned, it was not existent at all.

After 1945-ies, the communist governing authorities in Tirana undertook fundamental investments in the education sector by opening primary and 8 cycle schools which became compulsory. With the passing of time high schools were already opened in various regions in Albania. Concerning higher education the first University in 1957 was opened in Tirana; the State University of Tirana. However, despite the important results it achieved under the communist regime, the educational system was absolutely politicized and aimed at the final shaping of the “type of new individual”, who would willingly be devoted and serving to the state-party to the fullest.

After the fall of communism, the educational system in Albania had to be faced with new challenges. The imperative problem was a deep reform to meet the requirements of the new historical reality. Consequently, after 1991 the educational system in Albanian was involved in deep reforms such as keeping away from politics, reconsideration of textbooks, teaching plans or programs, management mode of schools, respecting the children rights etc. They led to an overturn of the whole situation. All these radical and large scale reforms were not only helpful, but considerably influenced the rise of teaching and learning quality. Anyhow, in some cases the reform application did not always produce the expected results. We think that they negatively affected the teaching process incurring various problems and setbacks. They significantly influenced the progress of the teaching process. Therefore, it is crucial that the educational system in Albania should seriously consider the long-term influence of these problems and reforms in general. One of the best ways is to avert the consequences by the compilation of some accurate and long term strategies about pre-university education.

The reforming of educational system in Albania is and continues to be one of the utmost significance. This problem was put forward for solution especially after the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990-ies. During the communist regime period in Albania the field of education underwent a real revolution. In 1945 over 80 % of the population was illiterate. Thus in the initial stages the regime took a series of measures in order to remove this social wound being inherited from the past. In the next year there were opened not only new schools,

but also courses in order to fight illiteracy. By the mid-50-ies, these measures brought about the illiteracy abolition meanwhile the 8- cycle education system (9-cycle education system of today) was transformed into a compulsory one. Also, in many important residential centers new high schools were firstly opened which widely influenced the education of the Albanian population.

During this period, the high schools were not only general but also professional ones which intended and fully served the qualification and preparation of the experts in the field of industrial and agricultural field. It should be emphasized that for the time being, these schools proved to be successful. This success is closely connected with the fact that Albanian population in characterized by a strong thirst to gain education and knowledge. This special trait of Albanians is explained with the situation in the past, where the right of education in their mother tongues has historically been denied to them.

The Ottoman Empire ruled our country for centuries running and they followed an assimilation policy against Albanians. In this framework, they strived hard that Albanians should forget their mother tongue. But thanks to the Albanian scholars and intellectuals of the period, it was enabled the challenge of the assimilation policy and accordingly, Albanians managed to survive. This survival was attributed to the long time attempts and deeds of the numerous attempts of Albanian patriots and Renaissance adherents.

Hence the first Albanian school was opened far later. The first school in Albanian language was opened in 1878. This backward policy of the Ottoman Empire had a positive side, though. This singled out the Albanian yearning for education and knowledge. Thus, Albanians have inculcated in their mind their love for education. A lot of Albanian families despite suffering from the challenges of life and under very hard circumstances try their best in order to provide the proper education for their kids at all costs.

Despite the achievements and successes of the time of communist regime, still this education remained limited and possessing big problems. One of the biggest deficiencies was the excessive and boundless politicized situation of the state. The aim of being politicized was that the schools of the time should provide education to someone who completely and absolutely believed in the new state-party. A number of school subjects were arranged in order to grasp the philosophy of Marxism and Leninism, while many other books had to do with the learning of the history of the Albanian communist party. At the center of everything was the portrait and role of the dictator Enver Hoxha These subjects were even basic subjects of schools. The school was mostly based on the famous and revolutionary so-called *triangle*: education – productive labor and military-training.

Meanwhile, in schools the students' rights and their personality were not taken into consideration. They were obliged to fully comply with all the orders and guidelines given by the teacher. What's worse, they were obliged to face a kind of violence almost exaggerated. This way of school operation and functioning directly influenced the restraining of the students personality. Everything was deliberately handled. The communist regime was interested in educating individuals who were reliable and could serve him in every aspect of their life and could be the enthusiastic supporters of the government. The aim was not to qualify the experts who would be skillful in everything, but individuals who were simply about to serve to this Party in any place they were needed to.

Therefore, considering the abovementioned situation and the characteristics this type of educational system entailed, the reforming of it was a historical necessity. This necessity stemmed from the change of political system in Albania. With the fall of the communist regime, it was obvious as well as imperative to carry out a reforming process in the educational system of the Albania of post communist period. To meet this objectives, after 1991 several reforms were undertaken which played an important role in the educational system.

Firstly, school was free from the politicized subjects, which led to the exclusion of several compulsory subjects in the school curricula such as subjects of Marxism and Leninism philosophy, the subject of History of Communist Party (HCP), productive labor, obligatory military training subject etc.

Secondly, there started a thorough investigation and rearrangement of all teaching plans and textbooks which gave much more space to basic subjects like math, physics, biology, chemistry, history, geography, literature, foreign languages etc.

Thirdly, another way of administering the schools was applied by transforming them into community centers. Fourthly, the student and the teaching process were mainly focused on him- so student-centered by respecting the essential rights of children and above all respecting their personality etc.

Thus, the Albanian educational system after 1990 -ies underwent a reforming system which had a remarkable importance in terms of its transformation and providing suitability with all the economic, social and political changes in the country. The application of all these reforms not only overturned the situation the educational system was experiencing, but above all they influenced positively in the improvement of the teaching quality.

This had satisfactory results with reference to the new knowledge benefits on the part of the student. Now, the school seemed to eventually be free of the extra and unnecessary items and content. These unnecessary items were straining and exhausting as well as fruitless to their educational molding. On the other hand, the teachers' job was simplified and facilitated considerably leading to the reduction of exhaustion and stress. Thus, the teacher is given more freedom in the classes not fearing the idea of making political-like and ideological mistakes, which unfortunately, were severely punished under the communist regime. The application of these reforms gave an impetus and a new breath to the whole educational process in general.

But, were all these reforms necessary and what is more did they positively influence in the improvement of the situation of the educational system in Albania?

Naturally all these reforms were followed by other consequent issues. Due to their effects they sometimes deteriorated the situation rather than improved it. The greatest drawback with the Albanian educational system is a system which appears to be continuously in a transitional period. This transition seems to continue a long time which certainly has a negative effect on the further progress of the teaching process. We do not agree with the fact that reforms should be carried out and applied immediately, as they take time and need the proper period of being applied and suitable for the current reality. The constant experiments being reformed with the education during the last decades have distracted substantially the whole educational process in Albania. Accordingly, we think that these reforms should have covered a decade and should not have been extended any longer. The bureaucracy delay in the reforming of education has affected the malfunctioning of the whole system.

The investigation and rearrangement of textbooks content has also led to problems. In our view, some textbooks in various cases are crowded with formal concepts, laws and regulations which do not seem to be fit for certain age groups they are addressed to. The worst thing about them is the occurrence of scientific errors in some of them.

So, the table of content leaves much space to be updated and improved to meet the required standards. We consider it very imperative the monitoring process the relevant ministry should keep, in order to control the texts and persons involved in this process, who should not only be part of the academic sector. In the compilation of these textbooks the ministry should also make part of the process the teachers of pre university education. In this sector our country boasts outstanding intellectual potentials. It is exactly this group of qualified and experienced teachers who would greatly improve the content of school textbooks. It is definitely teachers who better know the psychological characteristics of the students.

On the other hand, some directives, orders and guidelines been given by the relevant ministry have negatively affected the current educational system, because instead of creating an less complicated environment they have done the opposite. They have simply made a bureaucracy system where the teacher is inclined to deal with filing in and compiling paperwork all the time.

Also, the way of testing and evaluation is not the appropriate way being examined and we think it is not carefully studied. From the conversation and evidence of some teachers they complain about the way they have to grade their students. According to them grading the students only at the end of the terms, is not the best choice. Having grades in the registrar only at the end of the term is a failure to the way the student's performance is evaluated. This has reduced the enthusiasm and evaluation when you are graded directly after you are being asked by the teacher.

But another current problem still remains the way these schools are being controlled. Nowadays, according to the latest reforms the initial competencies for the teachers work monitoring are focused in one or some regional educational directorate. They find it impossible to fulfill their mission. There are several schools under the regional educational directorate supervision and the degree of controlling them is not satisfactory. As a consequence, the teacher's job is beyond control. We think that in order for teachers it is helpful for all the teachers to be monitored and supervised once in 6 months at least. This leads to having an encouraged teacher who is responsible for his daily preparation.

Whereas, in many schools the internal qualification is not applied in many schools. The internal qualification as a process has had excellent results. Thus, the compilation of an obvious strategy would greatly improve the quality of teaching.

As a conclusion, we should say that the process of reforming in the education system in Albania was a necessity. This has had established and noticeable results. But the exaggerating lasting of the reforms has led to the situation where the educational system is experiencing a very long transition. It has negatively affected the appropriate functioning in all levels. Also, the application of some reforms has not given the expected results, and thus they should be reviewed in order for the educational systems to reach the required and contemporary standards.

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