EDUCATION IN ALBANIA
National dossier

Indicators and trends

Center for Democratic Education (CDE)

Supported by

unicef

Tirana, 2006
This book was prepared in the framework of "Education in Albania - National Dossier" project developed by Center for Democratic Education (CDE) and supported by UNICEF.

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Graphic Design: ViSi design

Published at: mediaprint

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Abbreviations and acronyms ................................................................. 4
Foreword .................................................................................................. 5
Introductory word ................................................................................... 7
1. Historical Background ........................................................................ 8
   *Major events in education after 1990* ............................................. 11
   *Problems the education copes with today* ...................................... 13
2. General social economic data ............................................................ 15
3. Governance ....................................................................................... 18
4. Legislation .......................................................................................... 20
5. Financing in education ....................................................................... 23
6. Organization of the education system ............................................. 28
7. Preschool education .......................................................................... 35
8. Compulsory education ..................................................................... 38
9. Special education .............................................................................. 46
10. General high education .................................................................... 52
11. Professional and social cultural education ..................................... 57
12. Private education ............................................................................ 67
13. Higher education ............................................................................ 70
14. Academic staff ............................................................................... 80
15. Quality assessment .......................................................................... 86
16. Scientific research ........................................................................... 90
16. International cooperation ............................................................... 95

**Note:** The dossier has been prepared based on the data of the school year 2005 - 2006.

The dossier was prepared in cooperation with (in alphabetical order):

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA Academy of Arts
APES Academy of Physical Education and Sports
EPF Education and Professional Formation
PrE Private Education
VE Vocational Education
WB World Bank
EU European Union
CARDS Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Sustainability
RED Regional Education Directorate
DI Directorate of Inspection
ND Normative Dispositions
EFA Education for All
EMIS Education Management Information System
GDP Gross Domestic Product
PrEI Private Education Institutions
ICS Institute of Curricula and Standards
WJO World Job Organization
INSTAT Institute of Statistics
IPS Institute of Pedagogical Studies
SPTDC Scientific Policy and Technological Development Council
RC Rectors’ Conference
ASLS Assessment Survey of Life Standard
MES Ministry of Education and Science
PBM Performance Based Management
OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
NGO Non Governmental Organization
GDP Gross Domestic Product
LG Local Government
NECEE National Education Center for Evaluation and Examinations
TQCE Training and Qualification Center for Education
SPPA Section of Policy and Planning Analyses
TPH Textbook Publishing House
HSN Higher School of Nursing
NSDPUE National Strategy of the Development of Pre-University Education
ICT/IT Information and Communication Technology
UE University of Elbasan
UGJ University of Gjirokastra
UK University of Korça
UNICEF United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
PUT Polytechnic University of Tirana
USH University of Shkodra
UT University of Tirana
UV University of Vlora
DCM Decision of the Council of Ministers
EO Education Office
FOREWORD

*Education in Albania, an International Dossier* is the second book introducing the structure, functioning and trends of the development of the Albanian education system.

This publication, in its wider sense, is an effort to portray in an objective way the current situation, the latest changes as well as the perspective of the Albanian education for the present-day readers and researchers.

*The National Dossier* meets a constant need to update all interested people/stakeholders with the situation of the education system and to compare it with its sibling international systems, as regards essential and principal aspects.

The book has been conceived to serve a wide range of readers: teachers, students, parents, education experts, education administration staff and various local and foreign researchers. Its materials ranked in chapters aim at a better approaching to the programs of international assistance with the real needs and trends of the development of the Albanian education, highlighting its peculiarities and problems.

*The National Dossier* aims at introducing an analysis of the way of the establishment and functioning of our education system based on the criteria of efficiency. Along side with these, special attention has been paid to the features of the democratization and participation of the clients, the professionals and the public in general.

Through the data offered and confirmed by various official resources, this publication aims to represent as accurate a view as possible of the figures mainly elaborated by MoES and INSTAT. Despite the efforts, ambition and good will, this publication was not able to overcome the actual level of the possession and distribution of statistics in our country. The authors have tried to offer the most updated information and the most recent values of the education indicators, although they are conscientious of the existing limitations, which are inevitable.

The group of the authors consists of specialists of the Ministry of Education and Science, Institute of Curricula and Standards, National Education Center for Evaluation and Examinations, University of Tirana and freelance experts.

The initiative for the development of this book goes to the Center for Democratic Education, under the personal care of the Executive Director, Mr. Bardhyl Musai, who in cooperation with Mrs. Linda Gjermani, has led and managed all the preparation process.
Its publication became possible thanks to the financial support of UNICEF. Mrs. Aurora Bushati’s contribution has always been helpful and cooperating especially through her valuable advice and suggestions.

Constant cooperation and institutional support of the UNICEF representative, Mrs. Carrie Auer and the minister of Education, Mr. Genc Pollo, have been crucial factors to the progress of the whole process.

The authors hope that the *National Dossier* will make up a serial of periodical continuity at the advantage of the Albanian readers and all the other persons interested in the development of education in Albania.
INTRODUCTORY WORD

National Dossier, the second after that of 1997, is published at a time when Education in Albania is going through a thorough reformation of its entire links, institutions, management and its other aspects. Last year a lot of important events, which make up the beginnings of the implementation of the major objectives we want to achieve in 2010 and further, happened in education. The National Strategy of Pre-university Education, the Higher Education Master Plan and the Education Excellence and Equity Program are major initiatives which involve the whole system as a single one, require coordination of all efforts, mobilization of all human and financial capacities. The defined objectives will be successfully accomplished when the educational policy, planning and accomplishment of the activities are based on analysis of particular elements and trends of each and every market. National dossier helps at its best all those involved in this reformation process.

Education in Albania-National Dossier provides us with a clear view of the current situation and the latest changes which will serve the researchers and all the other stakeholders to get to know the education system more closely and contribute to its development.

Ministry of Education and Science, starting from the importance that the data, the indicators and the descriptions of the situation and perspective of education have, will enable that this publication be periodical, every time that there occur dynamic changes in education, in order to always provide the readers, researchers and all the other stakeholders with updated and valuable information.

On this occasion, I wish that the National Dossier on Education in Albania fulfills at its best the aims it is published for, constantly providing us with the image of the dynamic changes of the system.

Genc Pollo
Minister of Education and Science
Chapter 1

Historical Background

Education in Albania has an early tradition, closely connected with the entire history of our people as regards freedom and progress. Archeological data and comparative studies show evidence of the ancient Culture of the Illyrians, who Albanians descended from. This culture had its first bloom during the 8th – 5th century BC.

During the middle Ages, churches, cathedrals and monasteries were established which carried out teaching activities alongside with other ones. Clergymen performed the role of the teachers.

At the time of the foundation of the Arbëri princedom in the 12th – 13th century and other Albanian principalities, especially during the epoch of our national hero, George Castriot – Scanderbeg, the development of historical chronics and other documents underwent a particular progress. Chancelleries were established where the official documentation, correspondence with the neighbors and agreements with foreign countries were elaborated. The language used for communication within the principalities was Albanian. This period marks down a great moment in the efforts of the Albanian nation for the protection of its freedom and identity.

The first documents of the written Albanian language date back to the 15th century. The oldest book in the Albanian language is Meshari (the Missal) written by Gjon Buzuku and published in 1555. The rich language and the relatively stable orthography testify that Meshari must have been based on a previous tradition of the written Albanian.

Although under difficult conditions, a lot of intellectuals of the catholic clergy enabled the opening of several primary schools in Albanian, in 1632 and 1639, which were closed down by the ottoman authorities. Under these circumstances, teaching Albanian resumed in illegal conditions in houses, churches and mosques. The teaching materials were prepared by education – loving clergymen like Pjetër Budi, Frang Bardhi, Andrea Bogdani etc.

The Meeting of the Albanian Clergymen, recognized under the name Koncili i Arbërit (Arbër’s Council) (1703), which decided that all the notes on the Albanian registers should be kept in Albanian, had a special importance for the protection and development of the Albanian language.

The 17th – 18th centuries saw the building of madrasahs and high Islamic schools, where teaching of Islamic religion, Arabic language and culture occupied the main part, but some elementary knowledge of a scientific character was also taught. In the monasteries, as well, there were schools opened by the orthodox clergy, which helped in the education of the population at a medium level. The teaching there was held in Greek. The highest point of this period was the establishment of the New Academy, otherwise called Voskopoja Academy in 1705, which soon became an
important center of European size for the development of culture and didactic thought.

The efforts for the development of the Albanian school and education had a notable increase during the period of the Albanian National Renaissance during 1830 – 1912. The Prizreni Albanian Link, 1978 – 1881, developed the program for the official recognition of the Albanian school and language. The link defined a common alphabet of the Albanian language and the book “ABC of the Albanian Language” (Abetare) was published.

On March 7, 1887, the Mësonjtorja e pare school opened in Korça marking officially the first institutionalized Albanian school of a thorough national physiognomy and democratic character, for both boys and girls from all social strata and various religions.

In December 1909, in Elbasan, the opening of the Normal School marks the foundation of the high school of our national education, which served for the training of primary school teachers of Albania.

Albania was sanctioned as a distinguished political entity in 1912 when it was proclaimed independent from the Ottoman Empire. With the proclamation of the independence, on November 28, in the town of Vlora, the Albanian school and education were organized and managed by the Albanian Government for the first time in the history of Albania. Its educational activity focused on the establishment of the Albanian Language as the official language of the new Albanian state, on the creation of the school content of a national and democratic character; on the setting up of the education directorates in the main prefectures, on the compulsory primary education and on the opening of high schools for teacher training. These decisions found their expression in The Suitable Canon of the Civil Administration in Albania in 1913, which constituted the laying of the fundamental basis of the Albanian educational legislation.

In January 1920, the Congress of Lushnja approved the Fundamental Statute of the Albanian State and established the foundation of the Albanian ministries. The same year, under the spirit of this congress the Education Congress of Lushnja was held, which made a lot of important decisions on the nationalization, democratization, laicism and uniqueness of the Albanian school and on the design of school documentation.

By the second half of the '20 – '30 of the twentieth century, efforts were made to organize the legislative state, to introduce the Western European legislation to Albania. These years were characterized by the stability of education, consolidation of primary school, establishment of the complete system of high education. In 1933 the schools became state – owned. In September 1934 the decree – law On the Structure of Education was proclaimed on whose basis the educational reform was carried out.

After World War II, Albanian local administration was established in the Albanian territories of Kosova, Montenegro and Macedonia. Hundreds of voluntary teachers went to Kosova and other areas, where the basis of the national Albanian education were laid.

After the liberation, in November 1944, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a single party system, was established in Albania for 45 years. In August 1946, the First Educational Reform was approved consisting in the establishment of a new education system built on so – called democratic and socialist principles, on the fundamental change of ideological, scientific and pedagogical criteria of the teaching and education process, on the contents and methods, on the bases of Marxism – Leninism. The fight against illiteracy undertook a wide spread.

On the basis of the educational reforms, the structures of the primary education were defined as
unique and general. Primary education, and later on, the 7 – year education was proclaimed compulsory. The school was equal for all, boys and girls of towns and villages, as well. Schools for adults were also set up at these levels (studying and working at the same time).

In 1946, the Higher Pedagogical Institute opened in Tirana, the first higher school in Albania. The State University of Tirana was founded in 1957

The People’s Assembly of the Republic of Albania passed on the law On the reorganization of the educational system, on 06.11.1963. The 7 – year school, on the basis of this law, became compulsory 8 – year school. All the teaching plans and programs were reprocessed, leading to remarkable changes regarding the ideological content of school. Productive labor was introduced into the high schools and the communist education of the new generation was given priority.

The reformation of the education on ideological criteria was carried further by the law “Further revolutionizing of school” approved on 12.24.1969. The entire teaching and educational work was built on the basis of three basic components: teaching, productive labor and physical and military training and the entire content of the school would be permeated by the read thread of the Marxist – Leninist ideology and the state – party. Hence, school politicization reached extreme limits.

In 1970, the Institute of Pedagogical Studies was set up in Tirana.

In the ’80s and later on efforts were made for the scientific modernization and qualitative strengthening of the school, but under the conditions of our country, they were done in an enclosed circle, within the same system, and consequently they did not yield the expected success.

The creation of the free market economy and the opening of the borders led to a massive leaving of the teachers abroad or to other jobs, qualified or not, but better paid.

Difficulties were also noticed in the universities and other schools of higher education.

The urgent needs of the educational system asked for immediate measures, first regarding the putting into operation of the damaged network of the education institutions as prerequisite for other reformation changes. In 1994 and 1995 laws of pre-university and higher education in the Republic of Albania were designed based on the democratic principles of the education system building. Foreign institutions undertook an assistance and aid program for the rehabilitation of all the education system, its physical infrastructure and its content.

The Albanian education has now passed from the emergent phase of assistance to that of development. National education is developed based on the short term strategy of Pre-university Education which is serving as a program for the undertaking of a wide system reform supported by the World Bank, European Union and other donors. In 2006, the Maturity Exam was implemented for the first time and successfully all over the system of high education and its results were also used for admission in higher schools. A new scheme for the design, assessment, publication and distribution of the textbooks was implemented the same year. According to this scheme the Ministry does no longer play the role of the publisher whereas the textbook users – teachers, students and parents in schools choose the most appropriate book for them. Both these great initiatives aim at giving an end to corruption in education and directly contribute to the increase/enhancement of the quality of the system. This is only the beginning of a thorough transformation in education, however.

Albania has been engaged in a regional integrating policy in the Balkans Peninsula and in taking the first institutional steps for integration in the European Union. The preparation of the Albanian
The year 2003 was also the year of the opening of the negotiations for the signing of Stability – Association Agreement with the European Union, which places our country in front of the pressure to achieve certain legislative, political, institutional and economic standards, and at the same time, ensures support for a series of processes, where education, on the basis of these standards, makes up a national priority for the state.

Major events in education after 1990

1992
- Subjects of ideological character and military were removed from the school curriculum.
- First institutional attempts to design depoliticized subjects and textbooks. First attempts to use interactive teaching and learning methods.
- Cascade teacher training system was built, providing them with more possibilities to be exposed to new curricula and approaches.

1994
- Law on Higher Education approved in the Albanian Parliament, making a step forward in the democratization of the universities.
- Human rights introduced as cross-curricular elements in basic education.
- First steps undertaken for the establishment of the National Examinations and Evaluation Center, which will administer examinations of admission at university.

1995
- The World Bank, European Union and Soros Foundation offer a sum of $ 30 million to support the construction and rehabilitation of school buildings and building capacities for the reformation of teaching and learning.
- Law on Pre-University Education was passed, laying the basis for the development of the education system to contribute to the democratic society and free market economy. The law also foresees the new structure of the vocational schools and the activity of the non-public schools.
- A joint four-year-program of the government and donors to improve school infrastructure was approved.

1997
- A joint program of the Government and donors for the improvement of school infrastructure is approved.

1998
- Examination and Evaluation Center set
- Cascade teacher training system invalidated
- Teaching week reduced to five days instead of six

1999
- Law on Higher Education approved which provides universities with more academic, administrative and financial freedom and guarantees free elections of the leading staff.
- Pilot phase for the specialization of general high education into natural and social tracks started.

2000
- Law on local government declares general education as a functional responsibility between local government and the central/national one.
2001
- Strategy of poverty reduction, in the framework of the Millennium Objectives, classifies education and health as long-term strategic sectors.

2002
- Ministry of Education and Science is structured aiming at building capacities in the functions of education policies and quality insurance.
- Directorate of Inspection in the Ministry of Education and Science is set.
- Ministry employees, in conformity with the requirements of the legislation of civil service, undergo testing. This measure was taken in order to protect the technical staff of the Ministry from political clearing and frequent changes of the Ministers.
- Law on Pre-University Education (1995) amended, which ensures more local government rights in the decision making process.

2003
- Institute of Pedagogical Studies is divided into two institutions: Institute of Curricula and Standards and the Teacher Training and Qualification Center.
- The system of Education Directorates is organized in 24 units (Education Offices) at a local level; in 12 units at a region level plus that of Tirana (Regional Education Directorates).

2004
- National strategy of Education is approved, which defines priorities in the sector of Education for the Government and donors by the Council of Ministers.
- Government decree restructures levels and years of schooling, in an attempt to approach the Albanian Educational System with practices of other countries of the Southeast European Region, European Union and member countries of OECD.
- Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization sign a memorandum in order to accelerate the rate of decentralization in pre-university education.
- Tirana municipality is appointed as a pilot unit to manage the school construction and reconstruction funds.

2005
- Ministry of Education and Science establishes the Recommendation Board of the Fiction, Research and Publicity Literature (RBFRPL).
- Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with UNDP in Tirana, introduce the Government program "Master plan for the IT program in schools".

2006
- January  Ministry of Education and Science introduces the Strategy of Vocational Education and Formation in Albania
- February  Council of Ministers approves the decision for the establishment of the Maturity Exam and for admissions in public higher schools
- March    Council of Ministers approves the decision for the publication, printing and distribution of school textbooks of the pre-university system.
- June     Financial agreement between the Government and the World Bank is signed for the "Education Excellence and Equity" Program, of a value of $ 75 million. The financiers of this project are: World Bank, European Investment Bank, Investment Bank of the Council of Europe and the Albanian Government.
- August   Decision of the Ministry of Education and Science to set the Council of Higher Education and Science is proclaimed
- October  Master Plan Project on Higher Education is introduced.
Problems education faces today

During the transition years, despite the progress achieved by the education system in all its links, it is still far from the standards to approach the education systems of the European Union and farther. The major problems this system faces today are summarized as follows:

**The development of the educational sector is still in unsatisfactory levels and indicators. A crucial factor in the future remains the encouragement of the competition in compliance with the economic development of the country.** The major challenge in the framework of the aspirations of Albania for membership in the EU as regards the education sector is the development of a system and institutions which prepare capacities to operate efficiently in the labor markets so as to become active citizens and contribute to this competition in Albania. The importance of investment in human capital is more emphatic in a country like Albania where the resources are limited/few. High school and higher education reform remains a high priority in the program of the development of the education sector. The quality and value of education should increase considerably in all levels and this gives a critical importance to the continuity of the recently started reforms.

**Education results in the system are weak, especially when measured against the labor market needs and achievements in the other countries of the region which the need for labor hand in Albania have to compete with.** The Albanian children take 8.6 years of schooling on average, a figure which ranks Albania behind many countries of the region. Our children also take almost 6 years less of education than the average of EU. Although the universal primary education is increased, the attendance percentage in high school (grades 9-12) is low (about 50%). The low average grades of education are also a result of the changes of the market in certain regions and according to income groups. The level of the Albanian students lags behind the other countries of the region with which the labor hand in Albania competes. Although the trend is increasing, the percentage of attendance of higher education remains low, at a level of 13% and the system does not comply with the changing needs of the labor market.

**The decrease of the public expenses in education during the recent years has led to the decrease of the education quality.** The limited public expenses in education resulted in sharing the schooling cost with the families. This element has had a negative impact on the school attendance from children who come from poor families. The public expenses of the education system as a GDP percentage suffered a decrease from 3.7% in 1995 to 3.1% in 2004. This figure is much lower than the average of EU (about 4.9%). Public expenses on education, as percentage of the total public expenses, have got stuck at about 10% since 1995. Even this comparison is not positive compared to the average of the new member countries of EU (10-14%). Schools in urban and suburban areas are overcrowded. On the other hand, schools in the remote areas have very small students-teacher ratio as a result of the decrease of the number of the inhabitants or migration of the population to the urban areas. While efforts are being made to increase the teacher’s salaries, especially in the rural areas, the current budget of non-salary expenses has remained at about 10-12% of the total budget of education, thus having a negative impact on the teaching quality, didactic materials, teacher training and building maintenance.

**The New Education Strategy (NES) lays the framework of a sector wide reform.** The strategy identifies four priority areas and sets the objectives related to them, the indicators for the measurement of the achievements and deadlines for their accomplishment. The four priority areas include: (I) governance – reformation and strengthening of the managing capacities, (II) improvement of the teaching and learning process quality, (III) financing of pre-university education and (IV) building capacities and development of human resources. This strategy foresees
the viewpoint, generally accepted, to the assistance of the educational sector level and serves as basis of the common efforts to achieve better and more efficient results. The Ministry of Education and Science based on the National Education Strategy, 2004-2015, aims at developing an all-inclusive strategy that will cover from early childhood development to higher education.

**With the increase of participation in education, quality and equity remain major issues.** The curricula and textbook reforms have started in order to improve the quality of pre-university education. The efforts for the improvement of the teaching quality include: establishment of a system of the professional development of the teachers and school principals, reform of the elementary programs of teacher training in universities, financing of research work related to teaching and learning, improvement of schools and education management.

**The modernization of the higher education system and the strengthening of governance in universities are moments of a crucial importance.** The program of higher education reform includes: modernization of the courses and curricula structures, strengthening of the university governance structures, improvement of the legislation and financing formula, strengthening of the mechanisms of quality and accreditation insurance as well as strengthening of the relations with the labor market.

**Governance in education and decentralization in particular require an urgent need for revision and development.** Decentralization of the education system management and services provision at the pre-university level, in the framework of the general efforts for the decentralization in the country, are very important aspects. The process of the decentralization of the pre-university education system is based on the following principles: (I) efforts for higher academic achievements and administrative efficiency and transparency, (II) measurement culture, (III) performance based management, (IV) new role for the school principals and (V) participation approach. With the increase of the local and school autonomy, the schools and the individuals who work in schools should take more responsibility regarding planning and management of the services they provide and improvement of quality as well.

All these draft reforms, based on the current problems education is coping with today, have been ambitious since the early beginning stage of their implementation. An acute task for MoES and all the other stakeholders is the establishment of priorities and the ranking of the activities of the reform, defining of the objectives and monitoring indicators, development of detailed implementation plans, clarification of the responsibility and the framework of accountability strengthening of leadership in schools and other education institutions.

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CHAPTER 2

GENERAL SOCIAL ECONOMIC DATA

By the end of the first decade of the unimaginable multidimensional changes after the 50-year totalitarian system, Albania represents a complex reality of progress and challenges.

The changes carried out during the transition period have given a new look to the country concerning various aspects. Installation of a new democratic political system and market economy, among others, is making the Albanian society encounter the fast social – economic stratification, intensive urbanization, emigration and immigration, regional changes, the creation of the civil society, decentralization of the government, quick change of the working and living culture, corruption etc.

The biggest difficulty of the transition period was and remains the materialization of the European aspiration in a series of reforms, which would generally affect the existing institutions, would create new ones as well as would adapt the way of governance and managing human resources to the new system. The undertaken reforms in Albania were characterized by their depth and width. Their pace has set Albania among countries with a relatively fast and irreversible transition towards a market economy and democratic system.

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<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>28,748 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>3,069,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of the population</td>
<td>rural 57.8%; urban 42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age structure</td>
<td>age-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-4 years old: 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-14: 22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>under 24 years old: 48.86%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labor active: 63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender composition</td>
<td>females: 50.16%, males: 49.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural growth</td>
<td>39,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average life expectancy</td>
<td>74.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>106 inhabitants/km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic composition</td>
<td>97.96% Albanian;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.85% Greek; 0.15% Macedonian;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.04% Montenegrin, Vilah and Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Domestic Product per capita</td>
<td>2,060 $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State expenses on public education</td>
<td>10.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State expenses on public education as % of GDP</td>
<td>3.252 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family expenses on education &amp; entertainment</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the beginning of the political and social transformations, the Albanian economy had to cope with all the deep crises that accompanied the entire process of transferring the property of productive enterprises from state owned to private ones and putting them into operation. The inevitable cost was general reduction of production, immediate increase of unemployment in galloping figures and inflation unknown during the socialist economy.

Besides the re-stabilization of the macroeconomic factors, new phenomena have occurred considerably hindering the success of the reforms in the country, such as: corruption of the administration staff and the social system in general, human beings trafficking, forced prostitution, informal and semiformal economy, the severe damage of the environment and natural resources, unprotected competition with the foreign subsidized products etc.

This has led to mixed results of the transition period, which have had consequences such as an obvious social and economic polarization, the creation of powerful monopoly tendencies and massive emigration.

In spite of the obvious progress in many aspects, gender equity in Albania has stepped backward. Women were the first to be hit by unemployment as a consequence of restructuring and privatization of the economy. A violent resurrection of the norms of medieval canon has led to a submissive state of the woman, especially in the northeast and rural areas where she bears the burden of the main jobs in agriculture and house and children care and has been marginalized from the social and cultural life. The percentage of the women representation in political and administrative leading organs at both central and local level is reduced.

About 30% of the Albanian people are considered to live in poverty, defining the latter as a combination of social – economic indicators. Poverty is more common in the countryside, where the poor occupy 80% of the population. GINI coefficient at a national level has been calculated as 0.43 and indicates a high inequality level. Unemployment as well, closely connected with poverty, is unequally spread from the geographical point of view concentrating in the areas of Laç, Puka, Kuçova, Librazhd, Tropoja, Shkodra.

One of the most direct consequences of poverty has been massive migration within the country and abroad, which has considerably changed the demographic configuration in the majority of the areas of the country leading to depopulation and abandonment of the northeast and remote mountainous areas, and massive settlement in the suburban areas of the main towns, especially in Tirana and Durrësi. Hence, the pressure on the public service systems such as education and health care, as well as on physical infrastructure of roads and canals, water and electricity supply has been impossible to cope with.

The estimated figures indicate a total emigration as of about 25% of the population beyond the borders of the country. This emigration has helped Albania withstand a considerable part of the monetary deficiency with the financial income from emigration, whereas at a family level these incomes often constitute a drastic difference between being or not being poor. One of the social effects of emigration has been the introduction of new mentalities and more contemporary working methods. Lots of skills learned during the emigration period have been widely used while setting up and managing local businesses. Meanwhile, alongside with this, emigration of the intellectuals has had its impact on the phenomenon of brain drain, especially felt among the ranks of scientific researchers and public administration. The government, through the brain gain programs, has obviously expressed its willingness to develop a unified strategy to prevent and cope with this phenomenon. Lack of teachers with proper education in the rural areas is considerable. The same holds true for doctors especially specialists in villages and certain districts.
Political militancy is gradually leaving more space to other actors of the social and political life such as organized business, local communities, civil society and interest social groups. The positive impact of this social development is noticed by the fact that the political and economic life is much more diversified and it is increasingly being submitted to the public and social debate, elements of a functioning democracy.

During this period, Albania has entered an intensive period of the development of legislation, reformation and modernization of the institutions. More than 80% of the entire legislation has been changed and revised until now. Among the deepest legal reforms, it is worth mentioning taxation, privatization of the economic and social objects, financial system, decentralization of administrative government, civil service, university system and penal and civil codes, which are still in the process of elaboration.

Albanian aspiration for membership and integration in the European community brings about the challenge of approach with that of the European Community and above all with the implementation one. While the compilation has been carried out through cooperation with Euro-Atlantic experts, its implementation is more a problem of the weakness of the Albanian institutions, civil society and citizens as individuals.

Meanwhile, Albania has undertaken its international engagements for the accomplishment of the millennium objectives, which set measurable indicators of achievements for 2020. The second millennium objective is the qualitative accomplishment of compulsory education by all. Although social interest in education is considerable and at family level it often becomes primary, civil society in the education sector has been developed later and more slowly than in the other sectors. It has displayed lack of vision and weakness in coordination unable to become a proactive and loud voice. As a result of this, the official strategies of the reformation of this sector have also been characterized by a closed process and have not been well mastered by the stakeholders and relevant communities. Ministry of Education and Science has lacked an important partner and opponent for policy making.

Education has inherited state mentality and weakness as regards social and professional organization. The role of the teachers' trade unions in the improvement of the working conditions in education has little effect, whereas the parents' associations present in the legislation and normative dispositions of public schools since 1995 are still inactive. Their activity is quite restricted and it doesn't go beyond one or several schools. A real parental movement is missing at the national level. However, at the moment, the trends indicate more organization and grouping of stakeholders in the area of education.

The successful implementation of the Maturity Exam, admission at universities according to its results avoiding admission tests, the new procedure of textbooks and some other initiatives during this year, have brought back the citizens' trust in the government, have increased their interest in education and have encouraged the community for wider and more active participation in education issues.
Governance in the Republic of Albania consists of two essential levels: the central one and the local one.

**The central level**

The central level government consists of the legislative, the Parliament and the executive, the Council of Ministers, central institutions and the deconcentrated offices of the central government such as the educational and public health directorates.

**Prefectures**

There are 12 prefectures in Albania. They, on behalf of the central government, mainly monitor the legitimacy of the decisions made by the communes and municipalities and public services provided by the central level such as health and education.

The prefecture is led by the prefect nominated by the Council of Ministers. His/her task is to ensure of the implementation of the government and national policy and programs at a local level in the territory of the prefecture.

**The local level**

**The First Local Level - Communes and Municipalities**

Albania is administratively divided into 76 municipalities and 209 communes, a division made by law. The election period is every three years. Communes and municipalities make up the first and major level of the local government. From the legal and functions viewpoint, the communes and the municipalities are tantamount. The communes operate in the rural areas; the municipalities correspond to the urban ones. The law for the organization and functioning of the local government and the law for the territorial administrative division were passed in 1999.

The people directly elect the heads of the communes and municipalities, as well as their councils. In the villages, in communes there are reeves, who have been directly elected, whereas at a municipality level there operate the heads of the administrative units as parts of their corresponding municipality, elected through direct voting, too. Apart from the elected persons and organs, the communes and the municipalities also have their executive apparatus consisting
of the nominated staff that carries out all the functions of the municipalities and communes under the corresponding direction and approval. The head of the commune and the mayor, although elected through direct voting, carry out executive tasks just like the nominated staff.

The law provides the local organs with the right to decide on all the issues under their dependence, exercise the right of property, use the revenues by the local taxes and other ways law approves, carry out economic activity, determine the quantity of the local taxes, etc.

They also perform particular functions for various services as well as for local cultural and historic values such as sports and entertaining activities, social service and administration of nurseries, elderly people homes, orphanages, etc. The communes and the municipalities carry out functions even in cooperation with the central level as preschool and pre-university education, primary health care, etc.

Second Level - Regions
The regions reappeared again as structures of the local government by the local elections of the year 2000. Not yet consolidated, the functions and the competences of the regions are not well configured compared to those of the communes and municipalities. The constitution still being the main legislation for the regions makes their profile quite dependent on the size and character of the delegation from the communes and the municipalities. There are 13 regions and their territorial division complies with that of the prefectures.

The regions constitute the second level of the local government made up by delegation of the elected people from each commune or municipality within the region territory. The regions cover several districts and their main responsibility is the planning of the regional development in their respective territory and coordination of their work with the national policies. Their representative organ is the regional council. The representatives of the municipalities and communes, elected for the regional council, elect the head and the headship of the region as executive organs. The delegation of the representatives from each commune and municipality to the region is commensurate with the corresponding population. The election period for the regions is also every three years.

Districts
Districts were the main governing structures at a local level during the 50 year period of socialist governance (more like decentralized levels of the central government). The districts continue to exist as subdivisions within the region, without having elected organs. They still administer certain functions and services such as order, education, health, employment service, justice etc.
CHAPTER 4

LEGISLATION

The Parliament of Albania is the legislative organ, which makes laws and amendments. The government, the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science issue sub-legal acts, such as: normative dispositions, regulations, orders and instructions etc. as regards implementation of the laws.

Fundamental Principles Education Is Based on

The fundamental principles upon which education is based in Albania are expressed in the Constitution of Albania, the basic laws and other important legal, sub-legal acts and documents of the Parliament, Government, Ministry of Science and Education.

The Constitution of Albania guarantees each citizen of the right of education in the public schools of compulsory education and general, vocational and social-cultural education. The right of education is free.

The existing legislation proclaims education in Albania a national priority. The mission of the education is the spiritual emancipation, the materialistic progress and the social development of the individual. The promotion of education on the traditions and most valuable achievements of our national schools and international agreements and treaties ratified by the Republic of Albania, constitutes another functional principle. The respect of the children and adults’ rights is another powerful democratic principle. The citizens of the Republic of Albania enjoy equal rights to be educated in all the levels of education despite their social state, nationality, language, sex, religion, political convictions, health conditions and economic level. The possibility of national minorities to develop their mother tongue and culture and at the same time to get integrated and participate in the life of the country is another fundamental principle stated by law.

The legal basis of the pre-university education is the Law on pre-university education system No. 7952, dated 06.21.1995, changed by the Law No. 8387, dated 07.30.1998. As regards higher education, the law available is Law No. 8461, dated 02.25.1999 together with the amendments made to it on 07.28.2003.

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is the highest public administrative organ in education. This institution is in charge of the administrative of the education system at a national level, on the basis of the basic principles of the education policy defined by the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Albania.

MoES is responsible for the realization of the national policy of the secular education approved by the Council of Ministers. MoES approves basic documents of the education institutions such
as: teaching plans, school curricula and textbooks, academic year structure, the teacher’s teaching load and the number of the students per class in the public educational institutions.

The basic laws passed by the Parliament during the years of political pluralism in Albania on which the education in Albania is based are:

**Pre – university Education**


This law has 67 articles according to the following chapters:

a) General principles
b) Public education system
c) Public special education
d) Private education
e) Complementary structures of education
f) Management of the pre – university education system
g) Financial relations of the education system
h) Recent dispositions

The Ministry of Education and Science has issued other sub – legal acts concerning the implementation of the law. One of the most important ones is “Normative dispositions”, which entered into operation during the school year 2002 – 2003. The normative dispositions, otherwise known as “The School Law”, make up the concrete basis for the functioning of the activity of the school and other institutions of pre – university education. “Normative dispositions” consists of 77 articles, according to the following chapters:

a) General principles
b) School obligation and dismissal from it
c) School enrollments
d) Teaching and educational work
e) School leaving, maturity and final exams
f) Activities, contests and competitions
g) Student
h) Teacher, his/her rights and duties
i) Parents
j) School collegial organs
k) Transfers, movements of the teachers and students
l) Education of students in special needs
m) Education authorities
n) School property, inventory and budget
o) School documentation, history
p) Recent dispositions

**Higher Education**


The law of 1999, which is actually in power, contains 46 articles under the following chapters:

- a) General dispositions
- b) Organization and management of higher schools
- c) Financial and administrative relations
- d) Higher schools staff
- e) Students
- f) Studies in higher schools
- g) Recent dispositions

Main Documents of Education

The teaching plans, programs and textbooks for the public institutions make up the main documents of education. They are approved by the Minister of Education and Science or through proposals of the institutions other organisms depending on it.. The teaching plans of the nine-year schools, of public compulsory education and those of the high schools of public education are developed by the Curricula Directorate in the Ministry of Education and Science and approved by the Minister.

The curricula are developed by the Institute of Curricula and Standards and are approved by Subject Program Commissions and then by the Minister.

The textbooks are developed by groups of specialists of education whereas the textbook selection is being done on the basis of contests. In 2006, alternative textbooks selected by the school board started being used for the first time.

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1 Since 2004, the compulsory education system has changed from eight to nine years.
The budget for the public system of education is an expression, and at the same time, a mechanism of the national education policy for the implementation of the economic and social policies of the government. This annual financing consists of funds approved by law by the parliament of Albania. In the case of the budget of Ministry of Education and Science, the budget is only an expenses balance sheet. These expenses in education have been planned on annual basis in the form of short-term operating plans.

Starting from 1989, the public expenses for education, as part of GDP, have constantly reduced, from 4% in 1989, 3% in 200 and 2001 and 2.9% in 2003. These indicators are lower than the average of the other countries of the region. The state budget of education in 2003 was only 10.3% of the general public expenses. This indicator compared to 11.4% of 1995 and 11.5% in 1996 is not evidence of increase.

Starting from the year 2000, midterm budget programs for a 3-year period have been applied to have a more successful budget plan of education. The midterm plan ensures a more detailed analysis of the one – year public expenses defining more real indicators in the planning and distribution of funds in the education system. Planning the expenses on the basis of the calendar year, reflecting and respecting the rhythm of the school activities according to the academic year, is specific in designing the public budget in education.

The total education budget consists of the central and the local budget.

1. Local Budget

Local budget of education is that part of the expenses which goes entirely to the function of the pre – university education system. Local budget occupies about 80 % of the total budget of the Ministry of Education and Science. The planning and distribution of the funds of the local budget is done according to the education levels, e.g., the budget in pre – university education is managed in these educational levels: basic education including pre – school and compulsory education, general high education and vocational education.

Recent years, a series of indicators have been taken into consideration during the process of the preparation of the budget such as: the number of students per class, the number of the teachers per class, cost per teacher and cost per student, which have considerably improved the distribution of the budget.
The negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Finances constitute the first stage of the development of the public budget of education. At first, the Ministry of Finances sends to the Ministry of Education the orientating quotas according to the levels for the year being planned.

The Ministry of Education in cooperation with the education directorates in the districts, sustaining the educational policies and in conformity with the law “On the state budget” estimate the needs for budget funds for the normal functioning of the education institutions, detailed for every administrative unit of the local government.

The local budget is divided into several items

a) Salary and social insurances fund
The salary and social insurances fund occupies about 71% of the total expenses in the local education. Planning of this fund is based on the organizational structures and typical analytical structures of pre–university institutions, as well as the norms of the teaching and assistance work in education, approved by the Ministry.

During the process of the development of the draft-budget, the educational directorate engages the finance office, the staff and the sector of statistics, making use of all the economic and teaching indicators.

The detailed determination of the number of the employees according to the education levels and for every administrative unit of the local government is done based on the education policy for the year being planned and implementation of the indicators of the students number, normative acts approved by the Ministry of Education and Science as well as the typical structures of the institutions of education. The number of the employees is the basic economic indicator of the budget planning in education. This indicator, elaborated with the average salary where the job indicators such as years of work of the employee, average qualification in % per employee and additions to the wage for the teaching staff who work far from their living area are reflected, is used for every administrative unit of the local government (commune and municipality) to plan the salary fund and social insurances. These occupy the major weight in the local budget of education administered and managed by the commune and the municipality.

At the same time, the communes and the municipalities, implementing the instruction of the Ministry of Finances for the development of the draft plan of the budget and the accomplishment of the salary fund and social insurances, designs the draft-budget of the salary fund and social insurances and sends it to the Ministry Finance.

The educational directorate confronts and elaborates the salary and social insurance fund calculated by the commune and the municipality, develops the budget draft-plan for expenses, salaries and social insurances and sends it to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education and Science after checking, elaborating and verifying the estimated expenses with the real current indicators of the teaching and assisting work in education, develops the final document of the draft budget and sends it to the Ministry of Finance.

b. Investments
Investments in education in 2005 cover about 15%, in 2006 about 18% and in 2003 about 23% of the overall expenses in the education system. Investments include the construction of new school, rehabilitation of the existing schools and their equipment with the necessary means and materials. Investments were and are followed by the Ministry of Education and Science, which makes the policy of the allocation of the investment fund into school objects. The investment
expenses are planned collecting the opinion of the educational directorates, studying the number
of the children as well as the actual physical condition of the teaching objects for each
administrative unit of the local government.

The Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the education directorates, designs
the draft budget of the respective year in the form of a document in which the expenses in education
are presented according to the nomenclature approved in the budget, for the fulfillment of short
term policies. The draft budget is designed in details for each education level and for each
administrative unit of the local government, commune and municipality and is sent for approval
to the Ministry of Finance in August.

The Ministry of Finance, after doing the necessary revisions in cooperation with the Ministry of
Education, sends the draft budget of education to the Council of Ministers as a component part of
the overall budget of the government. The final approval of the 1-year short-term budget is done
by the Parliament through voting. After the approval in the Parliament, the Ministry of Education
and Science revises once again the planning of the expenses according to the education levels,
details them in 4-month and 2-month expenses (monthly quotes) and sends this final document
again to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance sends the detailed budget of the Ministry
of Education and Science to the budget branches of the districts for implementation.

The expenses for the salaries and social insurances fund in the local budget are planned by the
Ministry of Education and Science and administered by the organs of the local government. The
municipalities and the communes are responsible for the good administration of this part of the
budget and do not have the right to interfere and use these funds for other purposes. The
municipalities and the communes, who order the funds, organize the performance of the payment
of the employees of the educational system in their territory, in conformity with the number of the
employees sent by the Ministry of Education to the district budget branches. Changes in the
approved staff structure are made only by the Ministry of Education and Science at the request of
the education directorate at the beginning of each school year and during the year as a result of
free demographic movement. The expenses for investments and reconstructions of the teaching
objects are followed by the district education directorate. The educational directorates also estimate
and follow the needs for textbooks, enroll, diplomas, matriculation registers, laboratory
equipment, chalk, furniture, maps and other school equipments which are classified as teaching
aid materials for the school.

Public budget spending for education according to items in million lek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tr>
<td>in million lek</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALI</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current expenses</td>
<td>17299</td>
<td>18110</td>
<td>19455</td>
<td>21105</td>
<td>23283</td>
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<td>Capital expenses</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2921</td>
<td>4780</td>
<td>3744</td>
<td>5102</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Out of which foreign</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Education from local government</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>1610</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education as a percentage of GDP</td>
<td>3.05%</td>
<td>2.92%</td>
<td>2.81%</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>3.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses as a percentage of total expenses</td>
<td>9.48%</td>
<td>9.59%</td>
<td>9.89%</td>
<td>10.51%</td>
<td>10.74%</td>
<td>11.38%</td>
<td>11.31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>530906</td>
<td>610426</td>
<td>67784</td>
<td>744974</td>
<td>822677</td>
<td>836900</td>
<td>899700</td>
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<td>Total budget expenses</td>
<td>170621</td>
<td>186049</td>
<td>192517</td>
<td>209420</td>
<td>222439</td>
<td>232339</td>
<td>266751</td>
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</table>

* For the year 2006 it is at the expenses’ estimation
The planning and management of the funds in the education system about issues related to the maintenance of the teaching institutions of pre-school, compulsory and high education, in the management of the education budget at a local level, in conformity with the law “On the local budget” and the law “On the organization and operation of the local government”, is made by the administrative units of the local government, by the communes and municipalities. This part of the local education budget is taken by the communes and municipalities in the form of a lump sum. The part of the budget given to the local government in the lump sum form for the operating expenses in education is managed by the local government.

It is important that the school continuously plays an active role in the use of this part of the budget. Actually the school should take part in the planning of its expenses for the items mentioned above and introduce to the commune or municipality in June the draft budget of the school for the coming year. The education institution should be directly involved to manage and follow the expenses all the time, in compliance with the concrete plan approved by the commune or municipality.

Another element of school financing is the space of the educational institutions to ensure additional resources through the contribution of the community, parents, business and particular sponsors, as well. Even the communes with the financial possibilities they have from the local budget on the basis of the decisions of respective councils and according to their concrete circumstances, can use funds for the education system, for a more normal functioning of the educational institutions in their territory.

As regards the development and implementation of the expenses of education, the relations between schools and local government have not yet been consolidated. The management of these expenses is done through the good wills of one or the other, i.e. they are attributes of the administration officers in communes and municipalities. The participation of the school representatives should increase so as to perfect the procedures of the development and management of the operating costs for the educational institutions.

2. Central Budget

The other part of the total education budget consists of the central budget, which covers the expenses for the Ministry, higher schools and universities, as well as their depending institutions. Planning and management of the central budget are better-harmonized processes because the respective institutions design and administer their draft budget themselves.

Universities have more autonomy as regards financial aspect. They enjoy the right to do the distribution of the budget according to the approved nomenclature. Planning of the expenses of the universities and their depending institutions is more practical and real because the essential indicators of planning are better studied and the number of the employees is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science with a detailed organizational structure according to the analytical structure. The procedures of the development in time of the central draft budget are similar to those of the local budget.

About 68.7 % of the expenses in education are expenses for the basic education, which includes the largest number of students and teachers. As regards 1996 – 2000 expenses have had a faster increase in higher schools.
3. Financial Aid in Education

The state budget of education, apart from expenses for investments, salaries, heating, teaching aids, teachers and students transport, subsidizes at a certain extent the price rise and the inflation rate in the payment of meals and accommodation of the students and pupils who live in the dormitories. The subsidy for the textbooks is also a financial aid for the pupils.

Another form of financial aid is granting scholarships to the students who continue their studies far from their home place, and who meet the economic criterion. Scholarships are also granted to the students of vocational education who have completed the previous school year with a grade point average 10 and university students who have finished the previous academic year with a GPA of 10.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the institution which designs the plan of the scholarships according to the quotas for each district, whereas the education directorate allocates it for each commune and municipality. The communes and municipalities make decisions about scholarship grants and send to the education directorates the decisions and documentation of scholarship awards, which are signed by the director of education directorate/education office for control effect. The textbooks subsidy is planned by the Ministry of Education and Science.
CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

Ministry of Education and Science
Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is the highest public administrative organ in education. This institution is responsible for the administration of the education system at a national level on the basis of the fundamental principles of the educational policy, defined by the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Albania. MoES is responsible for the realization of the national policy of secular education approved by the Council of Ministers. MoES approves the basic documents of the education institutions such as teaching plans, curricula and textbooks, defines the structure of the academic year, the teacher’s teaching load, and the number of the students per class in the public education institutions. A series of counseling organs about different aspects of education operate in the Ministry of Education and Science.

Institute of Curricula and Standards
ICS has been operating as a national public institution depending on the Ministry of Education and Science since 2003. Its mission is the development of the curricula and achievement standards for different school levels.

Training and Qualifications Center for Education
TQCE has started to operate since 2005. The Center’s mission is to assess the needs for the teacher and school principal trainings as well as develop national training programs.

National Education Center of Evaluation and Examinations
National Educational Center of Evaluation and Examinations (NECEE) is a special public institution depending on the structures of MoES. Its main mission is to establish a national education evaluation and examination system the most important among which remain the maturity exams. NECEE also offers expertise about various evaluations in education including the admission tests in the professional and social cultural schools.

The three above-mentioned institutions have been developed as separate units specialized in the former Institute of Pedagogical Studies. The experience of the recent years has shown that there is no coordination and harmonization of the activities among these three institutions so as to fulfill the national education objectives formulated in the national strategy. Their management is of a low level because collegial managing and decision making organisms lack. The change of the status and of the statute of these three institutions is now a primary need of the Ministry of Education and Science which is also involved in the Education Excellence and Equity Program (EEE-P).
### Ministry of Education and Science structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>THE MINISTER'S CABINET</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of the Cabinet</td>
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<td>Adviser</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF THE PRE-UNIVERSITY POLICIES</td>
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<td>General Director</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-school and basic education sector</td>
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<td>Vocational and adult education sector</td>
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<td>POLICY ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DIRECTORATE</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<td>HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY DIRECTORATE</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sector of curricula and university policies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector of diploma recognition and international cooperation</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSPECTION DIRECTORATE</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist on legal acts</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching process sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>School management office</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIRECTORATE OF DAILY MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
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<td>Human resources sector</td>
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<td>Foreign relations sector</td>
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<td>Public relations office</td>
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<td>Education services office</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF SUPPORTING SERVICES</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIRECTORATE OF LEGAL SERVICES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector of legal services</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sector of procurement services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional and local organisms

Regional education directorates
In October 2003 the district education directorates were reorganized into regional education directorates (RED) and education offices. According to these organizations, 13 RED-s operate in Albania at a regional level and 24 education offices which are not the center of the district. There are two regional directorates in the district of Tirana one of which covers the district of Tirana and Kavaja whereas the other one covers only the city of Tirana. The structures and the staff of RED are approved by the prime minister through the proposal of MoES. The internal regulations of the RED-s are approved by the minister.

RED-s are responsible for the insurance of the quality of the educational service at a regional level and perform these functions:

a) Develop the policies of development in the area of pre – university education, at a region level.
b) Accomplish regional policies in conformity with and in implementation of the national strategy of the development of education.
c) Develop and implement projects of a local or national character, through mutual agreements.
d) Organize inspections in the public and non – public educational institutions, accomplishing the real assessment of the quality of the offered service.
e) Organize and realize the training and qualification of the teaching staff of the schools depending on them, cooperating with the specialized institutions.

Education Offices
The Education Offices (EO), which depend on the regional education directorates operate in every district which is not the center of the region. In every district which serves as the center of the region, the education office is a component part of the structure of the regional education directorate.

The education office has the following functions:
a) Development of human resources, nominations and transfers of teaching and leading staff, career development etc;
b) Accomplishment of pedagogical and psychological counseling;
c) Collection of statistical data on the depending schools, according to the requirements of the regional education directorate and central institutions;
d) Strengthening of the relations teacher – student – community and following the curricular, inter – curricular and extra – curricular activities etc;
e) Management of the financial resources, investments and other expenses for teaching aids etc;
f) Administration of the entire teaching process, in all its elements, and suggestions for changes and improvement of the curriculum.
National Consultative Organisms
So as to direct through competence the Albanian education in all its levels, the Council of the Minister operates in the Ministry of Education and Science, as a consultative organism for the strategic problems of the sector, to insure involvement and contributions to important decision makings.

Subjects Special Commissions (SSC) operate in the counseling organisms mainly about matters of programs and textbooks. They are:

The Albanian language special commission
The literature special commission
The social subjects special commission
The history and geography special commission
The mathematics special commission
The natural sciences special commission
The artistic education subjects special commission
The professional subjects special commission

Attempts have been made to involve in the SSC experienced experts in the field of education and school, scientific personalities of universities and other academic institutions, directors of various educational structures in Tirana and other districts.

The Conference of the Rectors (CR) operates in the higher education consisting of all the rectors of the universities and in which the Ministry of Education and Science has its own representative who is the deputy – minister. CR has its own statute and introduces its decisions to the Ministry of Education and Science in the form of recommendations.

Decision-making and Advisory Organs in Schools

School Directorate
School Directorate is responsible for the administration of the school institutions of pre-university education. It consists of one principal and 1-3 deputy principles depending on the size of the school. The principal is nominated by the respective ED based on contest. S/he is responsible for the development of the teaching and learning process at school, as well as various administrative and financial aspects of the school s/he is running.

School Board
School board is established to represent the interests of the community where school exercises its activity. The board has a certain space to contribute in a constructive way to the democratic management of financial and administrative aspects of the school. It consists of parents, representatives of the community business, of the local government etc. School boards are a still a new, only a few year-old experience in the Albanian schools. They aim at the democratization of the school management.

Students Government
Students’ government is an independent organization of the students in school, established with the free initiative of the students. It represents the opinion of the students on school problems and their education. SG ensures an active participation of the students in different democratizing processes in school and community and their education with values of an active democratic citizenship, too.
Councils
There are several councils in the schools. The class council consists of teachers, students, parents and the social worker (in case there is one). It deals with various aspects of the teaching and learning process and the students’ progress.

The school parents’ council (SPC) helps and counsels the executive board of the school. It offers solutions and suggestions in the process of the school democratization, development of moral, cultural, citizenship values and health of the children, as well as protection, maintenance and enrichment of the school.

The teachers’ council is a consultative organ of the school principal that helps with the progress and quality of the work done in school, dealing with various problems of school education.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system in Albania includes:

- Pre-school education, (ISCED level 0);
- Eight/nine year compulsory education, (ISCED level 1, 2);
- High education (ISCED level 3):
  - general, (ISCED level 3A);
  - vocational, (ISCED level 3B, 3C);
- Higher education:
  1. non-university, (ISCED level 4A, 4B, 4C);
  2. university, (ISCED level 5A, 5B);
  3. postgraduate

The Albanian education system inherits a structure which still bears the features of the previous system, something already overcome in a lot of other countries. Pre-school education is attended by 3-6 years old children. 6-14 year children attend compulsory education and 14-18/19 year students attend high education. The teaching week consists of 5 days.

Pre-school education (ISCED level 0) is attended by a small number of children and is represented by the unified system of public kindergartens and that of public ones.

Compulsory education or 8-year education\(^1\) is one of the major links of the whole pre-university education system. It operates in two cycles: lower/primary cycle includes grades I-IV (ISCED level 1); pre-high cycle/upper cycle includes grades V-IX (ISCED level 2). Compulsory education operates all over the country. It is built on a unique and thorough conception, i.e. that upper cycle is a logical and natural continuity of the lower cycle. The teaching subjects are an open cycle. Special institutions for children with physical and mental difficulties are also included in the compulsory education.

The lower cycle is followed by 6-10 year old students. This cycle, starting from the unique and thorough conception of compulsory education is joined with the higher cycle as regards the school premises as well as their direction by the principal and a common pedagogical board. In many cases, due to insufficient classrooms, the lessons in this cycle are done in the second shift. In several villages with a few inhabitants, there are also the so-called dependent schools (only lower cycle schools). Such schools have a joint directorate with the nearest 8-year school. Once they finish the lower cycle in those schools, these students attend the upper cycle in the respective 8-year school (pre-high school from now on according to the decision of the Government). In the lower cycle, the teacher teaches all the subjects except for the English language when it is taught by other teachers.

\(^1\) In 2004 the Government made the decision of passing from the 8-year system to the 9-year one.
In the school with collective classes, because of the insufficient number of the students to set up a class, one teacher teaches two grades at the same (grades I, III and II, IV) or even four grades simultaneously. The buildings of the schools with collective classes, in general, are of low standards and very poor as regards teaching and didactic equipment.

Upper cycle or pre-high school includes grades V-VIII. This cycle is compulsory for all students up to the age of 16. By the end of grade VIII, the students take two national examinations: Albanian language and math. By the end of this cycle the students are awarded the Leaving Diploma.

**General High School** (ISCED level 3A) is one of the most important links of the Pre-university Education System in the Republic of Albania. The right of every Albanian citizen to be educated in the general high school is a constitutional right.

General high school has a several decade history in the education of youngsters of the age of 14-18. Up to 1999, general high school was unified all over the country and the lessons were developed with the same teaching plan, the same curricula and the same textbooks.

In 1999-2000, experimenting of general high school tracking started. During the two first years there was a common trunk curriculum and in the third year there occur the division into two tracks, respecting the wishes and preferences of the students. In 2005-2006 a third track was added, the general one.

The public general high schools provide a general culture, conceived as a widening and deepening of the culture and knowledge gained in compulsory education schools. The study period in these schools is 4 years. General high school can have oriented direction distinguished by the teaching plans and curricula. They enable the students to gain knowledge and skills and provide them with the necessary professional preparation for studies in higher schools or any certain professional formation.

By the end of general high school, every student is provided with the Maturity Diploma with all the subjects that the students has had and the marks s/he has got during all the four years as well as the results of the maturity exams.

**Vocational Education** (ISCED 3B, 3C) in Albania has its beginnings by the 20’ of the previous century. By the middle of the 70’, there was an extreme massiveness of agricultural high schools (about 350). This massiveness was followed by a considerable decrease of the quality. During 70’ and 80’ efforts were made for the increase of the quality of professional education, through scientific – pedagogical modernization of the teaching process content. In 1990-1992, attendance of the industrial schools and especially the agricultural ones fell obviously, and this was accompanied with a drastic reduction of their number.

At the moment, the labor market structure is very “fluid” and most of the traditional productive activities have been replaced by various types of services, being accompanied with the “modification” and “extinction” of certain professions and “emergence” of some others.

Vocational education after 2000 has been engaged to respond and adapt to the fast and acute changes of the country. The traditional 4-year structure was gradually replaced by a two-level structure: The first level is the 3-year school for qualified workers and the second level is the 5-year school for high technicians and other specialists. The vocational education curriculum underwent changes. A lot of new programs were introduced to Vocational Education or were revised aiming to orient them towards practice. The practical content of the Vocational Education programs increased from 15-20% to 30-33%.
Despite this, Vocational Education is still characterized by a small attendance number of students, thus having a low reputation. 58 public professional schools operate in Albania today. Now there are also some private professional schools licensed by MoES which cover less than 10% of the Vocational Education.

About 2/3 of the professional public schools are financed by the state budget whereas 1/3 are considered pilot and are “furnished” with expertise, financial resources, and materials from foreign agencies and organisms. The strategy of the setting up of “pilot professional” schools has had a positive impact on the regeneration of VP.

**Higher and Post-University Education** (ISCED level 5 and 6) Higher education includes 3-year studies such as fine arts, physical education, nursing etc. University education includes 4 up to 6 years of study such as medicine. Post-graduate studies include the Master degrees which take 3-4 terms and doctorate (PhD) studies. In the framework of Bologna process, the whole university and post-university system is under reformation enabling thus the provision of diplomas of three levels: Bachelor, Master and Doctor. The possibility of the establishment of non-university higher education (ISCED level 4) which doesn’t actually exist in Albania is also being considered.
Preschool education makes up the first link of pre-university education. The first institution of this type in Albania, called infantile, was set up in 1921. During the years 1945 – 1999, the network of pre-school institutions spread all over the country reaching to 3174 kindergartens with about 13,000 children of 3 – 6 years old. Preschool education was public only and not compulsory.

By the beginning of the ’90, pre-school education faced a lot of difficulties and problems, such as: continuous decrease of the number of pre-school children in kindergartens, inappropriate infrastructure and considerable shortages in equipment and teaching aids.

At the moment, pre-school education is represented by the unified system of public kindergartens and the system of private kindergartens, where 3-6 year-old children are attracted.

**Non-public pre-school institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>COUNTRYSIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of kindergartens</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals offered</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollments in kindergartens</td>
<td>28 583</td>
<td>46 059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1 617</td>
<td>2 026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They operate full time, more than 6 hours a day and most children attend kindergartens working over 8 hours. As a rule, the groups are organized according to the age. Law as an exception allows the organization of mixed groups with children of various ages from 3 to 6 years old. The children under the age of 3 attend nurseries, which do not depend on the Ministry of Education and Science.

Characteristic of the Albanian public pre-school education is that it is unified and not compulsory for the children of all ages resulting in little variety of the types of institutions and programs of education. Based on the achieved experience, through the recent year piloting, in 2001 “Standards of preschool education content” were developed. Despite the achievements in content and methodology, the kindergarten organization, especially in the rural areas, still preserves more the character of care for children than that of their education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>97/98</th>
<th>98/99</th>
<th>99/00</th>
<th>00/01</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
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<td>81734</td>
<td>80337</td>
<td>80443</td>
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<td>76165</td>
<td>75755</td>
<td>74766</td>
<td>74642</td>
</tr>
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<td>Village</td>
<td>46677</td>
<td>44721</td>
<td>43737</td>
<td>43620</td>
<td>42373</td>
<td>37987</td>
<td>38836</td>
<td>38559</td>
<td>38337</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
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<td>9173</td>
<td>10185</td>
<td>12734</td>
<td>12213</td>
<td>12556</td>
<td>12971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Village</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives of Pre-school Education

Pre-school education aims to provide suitable environment and conditions for protection and health, for the development of physical and mental capacities of the children and improvement of family life. Pre-school institutions play two different roles: they take care of the children whose parents work and play the role of the first educating institution for children. They realize socialization of the children, building physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and esthetic capacities and the preparation of the children to enter school. This is achieved through activities in the areas of physical education, communication and speaking, artistic education and provision with elements of scientific knowledge.

The cooperation of the kindergarten with the parents is considered as a pre-requisite for the harmonization of the family education with that of the institution. The teachers of this institution work so that the parents take part in the planning of the activity of the kindergarten, and exchange information with the teachers about their children.

Types of institutions

Depending on the time the children stay in kindergartens, there operate:

a) Full-time kindergartens, where the children stay all day. In this type of kindergarten the children not only participate in educational activities but they are also taken care of as regards daily regime, meals and sleep;

b) Part-time kindergartens, where the children stay only for a small part of the day. The kindergarten focuses more on the aspect of education and teaching of pre-school children;

c) Home-kindergartens followed by small groups of children (3-4 children) and operate for different periods of time, depending on the timetable of their parents' job. This type of kindergarten is becoming widely spread because of the flexibility of the timetable and suitability of the educational program to the needs of the families of pre-school children.

The average number of the children per teacher in the private kindergartens is 16-17. This ratio is different from the one at a national level, which is one teacher per 20-21 children. These kindergartens operate mainly with mixed groups as a result of the limited number of the children compared to the public kindergartens.

Programs, Activities and Methods

Despite all the obvious changes made in the conceptual aspect and practical procedure of the education activities carried out in pre-school kindergartens, remnants of the past are still present: the teacher is in the center of the educational process, offering the children what was planned to develop beforehand. The activities are planned to be performed with all the children, they aim at the cognitive development of the children in particular subjects, without considering the fact that all the areas of cognitive, moral and social development are interrelated.

The evaluation/assessment of the educational activities of the children is more important for the age of 5-6, when the obtained knowledge and skills of the child are confronted with the ones of the first grade of primary school. The ways of evaluation used are: surveys, parent interviews, exhibition of children's work such as drawings, paintings, photos or children projects, recorded parts, videos of certain activities etc.
Teacher training and qualification

To work as a teacher of pre-school education, one is required the diploma of pedagogical high school, which is received after the completion of 4-year studies. In the last decade, the preparation of pre-school education teachers is done on a university level, the pre-service teacher faculties. The formation of the kindergarten teachers still suffers from traditionalism and academism which has gripped all the teacher training system. The basic subjects studied in this system are literature and mother tongue, mathematics, science, subjects of social and artistic education as well as the subjects of professional formation: psychology, education science and methodologies of various disciplines. The identified shortcomings are: low pedagogical and psychological culture, weak professional practice, limitation of artistic education subjects etc. The equipment with the necessary skills to work with the pre-school children and the overall cultural and professional formation in the pre-service teacher training institutions are still far from their accomplishment.

Nowadays a considerable number of teachers who have finished an agricultural, art or general high school work in kindergartens. There are also teachers who have graduated from higher schools but do not know the age psychology and the life of this link of education, so they work empirically.

Gardens of Mother and Children (GMC)

These are low-cost community-based centres that serve children from birth to 6 years along with family and community members. Organized by local communities and Christian Children’s Fund in spaces donated by families or local government, the centres supported from UNICEF offer social and educational services. They operate daily from 8:00-12:00, providing children with pre-school education and the opportunity to play learn to interact with their peers. Mothers and other women in the community particapate in training and discussions on child health and development, nutrition, play and children’s rights. Father's Boards guide the centre and advocate with local government. An administrative mother owns and manages each of the centres and organizes the activities. She is assisted by volunteer mother who are trained in preschool education. The GMCs are situated primarily in remote and poor rural areas in the north and northeast of Albania.

Trends and challenges for the future

The direction in which the Albanian pre-school education needs to be developed in the coming decades are: equipment of the children with the skills of thinking and problem solutions instead of unnecessary collection of knowledge, insurance of proper education for children with social and economic problems, decentralization of several services in order to meet needs in due time, employees’ participation in decision making, making them more active.

The short and long term strategy of the development of pre-school education aims at tracking into the solution road (solving) the existing shortcomings such as: prevailing of a uniform system of public kindergartens which do not correspond to the variety of the parents’ needs for this service, too low involvement of children with special needs for preschool education and lack of specialized care for them, lack of standards for the control of the quality of the education activity as well as weaknesses in the teacher formation and qualification. Some major trends are: gradual improvement of preschool children for school transition by ensuring at least one preparatory year for all children of 5-6 years old; consolidation of achievements of the education model as Step By Step, Reggio Emilia, etc, realised in pilot kindergartens; ensuring early childhood services with a special focus on the marginalized groups at the north-eastern areas.
Compulsory education or 8/9-year education is one of the major links of the entire pre-university system. It includes as a rule all the children from 6-14 and sometimes 16 years old. Compulsory education operates in two cycles: lower cycle including grades 1-4/5 and upper cycle, including grades 5-8/9 and is a logical and natural continuity of the former. Compulsory education is spread all over the country up to the remotest villages.

Compulsory education also includes special institutions for children with physical and mental difficulties/disabilities. In very special cases, as regards a 6-year child with a very slow and retarded development, the education directorate can make a decision to postpone the students’ registration for the next year. In the cases when the student becomes 16 years old during the school year, efforts are made in cooperation with him/her and his/her parents, that s/he continues his/her studies up to the end of the corresponding school year.

Despite the obligation, the school attendance of the children of corresponding age has never been full. By the 80’ this attendance reached the maximum quotas, so that 99% of these students continued schooling. Starting with the 90’, as a consequence of the new phenomena of the transition period, problem of attendance were noticed. In compulsory education at a country level, the lessons are followed by 98% of the corresponding age children whereas in the rural areas this figure is 96%.

As a reaction towards the great social, economic and political changes of the ’90, compulsory school underwent changes in several directions: de-politicization of the curriculum up to 20 % and incorporation of new subjects of civic education, education with the human rights, modernization of teaching methods and student’s assessment, introduction for the first time in 2006-2007 of the alternative textbooks, etc.;

General aims and types of schools

Compulsory public education aims to develop intellectual, practical and physical capacities of the students, develop their personality and provide them with the essential elements of the general culture of citizenship.

No goal, objectives or general aims of this elementary education are formulated in the existing official documents. The specialists and central educational institutions admit that the goal of the primary education is laying the foundations of the basis of the development of the child personality, formation of the willingness, necessary learning skills, intellectual and emotional development,
preparing him in a creative, critical and reflective spirit to become part of the society. Meanwhile, the goal of the upper cycle is to enable the students to develop their intellectual potential through assimilation of the essential elements of contemporary overall and various information, to develop skills of intellectual activities such as independent and critical judgment, esthetic tastes, physical, social and moral development and lay the basis for the assimilation of science and technology as well as their further education.

**Schools of Compulsory Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower cycle</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>213 751</td>
<td>10 485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-high/Upper Cycle</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>236 951</td>
<td>15 185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1725</td>
<td>450 702</td>
<td>25 670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The compulsory education school can be either a full time or part time cycle school. The part-time school is followed by the citizens who are 16 years old but have not finished the compulsory education. The opening of the compulsory education schools is a local government competence. Such a school can be opened after the approval of MoES. The institutions of compulsory education are the 9-year schools (with grades 1-8/9), elementary schools (with grades 1-4) and in some villages operate joint schools (with grades 1-12). In cases when there is no school in the students dwelling place, the expenses for their education are afforded by the state according to the definition: “The student (grade 5-8) who is included in the school compulsion, whose dwelling place is 5 km far from the school, is treated in the state dormitories”. *(Normative Dispositions for the Pre-university Education, 2002)*

The lower cycle includes students of grades I-IV and is attended by students of the age of 6-10. This cycle is united with the upper cycle as regards the school building and its direction by a common directorate and pedagogical body (based on the unique and comprehensive concept of compulsory education). In several cases, due to deficiency of space, the teachings of this cycle are done during the second shift. In quite a number of villages with few inhabitants, there exist the so-called dependent schools (only for the lower cycle). Such schools have joint directorates with the nearest 8 year school. The students, who finish the lower cycle in these schools, attend the other cycle in the school they depended from.

In special cases, especially in small schools of rural areas, according to the number of the students, the lesson can be developed in collective classes. One teacher teaches the two classes (I-III and I-IV) or even the four classes (I and III) simultaneously. During the school year 2005-2006 the lessons in the collective/joint classes were attended by 31859 students or 14.9% of the overall number of the students of lower cycle. In some towns there are some schools only of the lower cycle. These serve as “training schools” in which the pre-service teachers carry out their pedagogical practice. In both cycles there are special art or sports schools or classes where specific subjects are added to the relevant program.

**Number of Lower Cycle Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>97/98</th>
<th>98/99</th>
<th>99/00</th>
<th>00/01</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
<th>03/04</th>
<th>04/05</th>
<th>05/06</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>10209</td>
<td>9956</td>
<td>9689</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>8968</td>
<td>8564</td>
<td>8166</td>
<td>7884</td>
<td>8053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many villages in which the number of the students is small, there operate joint schools. These are schools of the compulsory education with the same directorate and in the same premises with the high education. In cases when no sufficient number of students per class is achieved even in the pre-high/upper cycle, schools with collective classes operate. Unlike the lower cycle, no more than two...
classes can be joined in this cycle. In 2005-2006, 15,443 students have attended their lessons in them all over the country, equal to 6.5% of the total number of the students of the pre-high cycle.

Distance learning school is opened in each district according to the requests. Schools of this type are opened for those students whose age is over the age of compulsory education and who find it impossible to continue part-time school. Unlike the latter, in these schools consultations are done once a month by the school pedagogical staff. At the end of the school year, the students sit for exams in all the subjects of the teaching program.

In the areas inhabited by Greek and Macedonian population, there are schools where alongside with their education in their mother tongue, the students have been given opportunities to study their own history, traditions and culture. In this way the Albanian education responds to the European standards. The ratio of the development of the subjects in the lower cycle in these schools is 90% in their mother tongue and 10% in Albanian, whereas in the upper cycle the ratio is 60% in their mother tongue and 40% in Albanian.

Whereas regarding the Greek and Macedonian minorities it can be admitted that their education is in conformity with the European standards, the same cannot be said about ethnic minorities such as Roma and Egyptian. It is a fact that the children of these minorities make up the largest number of the children who drop out of compulsory schooling. The reasons for this are not only their non-enrollment but also their real discrimination. The number of the Roma children who attend school is low, while official policy to alleviate this phenomenon has been impotent.

**Admission requirements**

According to the Normative Dispositions of the Pre-university Education the child who has become 6 years old 1 day before the beginning of the academic year is enrolled in the first grade. There are cases when this is not applied, especially in towns. The parents, due to the weak physical condition of their child or due to their mentality, hesitate to enroll their child in the first grade, preferring to do this a year later.

The enrollment of the children in the first grade is done on the basis of the birth certificate and vaccination certificate determined by the Ministry of Health. In all the other grades, the enrollment is done on the basis of a school document of the previous grade (diploma) and the vaccination certificate. As regards art schools, besides the above-mentioned requirement, the students should have won the corresponding competition.

As a rule the students follow the upper cycle in the same school where they completed the lower cycle. In case of change of address during the academic year, the movement of the students from one school to another is done immediately. In this case the student is issued a transcript of his actual marks, whereas the expecting school lets to know the former school so as to remove him/her from the register. The students, who have completed one or several grades abroad, are enrolled in the following grade if they come at the beginning of the school year and in the respective grade if they come during the school year. If these students do not possess the school document, they are tested about their level of knowledge by a commission set up in the Education Directorate/office which decides about the grade the student will be enrolled in. The average number of the students per class at a country level is 35.

**Number of Pre-high/Upper Cycle Classes**

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<th>00/01</th>
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Curricula

The teaching plan and the curricula are unified and approved by MoES, whereas the textbooks which used to be unified have been liberalized since the 2006-2007 school year. Textbook design is done in compliance with the curricula whereas MoES determines the standards of the design and evaluation of the textbooks.

9-year school teaching plan

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The school year is divided into two terms and it takes 34-35 weeks. The students of grade VIII have 2 weeks available for their school-leaving exams.
According to the law on the pre-university system, the teacher has the right to choose suitable methods and mechanisms for the implementation of the essential program. However, the curricula strictly determined by the Ministry of Education and Science limit the possibilities of the teachers for novelties. Traditional methods in which concentration is focused on the facts and knowledge little encouraging intellectual and emotional processes, predominate in a lot of schools. Lots of teachers organize teaching and learning based on explanation and as a result, they ensure little interaction with the students in the class. The situation, where the students are required to form independent opinions, support their ideas and discuss about the ways of the solution of the problem are limited. Meanwhile, in quite a lot of schools of the major towns, the teachers perform lessons based on interaction in the relationship and the learning process. These kinds of lessons are particularly performed in those towns where there are pre-service teacher training universities as a result of the implementation of various donors and organizations, supported by professional expertise. This has made possible that the children learning be enriched through games, role-plays, work with the teaching aids, original works of a creative character, various evaluation files etc. The educational organs are supporting the dissemination of such teaching methods already used in these schools, like those which promote critical and creative thinking of the students, problem solving, group discussions, interactive learning etc.

**Students’ evaluation**

The daily evaluation of the students is done by the relevant teacher in writing or orally. It is reflected on the register and the student is let to know at the moment of the evaluation whereas the parents during meetings with them. The evaluation is done by means of phrases in the grades I and II and with marks in the other grades. All the students of the first class, in general, are promoted to the second class. Only in very special cases, when even after the assistance given during the summer vacations, the student results with obvious weaknesses, s/he can repeat the grade. The relevant decision is made after a consultation with the student’s parents. The first grade student can also repeat the class in case the parent asks for it in writing.

As regards the second grade, the evaluation “weak” is considered as non-passing. In the other grades, from the third to the eighth grade, the evaluation is done by the marks 4-10, where 4 is a failing mark whereas the other marks are passing ones. The students’ evaluation for all the subjects of the curricula is done by the end of each term, whereas by the end of the school year, the teacher does the final evaluation. In written exams or various tests organized by different level inspection, a score system is often used, converting them later into the 4-10 marking system.

Since the second grade, the promotion is done based on the evaluation of the two semesters. If the student of these grades has annual evaluation “weak” or the mark 4 in one or two subjects, s/he is given special homework to do by the relevant teacher during the summer. S/He is tested by the teacher about his accomplishment in a special session (fall exams), in which it is decided whether the student passes the class or not. The student of the art class, who is evaluated as failing in the subjects of an artistic profile, is promoted to the following class, but no more to the one of the artistic profile. If the student of the art and sports classes or schools fails in the second session in the subject of art or sports profile he passes to the following grade of the common school (non-artistic and non-sports class).

If this situation occurs to the student of the eighth grade then s/he is examined during the month of June. If s/he passes the exams, then s/he sits for the school-leaving examinations in the second session. Otherwise, s/he is examined in the second session and if s/he passes, s/he sits the school-leaving exams in the same session. If the student does not pass the grade examinations in the second session, then s/he repeats the grade in the coming school year.
At the end of each term, the teacher does the term evaluation for each subject of the teaching plan, whereas at the end of the school year, on the basis of these evaluations s/he does the final evaluation. For the first time, concerning the evaluation failing in one single subject for a student, a new clause has been provided by the Normative Dispositions for the Pre-university Education (2002). In this case, the decision for classifying the student as failing in one subject is made not anymore by the subject teacher but by the groups of the teachers who teach in the class of this student. The group of the teachers discusses and judges that the student might pass the grade despite having failed a subject.

After the end of each grade, the students receive the school certificate. The students evaluated “very well” as regards their behavior and who result as having passed all the subjects of the curricula are admitted into the leaving exams. If the student successfully accomplishes the leaving exams, s/he receives the School Leaving Certificate/Diploma which guarantees his/her further studies.

**Dropout and other school problems**

School dropout and illiteracy have become a worrying phenomenon in the compulsory education. The figures reported by the Ministry of Education and Science, INSTAT and other organizations operating in Albania do not comply. This comes about as a result of the lack of the credibility of the data but also as a result of the difference of concepts regarding the drop-out and the illiterate students. Both these phenomena are closely related to trafficking, blood feud and poverty.

**Trafficking**

Children’s trafficking is a recent phenomenon which has most affected children from poor families, the orphans or those having a single parent etc. The destination of the trafficked children is mainly to the neighboring countries, whereas a considerable part of the trafficked children undergo criminal activities such as begging, stealing, prostitution, illegal adoptions and even organ transplants.

Children’s trafficking is mainly carried out by organized crime, and in some cases families are also involved forced by extreme material needs. Children’s trafficking constitutes a worrying matter, whose complete verification remains difficult under the circumstances of uncontrolled movements of the population, clandestine emigration abroad and irregular and unregistered migration within the country. The phenomenon affects more considerably the Roma and Egyptian minorities.

**Blood feud**

Blood feud, a traditionally alarming phenomenon for the Albanian society, remains one of the greatest challenges for the education of all the school-aged children. Being unfairly excused with the norms of the medieval Canon, blood feud is ever more involving the children, who as a result of the direct risk of life (mainly the boys) and/or the need to work and take care of the other members of the family (mainly girls), are obliged to leave school and they do not attend classes at all. Due to the lack of alternative forms of educations, these children gradually become illiterate and in the cases of returning to school, they present obvious psychological problems. Although present in a lot of areas of the country, the phenomenon is predominant in the areas of the north and includes tens and hundreds of shut down people, a considerable part of which are of the school age. These children often are unreported in the official statistics. The problem is acute and asks for solution through maximum engagement of all the social institutionalized governmental structures, clergy, local leaders, intellectuals and the involved families themselves. Such solutions exceed the possibilities of the educational sector. However, they require its and its teachers’ maximum engagement in the efforts for reconciliation and awareness raising.
Poverty

Poverty is an aspect, which considerably affects thousands of Albanian families in both rural and urban areas. Statistics show that 17% of the population lives on 1USD/day per capita and about 40% on less than 2 USD. Poverty is more widespread in the rural areas and the ones round big cities, where a large number of displaced people mainly from the northeast areas, find it too difficult to integrate in the new environment and earn their living. The children’s contribution is one of the necessary incomes to face life for lots of families. Children selling items in the streets, grazing the cattle, working in car washing as well as doing other odd jobs are present everywhere. In most cases these children are deprived of the possibility to attend school for an unlimited period. Administrative measures for not fulfilling the school obligations, under extreme poverty conditions of the relevant families, do not play any role at all and even are practically inapplicable. Up to now, there are no measures and methods of complementary teaching applied in many countries. These methods would make possible the development of the lessons in suitable time for those children who, due to economic reasons are obliged to work and cannot attend school during the normal timetable. For a number of families, especially those having many children, it is difficult to cover the expenses for books and other learning materials. So as to help such strata and to make education all-inclusive for the children of school group ages, MoES has subsidized the price of the textbooks.

Hidden dropout

Apart from the inequity of chances which exists between the urban and rural areas as well as between the remote areas and those close to the towns – both being very sensible phenomenon for Albania, the inequity of chances fro the students present in the same class traditionally exists. In general, discrimination due to intelligence is well spread among teachers. The teacher pays serious attention only to a part of the class and often this happens only with a small part of it. A part of the students who go to school do not really learn. They have been transformed into marginalized. This phenomenon constitutes the hidden dropout. So, one of the basic rights of the children, that of a genuine education, in essence, is not practically respected for all.

Besides the physical dropout, hidden dropout related to learning is being spread. HDO also constitutes one of the sources of school dropout. The largest part of the dropouts is students with low learning achievements, towards which the teacher does not show proper care. A survey supported by UNICEF in 2001 to find out what happened in schools within the classroom indicated that there are more than 100.000 children of the basic education in Albania who are in this situation.

Trends and future challenges

The education of the students over the age of 12 constitutes one of the constant worries of the majority of European governments. Several countries use the structure, which classifies high education into “Lower secondary education” (part of the compulsory education) and “High secondary education” (the actual high education). The extension of the period of compulsory education and the age of its completion has already become a necessity. In the compulsory education in Albania there is actually a contradiction between the age when this education is over (14 years old) and the age legally possible to be employed (16 years old). The idea to unify the general education up to 16 years old coincides with the aim of extending the basic education up to the age possible for employment, preparing the student with the necessary culture to further continue his/her studies as well as of the labor market. However, this extension should be conceived not only as an extension of schooling period but also as a reorganization of the educational system.

Some other challenges regarding compulsory education are:

a) Curricula improvement focusing on the integration of the information and knowledge skills.
b) Increase of the institutional autonomy of the schools from the pedagogical, human and financial resources.

c) Students’ orientation to optimize school options and their future professional career, too.

d) Reduction of the cases of teaching in joint classes by means of school concentrations.

e) Improvement of the physical standard of the schools and their equipment with lab and teaching aid materials.

f) Development of achievement and teacher standards.

g) Creating of new chances to complete compulsory education to those students who could not do this within the age of school obligation.

h) Study of the Albanian language by the emigrants’ children abroad and those who come back to Albania after having emigrated abroad for several years.

i) Improvement of the textbooks through further liberalization and introduction of alternative books.
CHAPTER 9

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Disabled children and youth education

The treatment of disabled children in our country has historically been an object of the family mainly and very little of particular individuals or charity institutions. The year 1946 marked the establishment of the first governmental caring institution as a special “center” of the treatment and reeducation of the young people who performed vagabond acts or severe behavior disorders. The authentic institutionalized school treatments for disabled children in Albania date back to the years 1960-1970. The first efforts are related to the opening of some special classes for blind and deaf and hard of hearing students. Their expansion gradually led to the establishment of a national institution in Tirana, which several years later managed to be divided in two separate institutions, one for children with vision impairments and one for deaf and hard of hearing children. As regards children with obvious development problems, mental retardation etc., the Ministry of Health set up some residential centers (institutions with beds). Recently, these institutions have become responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Support. After the ‘70s, in order to face up the numerous drop-outs from schools, there was felt the need for the establishment of special schools for children with light mental retardation in some major cities of the country in the framework of an 8-year compulsory education. Special curricula were designed for these schools.

At the moment for children with special needs there operate: 6 special schools (Tirana, Durrësi, Shkodra, Elbasan, Vlora, Korça), 8 special classes in some common schools, 3 day care centers, 3 residential centers (mainly for those with mental retardation) and 2 national institutions: one for blind children and one for deaf and hard of hearing children. These two last mentioned institutions cover almost all the needs of the country whereas the other ones meet less than 3% of the needs in this area. Special education institutions lack in a large number of towns and in the rural areas in general (where 60% of population lives).

The efficiency and the work of these institutions leave much to be desired. The personnel has been trained in short-term courses or transmitting experience from one generation to another, without having a reliable formation. The variety of the contingents and problems they have encountered has also influenced that these institutions do not have clear profiles, which has affected the decrease of the job quality. As regards the institutional direction in the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labor and Social Support, they lack the responsible structures. Without denying the values of the above-mentioned institutions, it cannot be said that an authentic special education system has existed in Albania.

Besides the above-mentioned institutions, the initiatives of various NGOs to set up supporting, rehabilitation and development centers or services are worth it and of interest.
The legal basis for the functioning of special education is the law “On pre-university Education” defining that “public special education, through the use of special forms and approaches aims to ensure as complete a development as possible of the abilities of the persons who bear physical, mental or emotional disabilities, in conformity with their needs and requirements for as dignitary a life as possible”, whereas in the school Normative Dispositions of 2002, it is emphasized that: “Education of disabled children is carried out in two forms: a) in common schools beside their peers and b) in separate (special) schools according to their specifics”. Stimulation of all inclusive (integrated) education is especially emphasized in this way.

Types of institutions

The establishment and the development of the organizational structures for the treatment of disabled people in Albania is largely oriented by the nature of the disability and the degree of how grave it is (from the medical point of view).

- **Residential care centers** are bed institutions, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor and Social Support in which are involved children and young people mainly with severe mental disabilities or other combined disorders, which require a special medical care alongside with the social-educational care. Recent years these institutions have become more open, contacts with the family have been increased and it is required that if possible, the young people establish regular contacts with their family (not only during the holidays but also every weekend).

- **Day social care centers**, depending on the Ministry of Labor and Social Support. They deal with a more moderated contingent, organizing simple educational and entertaining activities. The children and young people are engaged in these institutions during the day and they go back home in the afternoon.

- **Special schools**, depending on the Ministry of Education and Science. The institutions depending on the Ministry of Education and Science were built as social-education institutions with structures similar to those of the compulsory school system, with few differences such as: classes with fewer students, two teachers per class, and education activities in the morning and afternoon, more equipment and use of special approaches. Except for the Institute of deaf students and the Institute of blind and partially blind students, whose students come from all the districts of the country and go back home only during the winter and summer holidays, the other special schools for children with mental retardation have a daily character with a long duration. In the afternoon the children go back home. The category of special schools also includes the special classes or groups of children in the common schools or on their own.

Integration in common schools

The practice of integration of disabled children into common schools has been noticed mainly these recent years. Meanwhile we cannot deny the fact that the Albanian school has experienced cases, more urged by the parents’ interest, to treat these children together with their peers. Owing to the persistence of the parents and good will of certain teachers, quite a number of disabled children have managed to benefit from the great values offered by school life together with other children.

Especially after the 90’, with the support of different local and foreign NGO, successful programs and projects have been implemented in our school for the integration of disabled children into
kindergartens and especially lower cycle. Numerous facts testify that the integration of children with special needs in the common school system as a new alternative and priority not only for these children but also for all the students, our school and our society is gradually knocking on the doors of the Albanian schools as a necessity.

Parents increasingly do not accept that their children be involved in special institutions. They are aware of the abilities of their children and have increased their requirements for a better treatment and schooling in the framework of common schools, considering this not a privilege, but a human right, which should be enjoyed by all. Now in several schools in Tirana, Durrësi, Librazhdí etc. we come across practices and numerous projects, which speak up for successful integration of disabled students in the framework of ordinary classes. In this aspect, the new dispositions provide supporting alternatives for both children and teachers such as: implementation of individualized educational plans (IEP), facilitation of the teacher’s job or his/her motivation. Nevertheless, several disabled students leave school without finishing the fourth grade. In general, the schools and the teachers feel unprepared for this process. School principals and teachers are unaware and unqualified about the values, possibilities, methods and forms of integrated treatment. Schools themselves do not have a clear policy for the accomplishment of integrating processes. For many aspects, normative dispositions of public education do not provide clear directions to act. The new requirements presented in the sub legal acts for more numerous and programmed contacts of special school students with the ordinary school students through joint educational and socio-cultural activities are valuable enough and of great interest for the integrating process.

Detecting, diagnosing and admission to school

As a matter of fact Albania lacks an organized system of evaluating and diagnosing people with special needs, with the exception of severe cases of physical, mental, sense or behavior disabilities which due to their type, become a problem for the family who are the first to signalize and ask for help by the health and educational organs. Other less obvious cases but larger in number are pointed out by school organs when they notice that the child is not progressing properly. The low level of social culture regarding these problems, together with the limited possibilities available to offer necessary assistance, make detecting and diagnosing not to be in the proper level. There are criteria for the admission of children to special institutions but they are difficult to obey due to the shortage of various educational structures to meet the categories of the presented disabilities. There is a wide range of children in the institutions, which in particular cases, reduces the efficiency of their treatment.

The institutions of special education are making efforts to admit children with similar problems and similar level of development. This principle is followed also for the organization of groups and classes within the institution. The groups are smaller and consist of 5-6 to 10-12 students. The principle of similar age is also being followed recently in the group formation, which is seen as a favorable element for the social development of the students as well as for the stimulation of inter human exchanges among the groups. In cases of integration in ordinary schools, non-separation of the student with special need from her/his peers is admitted as most favorable, insisting more on the accomplishment of practical and social aspects of his/her education. Generally, the age range of the contingents in the institutions of special education varies from 6-19 years old.

Teachers, Educators, other Personnel and their Qualification

The institutions depending on the Ministry of Education and Science are predominated by teaching and educating personnel, whereas in the institutions depending on the Ministry of
Labor and Social Support the ratios have recently changed in favor to the educating personnel. Now you can find psychologists, social workers, various therapists, caretakers and educators among them. In general, the teaching educating personnel has been equipped with higher school teaching diplomas, without having a systematic formation regarding the specific problems of the contingent they cover. Their training is done mainly through generalization of experience or short-term seminars. They have also had trainings by particular local or foreign specialists, which have mostly been activities of projects or choices of the institutions themselves. Due to a lack of genuine formation in the respective specialty, there is need for more systematic qualification of the teaching and educating staff. The establishment of a specific branch of special pedagogy in the University of Vlora is an initiative, which promises positive developments in this field.

**Curriculum**

The special education in general follows the same objectives as those of the ordinary education, adapted to the possibilities and abilities of the disabled people. Hence it aims at shortage compensation, increase of independence, acquirement of basic academic and social skills in order to ensure a better integration of the children and youngsters into real life conditions.

Specific programs have been developed for people in special needs, according to different profiles adapting the ordinary school programs according to the specifics of the children. The knowledge and skills are selected on the basis of the values they have for the psychic development of the children and the role they play in their practical and social development. Emphasis is laid on the formation of self-service skills, increase of independence, development of communication capacities, practical and social habilitation, and the equipment with basic academic knowledge. So as to accomplish these aims subjects of a specific character are also developed in special school alongside with the subjects taught in ordinary compulsory schools. The number of the teaching hours varies according to the priorities of each school for the correction, compensation and development of the children's abilities.

In special schools for children with mental disabilities and in the Institute for Deaf Children, the programs of the first four years of compulsory education are realized in a nine-year period.

**Teaching plan in special schools for students with limited mental abilities**

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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Household Preparation</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Labor Classes</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Healthcare Education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These categories of schools mainly treat children and young people who have limited mental abilities of a mild up to a moderate level. These students might also express emotional or behavior disorders. Textbooks of ordinary schools are used in the work with the students. Numerous activities for the development of speaking and correction of different disabilities are carried out according to the needs. Special attention is paid to the concrete and practical rehabilitation of the youngsters regarding the social conditions where they will be later integrated. The integrating processes are evaluated not only as a means but also as an outcome of the educational processes.

In the Institute of deaf (or hard of hearing) students, specific subjects are taught in addition to common subjects such as: pronunciations, oral reading, labor classes (tailoring, shoe-making, carpentry). The school also has a photography lab and two hearing aid cabinets. This institute serves to cover the needs of the entire country. The Institute for blind students functions at a national level. The number of the children in this institution is not large. The blind students and those with considerable vision impairments of this institute assimilate the program of the ordinary 8 year compulsory school. Besides others, they study special subjects such as: speech development, touching development, Braille writing, flat writing, computer knowledge, space orientation, piano, accordion, clarinet, etc. According to the students’ specific needs, texts printed in Braille alphabet, zoomed writing and usual texts are used. Recent years, a need for solutions to better meet the requirements of the children is increasingly felt in all the special categories and institutions, even working with Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

**Most used approaches and techniques**

In general, the approaches and techniques used in special institutions vary according to the nature of the students’ contingent, the developed content and the pursued objectives. The use of Braille system in the Institute of Blind Children, the techniques of knowing by touching and those of orientation into space for these children, the use of dactylic techniques, oral reading or sign language for communication among deaf children, global reading for children with severe mental retardation etc. clearly illustrate this aspect. Aiming at the accomplishment of individualized education plans, there are initiatives for finding new strategies.

**Trends and Challenges for the Future**

In conformity with the strategic policies of UNO and EU regarding people in special needs, at the beginning of this century gradual changes have occurred in Albania mainly in the integrating policies. Starting from the actual situation and the needs laid ahead for a more efficient education and training of people in special education needs, a series of requirements and new challenges emerge for the Albanian society and especially for the school.

*Firstly:* a political engagement by the state for this new mission of the school;

*Secondly:* awareness raising of public opinion and especially the school about the values of all-inclusive education

*Thirdly:* schools habilitation to serve all students

All these require a gradual accomplishment of:

- Creation of a joint front of government, NGO-s, parents and students on the basis of integrating processes. Establishment of minimum standards to evaluate an all-inclusive
Focusing on early intervention, special measures for the treatment of disabled children since kindergarten. Evaluation and generalization of the existing positive experience in this area, reflections in schools over current concepts and practices;

Transition of schools into learning communities where group work and cooperation should predominate so as to support the teachers and find out efficient solutions. Transformation of special schools into resource centers for the ordinary schools;

Establishment of supporting services to assist teachers, students and parents. Introduction to schools of the service of the psychologist, social workers and supporting teacher. Better motivation of the teachers;

Gradual improvement of school infrastructures, equipping them with supporting structures for disabled children such as ramps, special WCs, signaling and orientating means etc.

Massive qualification of all teachers and principals both in the stage of primary formation and that of professional development on problems of the education of disabled children;

Development and implementation in the compulsory education of an all-inclusive curriculum, which will facilitate and enable the treatment of disabled students. Preparation of materials and complete accessory package for the teachers.

Consolidation of special schools focusing more on integrating processes, establishment in them of special branches for children in more severe conditions such as autism etc.;

Creation of a coordinating unit in the Ministry of Education and Science for all the problems of special education.
CHAPTER 10

GENERAL HIGH EDUCATION

The general high school or otherwise called the gymnasium has a several decade history in the education of the young people of the age of 14-18. Following the democratizing processes of the beginnings of the ’90s, politics- free school and the revision and design of new curricula brought about a new spirit and overthrew the basic formation of the students. Up to 1999, the general high schools were unified all over the country. They developed their classes based on the same teaching plan, the same curricula and the same textbooks.

The right of every Albanian citizen to be educated in general high school is a constitutional one. In a brief way, the legal package on which every public or private general high school operates contains: The Law on the Pre-university Education System, Normative Dispositions of Pre-university Education, and Guidelines for the beginning of the school year by the MoES. As regards special problems, which are to do with the content as well as with the various needs of the citizens, MoES has time and again issued specific guidelines such as the Guideline for the recognition of the Albanian students who have studied abroad for several years and for different reasons have come back to their fatherland to pursue their high studies, Guidelines for the maturity exams, etc. The duration and the goal of the general high school are determined by law.

Every student who wishes to begin his/her studies in the general high school is enrolled having the School Leaving Diploma s/he was given when s/he finished the compulsory 8-year education as the main document. The student enrolled in the first year of high schools shouldn’t be over 16. Otherwise s/he would be approved of the right to follow this school by the education organs in the district, RED/RO. In order to certify the age, the school directorates, apart from the school leaving diploma, require the student’s birth certificate as a document for registration.

The number of the students who finish general high education in an academic year is about 16000 and of those who join the first grade is about 30000. There are 90 general high schools in towns and 230 in villages. The students enrolled in the first year of general high school make up 64% of the students who have finished the compulsory education. In the northern area of the country, there study 17% of the total number of the students.

Although the average number of the students per class at a republic level is 35, in the general high schools of big cities, especially Tirana, the number of the students per class reaches up to 50-52. The teaching in these schools is done in shifts. The flow of the population from different areas to Tirana is a continuing process. Under these conditions, neither normal teaching nor a regular control process for the assimilation of the knowledge can be provided. 5.2% of the teachers of general knowledge subjects do not have the necessary education. The highest percentage of the teachers without the necessary education is in the subject of foreign language.
The average number of students per teacher in the general high education is 21. This average value, acceptable at first glance, contains in itself very disproportional ratios deriving from a very different distribution of the students in big cities and villages. The students/teacher ratio in the rural areas is 1:15.

**General aims**

The duration and the goal of general high school have been determined by law.

Public general high schools provide a general culture, which aims at extending and intensifying the culture and knowledge gained in the schools of compulsory education. The schedule of the fulfillment of these schools is 4 years. At the beginning of each school year, the Ministry of Education and Science releases instructions for the teaching structure of the school year, all the changes regarding the teaching plans and programs, the textbooks to be used, orientations for the educational work etc.

During the academic year 1999-2000, tracking of general high education started being experimented in 15 general high schools, in 11 districts of the country. It was decided that during the first two years, the teaching plan of the common trunk would be taught in these schools, whereas in the third year there would be the division in two tracks, according to the wills and preferences of the students. New teaching programs and textbooks were developed for this new structure, different from the ones that continued to be used in the schools not involved in the experimenting. The first graduates from these high schools completed their studies in 2003. During the academic year 2003 – 2004, tracking was spread in all the general high schools of the country without being preceded by any specialized study and without an overall assessment of the various achievements and problems and difficulties the experimenting of tracking brought about during the tracking as e.g. in the subject content, students’ load, the aims of their tracking, etc.

**Curriculum**

The teaching programs of the subjects contained in the teaching plan, up to now, have been developed by the Institute of Pedagogical Studies (IPS), today the institute of Curricula and Standards, through orders of the Directorate of the Development of Curricula, in MoES. The approval of the programs is done by the Special Commissions set up in MoES, through a special order of the Minister of Education and Science. The textbooks of high and compulsory education used by the students have been liberalized since the academic year of 2006-2007.

**School year structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>LESSON</th>
<th>Maturity exams</th>
<th>Holidays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IX, X, XI</td>
<td>Term I</td>
<td>17 weeks</td>
<td>10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Term II</td>
<td>18 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>17 weeks</td>
<td>17 weeks</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<th>98/99</th>
<th>99/00</th>
<th>00/01</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
<th>03/04</th>
<th>04/05</th>
<th>05/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>2522</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>2455</td>
<td>2646</td>
<td>2603</td>
<td>2743</td>
<td>3104</td>
<td>3041</td>
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</table>
General high school continues to be centralized despite the efforts made recently. Only small concrete steps have been undertaken such as the introduction of any elective courses. A second foreign language considered as an elective subject has been such since before the 90’. The subject Knowledge on the Environment is being taught recently as an elective one in certain schools involved in projects about the protection of the environment. Although the law foresees the teaching of elective courses or subjects, concrete steps have not yet been taken to create such spaces.

**Teaching Plan for General and Tracked High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>IX</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>XI Track</th>
<th>XII Track</th>
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<td>Foreign Language I</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Knowledge on the society</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Knowledge on the Economy</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Phylosophy</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
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<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>28/30</td>
<td>28/30</td>
<td>29/31</td>
<td>29/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The equipment of schools with teaching aids, cabinets, gym equipments, books for the libraries etc is a challenge the schools have started to encounter. In cooperation with the local governments, aids from foreign associations or foundations which operate in various areas of the country, siblings that the schools themselves have realized with schools of other countries and different contributions from inside the country or abroad etc., the environments of the reconstructed schools have begun to be enriched in an obvious way. Those which they actually lack and have an obvious influence in the fulfillment of the curricula are the cabinets of sciences and foreign languages. Thus the introduction of computer science as a completely new subject has been and continues to be a relatively difficult undertaking due to the lack of computer labs. Internet utilization would be considered as a great achievement to contribute to the increase of the quality of the information, to the increase of the level of a more qualitative assimilation of the contemporary knowledge. In 2006 the Government’s project for the provision of all the schools with the internet service started. The high schools are the first to benefit from this major program called “Albania in the Internet Age”

As regards teachers, efforts have been made traditionally to choose the general high schools teachers among the best ones. In big cities, especially in Tirana, the contest method has been used time after time to nominate the teachers in general high schools. Almost all the teachers have passed through the 5 and 10-year qualification procedure and have been given relevant certificates, but
this has always been insufficient. Traditionally, the teaching classes were and continue to be built as teacher – centered. In spite of the projects accomplished in particular districts, the lack of teacher training centers in districts is a deficiency of the educational system. Attempts are made in all schools for an internal qualification, mainly through exchange of experience, different topics in subject commissions/departments, or the development of some open teaching classes, but this method has not yielded the expected results.

The traditional methodology of teaching and learning brings about relatively low results of the high school students. The number of qualitative students is low enough compared to the total number of the students. About 50-60% of the students have a grade point average 5-6. The number of the qualitative students per classes is 4-6 on average. This number is even smaller in the science subjects.

Overload is quite present and there is still no strategy to reduce it to accepted levels. Concrete movements have been done these two last years for the revision of the textbooks. Nevertheless the Albanian education still lacks decision making based on wide debates and consultations and professional expertise which would change the situation and the widespread opinion that general high school is an “elite” one

By the end of the general high school every student is awarded the Maturity Diploma.

In 2005-2006 the general Maturity Exam (ME) was implemented for the first time, which is a result of the completion of the general, social cultural and 5-year technical and professional high school. ME is performed through examinations and the state and more concretely the MoES has the major role in the preparation, administration and evaluation of the exams. The maturity exams until now were organized through exams with unified tests but the administration and the evaluation was done by the school teachers.

The decision for the MATURITY EXAM (ME) was made under the framework of the reformation of the education system, as part of the integrating processes into the European Union and in the framework of the Government’s program of the fight against corruption, so as to eliminate the university admission contests. ME has been foreseen in the national strategy of the pre-university education. ME is a European-wide procedure being implemented for years by the developed countries and with education traditions.

ME performs several important functions:

I) The state exercises its authority on education, as a public responsibility and service for its citizens;

II) It mobilizes the young people to face ambitious challenges for their future;

III) It stabilizes the admission to universities, on the basis of a state result of a high degree of credibility whereas the universities define the criteria on the basis of the requests; It modernizes the process of going into university;

IV) High education is put in front of a state pressure to increase the quality, because the school teachers’ marks will be confronted with those of the external evaluation. It ensures a mechanism for the control of the teaching quality in high school.

ME balances the massive request of the young people to pursue university studies with the requirements for quality laid ahead of them, but this also requires from them the accomplishment of a minimum quality standard of admission.
Maturity Exams

ME has two groups of exams:

**Mandatory subjects:** mathematics and literature (Albanian language for the coming year) and two elective subjects which will be selected from two groups of subjects: social sciences and natural and technical sciences.

The calculation of the average mark/grade point average of the ME is added to that of the high school. The later calculations are based on two elements: the type of school and the subjects according to the branches.

Exam’s Administration

Exam’s administration is central. The entire process is administered under the direction of the Minister and organisms depending on him. NECEE administers the tests, their supervision and checks until the proclamation of the results. Administration is not done by the school teachers, that’s why it is called external and guarantees a transparent process based on the deserved results of each participant in exams.

Concentration of General High Schools

Concentration of general high schools has been a strategic goal of MoES. The concentration is necessary: to consolidate the general high school education concentrating the best teaching and pedagogical forces; to anticipate the investments for new and rehabilitated buildings regarding both schools and dormitories. A relevant map of the concentrated schools has been prepared for each district in this framework. For this reason 62 schools must be shut down at a national level, most of which are together with the 8 year schools. As regards Tirana city, on the contrary, decentralization should be done in order to reduce the number of the students per class.

During the recent years, the number of the students who finish the high school in Albania and go to pursue their studies in different countries of the world has increased. The majority are those who are tested in the Italian Embassy in Tirana, to attend their higher studies in Italian Universities. Their average number for the 3-4 last years goes from 2000-2500 students. The Ministry of Education and Science, based on the agreements it has with Turkey and other governments of the Eastern Europe has awarded 40-50 scholarships. The number of the students who privately attend universities of the USA, Canada or Western Europe countries is limited due to the high fees in these universities.
CHAPTER 11

PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL-CULTURAL EDUCATION

Vocational education (VE) in Albania has its beginnings in the years 1921-1930.

By the middle of the 70’ there was an extreme massiveness of the agricultural high schools (about 350), which was accompanied by an obvious decrease of quality. The aims and efforts made during the ‘70s and ‘80s for the increase of the quality of vocational education through scientific-pedagogical modernization of the content and educational process failed. During 1990-1992 the attendance of industrial schools and especially agricultural schools reduced considerably, which was followed by a drastic reduction of their number from several hundreds into some tens.

Actually, the structure of the market labor is “fluid” enough and the majority of the traditional productive activities have been replaced by various kinds of services, being accompanied with the modification and extinction of certain professions and the birth of some other ones. In order to react to these developments the 4-year traditional structure was gradually replaced by two-level structure: a 3-year one for qualified workers and a 5-year one for technicians and other specialists. Hundreds of curricula were newly developed or were revised, aiming at a better orientation towards practice (from 15-20 into 25-33%).

However, VE is characterized by a remarkable reduction of the number of the students who attend it and still continues to have a low reputation. During the school year 2005-2006, 59 public vocational schools with about 26956 students operated. Nowadays there operate some other private vocational schools, licensed by MoES, which cover less than 10% of the sector of VE.

The strategy of the establishment of vocational schools has had a positive impact on the regeneration of VE but has not managed to get it out of the crisis. The National Conferences of VE in May 1998 and April 2003 have emphasized the need to orientate the strategy of the reform in VE into the direction of systemic changes, which have to do with essential elements of the VE system as a whole. A very positive sign is the approval of a special law for the education and professional formation (EPF) (no. 8872, dated 03.29.2002), which is gradually becoming functional through the development of a series of sub-legal acts.

The structure and the functioning of vocational education like those of general education are based on the “Normative Dispositions of the Public Schools”. MoES also issues normative acts for particular aspects of VE and professional schools related to the beginning of each school year, students’ admission, final theoretical and practical exams, transfer of the students from one level or cycle of schooling into the other, financial activities, staff nomination, etc.

Financing of the system of public VE is done by the state budget of education, local government
budget, national and international programs and projects for VE, contributions of social partners, donations, sponsorships and other resources allowed by law. Almost 2/3 of the public vocational schools are supported by the state budget, whereas 1/3 of them, which are considered pilot, have been supported with expertise and financial and material resources by foreign agencies and organisms. The vocational schools have also the right to perform economical activity, in conformity with the teaching program, which yield incomes that are managed according to relevant legal dispositions.

Goals, structure and types of vocational education

Vocational Education in general aims to provide the students with professional qualifications, which give them chances of employment in different sectors of the national economy and at the same time, prepare them as citizens capable to adapt and contribute to the economic-social development of the country. It also aims to regenerate and increase the level of their qualification through education and further formation all along their working life.

Vocational education specifically aims at:

- Preparation of the qualified workers with the necessary competences to work in the professions included in the relevant qualification/training, and a general cultural and scientific formation which enables their further education at the level of a technician or completion of general high education.

- Preparation of other medium technicians and specialists capable to work in and manage mainly small and medium enterprises by providing the students with an overall cultural and scientific formation and enable the attendance of higher education.

Vocational education, in conformity with its aims, is structured into two levels.

(a) The level of the qualified worker, of a 3 year duration, at the completion of which a professional certificate and the diploma of the completion of this level of schooling are given.

(b) The technical/managerial level of a 5-year duration, at the completion of which a professional certificate and the maturity diploma are given. In certain profiles, this level is achieved through attendance of a special 2-year cycle, following the first 3-year level.

The schools of vocational education are divided into professional schools and technical schools. As a rule, professional schools provide 3 and 3+2 year qualifications, whereas technical schools offer 5-year qualifications. Nevertheless, many schools (industrial, agricultural, construction) are mixed ones despite the naming they bear and they provide 3, 3+2 and 5-year qualifications, whereas the schools which provide only 5-year qualifications are the economic school, the veterinary school and the forestry school. Actually, vocational education offers eighteen 3-year qualifications, thirteen 5-year qualifications and five 3+2 year qualifications, in 4 areas and 29 orientations or branches according to the following table. Professional and technical schools might organize short-term courses of professional training according to the orientations they have.

The students who finish the 3-year vocational schools can legally continue their studies in technical schools or general high schools through equivalence examinations or repetition of the third year, according to special instructions of MoES. The vocational education system does not provide the service of professional orientation and career counseling. VE in Albania is a school based system. In several cases, in conformity with the agreements the schools have with the local business, the students carry out a part of their professional practices in the relevant enterprises.
Branches, levels and duration of professional and technical education schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bank economist</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Middle technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Taxation economist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Insurance economist</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Telecom</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>General Electrician</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Electro technician</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>General Mechanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Construction technician</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Geodetic technician</td>
<td></td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Food Technology</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Forestry</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Automobile manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Polygraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Agricultural machinery</td>
<td>3+2 years</td>
<td>Professional II</td>
<td>Qualified worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Plant production</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Livestock produce</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Wood processing</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Auto mechanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Constructor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Food Technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Hotelier - Tourism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Professional I</td>
<td>Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Confectionary</td>
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<td>Constructor</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Furniture maker upholstery</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Hotelier</td>
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</table>

Schools in the area of professional and technical education in the Republic of Albania

40 professional and technical schools in 21 districts of the country operate at present in the area of professional and technical education. According to their duration and their general and professional culture ratio they are divided into:

1. Professional schools
   These schools take 3 years after the compulsory education. Students, who have finished
compulsory education, who are physically fit and want to learn a profession can be registered in these schools. The schools have an obvious practical character. The ratio of the subjects of general culture to those of professional culture and professional practice is: 33% to 33% and 34%.

At their completion the students take the Formation Exams in a) Professional Theory and b) Professional Practice.

The 3 year professional schools prepare workers of up to 13 professions and at its completion the student is awarded the Completion Certificate and the Certificate of the professional preparation. These types of schools are called semi-high schools. In order to complete high school the student must continue two years in schools of general high education or the +2 year second level of a vocational school.

2. Second level professional schools
These schools take 3+2 years after the compulsory education. Students, who have finished compulsory education, who are physically fit and want to learn a profession can be registered in these schools.

The schools have an emphatic practical character of a management trend and the ratio of the subjects of general culture to those of professional culture and professional practice is: 33% to 37% and 30%. The students can finish only the first level and address to the labor market or can continue their school completing both levels.

At their completion the student takes the Maturity Exams in: a) Theory of Professional Formation, b) Mathematics, and c) Practice of Professional Formation which is a school exam.

The 3+2 year professional schools prepare qualified workers (masters) in up to 9 professions.
At their completion the student is equipped with the Maturity Diploma and the Certificate of professional preparation.

At the completion of these schools the students are recognized the completion of high school and the right to compete to pursue higher studies.

3. Technical schools
These schools take 3+2 years after the compulsory education. Students, who have finished compulsory education, who are physically fit and want to learn a profession can be registered in these schools. In some schools (of the branches: economy, hotelier-tourism, electronics) where the number of the students who want to study is larger than their capacity, the students’ admission is done through competition.

The schools have an emphatic practical character with knowledge on management. The ratio of the subjects of general culture to those of professional culture and professional practice is: 45% to 33% and 22%.

At their completion the student takes the Maturity Exams in: a) Theory of Professional Formation, b) Mathematics, and c) Practice of Professional Formation which is a school exam.

The 5 year professional schools prepare high technicians and managers in up to 18 professions.
At their completion the student is equipped with the Maturity Diploma and the Certificate of professional preparation. At the completion of these schools the students are recognized the completion of high school and the right to pursue higher studies.
Social – Cultural High Schools

This group of schools includes:

a) Artistic high schools
   a. art schools
   b. music schools
   c. Dance Academy in Tirana

b) Foreign language high schools
   a. English branch
   b. French branch
   c. German branch
   d. Italian branch
   e. Spanish – Russian branch

c) Pedagogical high schools
   a. teaching branch
   b. teachers for minority

d) Physical-culture high schools

The largest number of the students is in the high schools of foreign languages followed by the pedagogical ones. This is also connected with the fact that it is being worked in the direction of the preparation of pre-school or lower cycle staff in those urban centers where there are deficiencies of this kind. A considerable percentage of such high schools are in Tirana and some of them have the status of the national school such as the Artistic Lyceum “Jordan Misja”, Academy of Dance, the football school “Loro Boriçi”. In the foreign language schools, English bears the largest weight.

The urban centers with a large weight in these groups of schools are Tirana, Shkodra, Korça, Elbasani. In general, they have students from the region around them and function with their dormitories next to them. The directorates of the dormitories depend (economically and administratively) on the respective Region Educational Directorate. Exceptions are made to the schools of the “national” status which depend economically on MoES and administratively on RED.

Admission requests in vocational education

Admission in public vocational schools, in general, is open to all the students who finish compulsory education. In schools and qualifications for which the demand is higher than the possibilities, the admission is done on admission criteria (or through contest), in conformity with the special instructions of MoES.

Curriculum

The fundamental curricular documents for every vocational qualification provided are the teaching plan and the teaching programs, which are approved by MoES. They are developed at a central level by groups of teachers and specialists of education. The main documentation objective in the curriculum is the content of vocational qualifications organized on subject bases and, generally structured as in the graphics below:
In the framework of the efforts for the reformation of VE curriculum in two agricultural schools there has been piloted a module based curriculum, according to the Scottish model, in which the theoretical and practical preparation are integrated. For 8 qualifications, a new concept of a two-level curriculum through its gradual development, at a central level and at school level has been piloted supported by donors’ projects. For these qualifications “job analysis” has also been piloted for the professions included in qualification as a preliminary process which enables the development of the curricula responding to the real situation of the job world.

Teaching in VE is characterized in general by the teacher-centered traditional model. There is shortage of labs in most cases or they are equipped with old equipments and materials. There is shortage of teaching aid materials or equipments and especially electronic ones. In the 12-15 recent years there have been no publications of textbooks and those published earlier by the Textbooks Publishing House (PBH) are partly old or few in number. The situation is even more critical in terms of supporting teaching materials. Schools have no means or capacities to realize them themselves.

The decrease of the reputation of vocational high schools has generally been followed by a shrinking of the level of the students’ enrollment in them. This brings about difficulties in the teaching process and decreases the achievements in the teaching process and decreases the achievements standards. Recently, there has been an increase of the admission requirements regarding the level, especially for some pilot schools and some profiles (economic, hotelier, construction, electrical installations) which are more attractive and whose demands exceed the offer.

For the majority of vocational high schools, limitations of reconstruction and maintenance funds is reflected in a degradation and gradual destruction of the workshop buildings, their equipment and instruments. Funds for consumption materials are too limited. The situation is different only in the pilot schools supported by the donors. The vast majority of agricultural schools either does not have at all or has little land and few materials for the performance of practices. They also lack consumer materials such as seeds, fertilizers, fuel, oil etc. This situation makes the instructor’s job less efficient and theory oriented.
Lack of didactic means and supporting teaching materials, the relatively high number of students per class, the low level of the students in these schools and the theoretical teaching negatively affect the process of the practice accomplishment. Planning of their development is weak and the instructors leave little space to the students’ practicing.

In the vocational schools there is principal, teaching and administrative staff. The teaching staff consists of teachers of the subjects of general education, teachers of the subjects of professional theory and teachers and instructors of professional practices. There is not an initial system of training for the teachers and instructors of the vocational subjects and practices. There isn’t even a special national program for the continuous training of this category of teaching except for the training activities offered by the donors’ projects and the Training and Qualification Center. The same situation holds true in terms of training of the principals of vocational schools.

**Evaluation and certification of the students’ achievements in vocational education**

Evaluation of the students’ achievements in vocational and technical schools is internal (by the schools themselves). It is accomplished in a constant way during the school years and in the final examinations organized for each level of qualification. All the students who meet the evaluation criteria which like those of passing from one grade to another are similar to the ones of general high school sit for the final exams. In the final exams the students are evaluated in math, professional theory and professional practice. Their successful promotion is accompanied with the certificate of professional preparation, according to the gained qualification and the certificate of the completion of relevant education (for 3-year schooling) or the maturity diploma (for 5-year or 3+2 year schooling). The exams are held in conformity with the regulations determined by MoES. The certificates are issued by the schools and are recognized by MoES (including the certificates issued by private schools accredited by this MoES).

The evaluation in the theoretical subjects is done with a system of 4-10 grades. The final evaluation of the students’ practical skills and habits is done by the phrases: “very well”, “well”, “sufficient”, “weak”.

The methods and instruments of the students’ assessment mainly refer to information memorizing. The use of methods of criteria based evaluation is limited. The planning of the performance of practices is weak and the instructors leave little space to the students’ practice, which in most cases is dictated by the shortage of necessary equipment and materials for work.

The evaluation in the theoretical subjects is done with a system of 4-10 grades. The final evaluation of the students’ practical skills and habits is done by the phrases: “very well”, “well”, “sufficient”, “weak”. Due to the weaknesses and the factiousness of the evaluation, the certificates offered by the majority of vocational schools are not enough evaluated in the labor market.

**Connection of the vocational education with the professional formation and labor market**

At the moment, vocational education and vocational formation operate as two separate sub sectors, under the corresponding responsibility of Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labor and Social Support. Vocational education involves young people (14-19 years old) who attend long-term professional schooling (3-5 years), whereas vocational formation, young people or adults who attend short-term vocational trainings (several weeks up to 2 years). Recent years, a tendency for cooperation between these two sub-sectors has been noticed.
Meanwhile, the connections of vocational education with the labor market are quite weak. Due to the massive closing down of the state enterprises which offered possibilities for vocational practices to the students, a gap was created, which could not be filled by the establishment of private small and medium enterprises. Vocational schools are also unprepared to establish steady connections of mutual interests with the enterprises. They find it difficult to collect information about the demands of the regional labor market and developments in the professions they are preparing the students for. School boards, with representatives from the enterprises, hardly operate; most teachers (especially teachers of theory) have no contacts with the profession. There are a few initiatives of certain schools to establish links with the enterprises (for professional practices, development of programs, final examinations etc.), but these are scarce and not institutionalized. There is not yet a legal framework to officially regulate the relations of vocational schools with the enterprises.

Informal Education

In addition to the formal system, a number of training activities operate in Albania making up the informal system such as a series of schools and centers, which provide different courses like foreign languages, computer knowledge, professional trainings etc. These schools and centers are registered and award relevant diplomas or certificates at the end of the courses. Informal education is responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance. The latter, through National Service of Employment, is responsible for the organization of professional courses for the unemployed in a number of specialties and in conformity with the demands of labor market and production. Branches of national services of employment are extended all over the country.

Another important element of informal education are different courses provided by Albanian and foreign non-governmental organizations through the projects they develop. These projects in general take into account the needs for employment and the gaps in the formation of the participants, but their quality is not certified.

Another increasing phenomenon is receiving private lessons mainly by the students of high schools of urban areas more in the science subjects and foreign languages, too. Although its scope in general is the progress of the students with special needs (either more advanced or more backward than the majority of the class), the motivation often is not positive and is caused by the pressure for the mark and financial and material benefit of the teachers. This has led to a notable increase of the family expenses on education and exactly at that part which is uncontrollable by the state. These courses as a rule are unlicensed and uncontrolled although the teaching quality is reported to be considerably higher than the one developed in class.

Due to the opening of a large number of private schools, the Ministry of Education and Science has found its control and involvement in the formal regular system ever more difficult. Although the majority of the private schools have received the respective license from Ministry of Education and Science and have approved programs, not all of them, including the religious ones, have an entirely controlled activity, which increases remarkably the level of informality. As the social pressure for the necessity of the control of private schools has considerably increased, MoES is conscientious that this will require more investment and efforts by its structures in the future.

Media, the written and the electronic one as well, are playing a remarkable role in the informal system of public education, children and adults included. As the ethical codes are not yet properly developed, on the screens of the private channels one can watch programs of high cognitive values which convey positive messages as well as disorientating and problematic productions which have a considerable impact on the formation of contemporary values and opinions of the children and youth.
In general, it can be said that the informal education in Albania is a dynamic complementary of the formal education system and it is also characterized by a notable lack of control and chaos. Its recent development is characterized by its extension and challenge to the formal system regarding quality.

**Trends and challenges for the future**

The needs for the development of the Albanian VE are:

- To be **open**, horizontally and vertically, so that every level of education prepares students for the following level and there exists the possibility for the passing from one type or kind of education within the same level, as well as from education to formation (vice-versa).

- To be **attractive**, providing possibilities of meeting the needs, interests and differentiated wills of as wide a clientele as possible and bearing at the same time the regional and global developments to contribute to the European integration of the country.

- To be **quick to react** to the developments and needs of the labor market at a regional/national level and especially at a local level, responding to all the areas of the professional activities available in the country, with trainings of required kinds and levels.

- To be of a **wide basis**, i.e. to provide specific and general professional skills, habits and constant learning throughout life and prepare the students as active citizens, too.

- To be **effective and efficient**, leading to high standards of qualification as large a number of young boys and girls as possible and using in an optimal way resources and means it possess, to perform all the types and levels of training, including the constant formation.

- To be an outcome of the **common efforts** of many stakeholders based on a partnership model, which involves in its activities all the respective parties such as the government, the social partners and parents in a simple and transparent structure.

Vocational education during the following decade should be oriented towards a **systemic reform**, which should meet the need for its transformation into a system capable to adapt itself to the insecurity and instability of employment. This reform requires fundamental changes regarding the vision, attitude and behavior of all those involved. Some important directions of the expected interventions and developments in the future decade are:

- **Increase of the attraction of the students in the technical and professional education**, from 10% at present to 40% of high school (not including social-cultural schools).

- **Improvement of the extent of the vocational and technical schools**, passing towards their concentration in some main towns (setting up of regional or national vocational schools).

- **Institutional strengthening of VE** through completion of the legal framework of VE, setting into action the National Council of Vocational Education and Formation, establishment in vocational schools of mechanisms of partnership (school boards) and organisms of teacher training and curricula development at a school level (department).

- **Improvement of the curricular model of VE**, institutionalizing a two-level curriculum (sketch curriculum and school curriculum) already successfully piloted and gradually **modularizing** the content of VE.
- Establishment of a special training and qualification network of human resources of VE, which will perform the initial preparation of the teaching staff, as well as their constant preparation at work, regarding the pedagogical and professional aspect.

- Conceiving of an open model for vocational schools, operating as centers of development and learning throughout life for the youth and adults and all the community in which they operate.

- Perfection of the system of evaluation and certification, to respond to the changes of the system of national vocational trainings and the design of modalities for the accreditation of vocational schools and licensing of the programs of professional qualifications, as well as the establishment of the internal and external verification mechanisms.
The democratic changes of the ‘90s brought about in the Ministry of Education and Science the requirement for the establishment of this new alternative of education whose beginnings date back earlier. Due to a lack of legislation to regulate the ratios between the central and local organs of education with the private subjects (religious communities, associations, foundations, physical or juridical persons), these years it has been operated on the basis of agreements between parties. The first legal regulation was done through the law dated 06.21.1995 “On pre-university education”. In the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, it is written: "The pupils and students can be educated even in private schools of all levels, which are set up and operate on legal basis.”

Later on, in 1998 the functioning of the private complementary institutions was regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science through the law on pre-university education. There are also guidelines for the equivalence of private high schools with public general high schools and some of the most requested types of public technical and professional schools. With the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 248, dated 05.28.1999 “On criteria and procedures of licensing the operation of private education institutions and complementary private education institutions where religious subjects are taught or where the classes are held in English”, the legal basis of approval and operation of private education is considered complete.

Private Education Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergartens</th>
<th>76</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Cycle Schools (I–IV)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Cycle Schools (V–VIII)</td>
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<td>8/9 year Schools (I–VIII)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational High Schools</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside with the private schools, according to the approvals from MoES, other institutions operate spread in 7 districts of the Republic such as centers for foreign language learning, computer knowledge, preparation according to some certain modules of accountants, lab assistant preparations, dental hygienists, assistant staff in medical professions, preparatory courses for the contests of music and for admission contests in higher schools, preparation of managers of tourism, business-marketing, training of teachers, educators - employees of daycare centers etc.
Content and teacher training

In pre-school education, in general, there is noticed a larger competition in attracting children because the number of private kindergartens only in Tirana is almost half of the total number of the Republic. This has brought about a more complete material and teaching aid basis and sometimes better hygienic conditions than in the public kindergartens. Meanwhile there are kindergartens operating without approval in residential flats. In Tirana, only 35% of them meet the norms of an educational institution according to the law in force, because they are located in adapted rented environments.

In addition, private institutions which have not implemented the requirements of the Law “On dental service in schools” and “The regulations of medical service” of the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health are not few. In some kindergartens more advanced programs and methods are being implemented, which have not yet been considered in public kindergartens and are supported by a suitable didactic basis. Equipment with teaching aid material basis is more a problem of the private high schools than of the compulsory ones. In this aspect, it is progressing slowly. Computer use has been introduced as a subject in over 80% of non-public schools. There are high schools, which possess modern computer labs.

These recent years the interest has been directed towards high technical and professional schools which now occupy 32% of the number of private high schools in Albanian language and without religious subjects.

As regards legal requirements in the area of content as well as the need for equivalence with the public compulsory education, all the private educational institution in compulsory education apply the school documentation of the public 8 year school. Some complementary or elective courses have been introduced which vary from school to school. Urged by the necessity to be equivalent to the public compulsory education, all PrEI implement the school documentation of public compulsory schools. In almost all schools a second foreign language besides the English one as well as the study of computer operation has been introduced. The first foreign language starts since grade I, III or V whereas the second one usually in grade V and in very few cases earlier. The languages taught are Italian, French, German, Spanish and Greek. It is important to point out that foreign language is taught based on the most advanced methods and textbooks of well-known foreign publishing house abroad Besides these, in a few private schools of compulsory education, musical instruments, knowledge on the environment, knowledge on market economy, knowledge on Greek mythology has been introduced.

Meanwhile, in high education the curricula of the public school should be followed only as regards the subjects of national importance such as: Albanian language and literature, history and geography of Albania. There predominate high schools which use school documentations of public schools (general, professional and technical). There are not yet seen initiatives to change teaching plans, curricula and textbooks. This happens even because of their relatively high cost due to their small number of copies.

Despite the interventions done in the religious schools, there is still room for the improvement of the ratio between the general secular culture and the religious one because the latter covers about 30% of the total number of the week hours. According to the law “On pre-university system”, the approval of the secular part of the teaching plan and curricula, as well as their annual equivalence with the public general high schools, is a duty of MoES. The approval or interventions in the religious part of this teaching plan, curricula and textbooks are the duty of the Cult Governmental Committee, with which the MoES has collaborated in continuity. The religious teaching plan consists of authentic religious subjects and the study of the Arabic, Greek language
or other specific professional subjects but with a religious content.

The personnel hired in the private institutions are mainly trained in the Albanian universities. Inspections have shown that the disorders observed in terms of hiring foreign personnel without proper qualification, retired teachers or full time teachers of public schools should be avoided and there should be a better coordination of control with the local job inspectorate. In general, the requirements towards teaching staff are high, but the tendency of undeserved profit has often compromised this priority, which distinguishes the private schools from the public ones. As regards the teaching and leading staff training, the private schools have been treated similarly to their public counter parts financed by the state.

**Future trends and challenges**

Some tasks laid ahead of MoES are:

- Improvement of workgroup inspections of private religious and secular schools, according to set standards, becoming more efficient in terms of accomplishment of the content of education, efficiency, use of school documentations and legal documents in power.

- Possible improvements of the law “On pre-university system” regarding the functioning of PrEI as well as taking measures for administrative offences towards principals and administrators of the public and private educational institutions including their opening without permission.

- Focusing attention on the functioning of the private schools and institutions where religious subjects are taught or where teaching is performed in foreign language as well, because among others the Albanian reality, achievements and traditions of the Albanian national schools should be respected.

- Observance of the unjustified overload the students and especially those of some private institutions have to face, and the revision of the load system to ensure a normal and unstrained equivalence during the maturity and school leaving exams as well as in the admission tests to higher schools.

- Definition in sub legal acts of the percentage of the changes that private institutions might make to the teaching plan so that they display their individuality, meet the equivalence requirements in all teaching levels and have a bigger respiration and independence in their plans and programs.

- Revision of the qualification level of foreign teachers, because there have been cases that they aim more to suppress the students dealing much more with marginal problems, appearance, discipline or even separation of boys from girls evading from the most essential one: scientific level of knowledge giving and checking.

- Increase of exchanges between public and non-public/private institutions because private institutions in some cases have been seen with the eye of the rival, which wants to challenge public education. The good experience gained in some private institutions in cooperation with foreign institutions regarding organization of training workshops, going to summer schools abroad for trainings might serve as an example for the public institutions.
Higher education in Albania has an over 50-year standing tradition. It has its beginnings in 1946 with the establishment of the first higher institutions of formations, first in the teacher training areas. In 1951, a number of institutions were set up for the preparation of higher specialists for the main fields of economy, such as engineering, medicine, economy and justice. With their unification in 1957, the State University of Tirana was founded, the first national university with a classic structure of faculties, departments, deaneries where the scientific councils had a merely consultative function. Admissions in high schools were programmed. Selection of the future students was done on the basis of the results of high school and political selection.

Among the most important changes undertaken in the 90’s were further decentralization of the entire system and the liberalization and a larger academic autonomy of the faculty staff and higher school itself. The complete system of higher education in Albania today consists of 13 institutions, 8 of which are universities (in Tirana, Shkodra, Vlora, Korça, Elbasan and Gjirokastra) and 5 of them are higher schools of art, physical culture, nursing and 2 military ones which are not part of the MoES system. This has been accompanied with an obvious increase of degrees received and of the number of the students.

Some of the most important aspects of the content of the law on higher education to be highlighted are: permission of public and private higher schools; secularity of public higher schools; the mission of formation of higher specialists and preparation of new scientists; academic freedom in teaching and research. Academic liberty is materialized in respecting the opinions, ideas and methods and guaranteeing free critical and creative development of teaching and research. Civil public higher schools are autonomous institutions. One of the most important aspects of this autonomy is that the academic staff has the right to elect independently and be elected in the leading organs of higher school. Higher school itself also defines the areas of teaching and research. Higher schools operate based on law as well as their internal statutes and regulations.

As for the students, the law predicts their right to use all the installments and equipment of higher school for the fulfillment of their learning. They have the right to elect and be elected in all the school councils, the senate included. They can benefit scholarships when they comply with the conditions preset by the Council of Ministers, whereas excellent students get scholarships and special bonuses. Higher school students have the right to be organized in non-political students’ associations.

In terms of higher school organization, the law envisages that they consist of faculties. A non-university higher school with a structure similar to that of a faculty can be included within a university higher school. Faculty is defined as an academic – scientific structure of a university
higher school, which covers sciences of a common trunk. This structure organizes and finalizes studies in these branches. Faculty and non-university higher schools consist of departments. The department is the basic academic – scientific unit of university higher school. The object of teaching and research of the department includes several disciplines of a science. Department, as a rule, is divided into sections including the closest disciplines of a science.

Senates and councils in higher schools are collegial elected organs, which decide about the most important issues of higher school in the teaching, research, administrative and financial areas. Senate is the highest organ of higher school; faculty council is the highest faculty organ and the department council is the highest department organ. These organs later develop separate statutes of each higher school depending on the specific features they have. The Conference of Rectors operates in the system of higher education as an autonomous collegial organ of higher school leaders to assist the design of the policies of the development of this system. Public higher schools are budget institutions financed by the state.

Institutions of Higher Education

Albanian institutions of public higher education, which provide university diplomas, are:

a. of the MoES system:
1. University of Tirana (UT),
2. Polytechnic University – Tirana (PUT),
3. Agricultural University – Tirana (AUT),
4. “Luigj Gurakuqi” University – Shkodra (USH),
5. “Aleksandër Xhuvani” University – Elbasan (UE),
6. “Ismail Qemali” Technological University – Vlora (TUV),
7. “Eqrem Çabej” University – Gjirokastra (UGJ),
8. “Fan Noli” University – Korça (UK),
9. Academy of Arts – Tirana (AA),
10. Academy of Physical Education and Sports – Tirana (APES),
11. Higher School of Nursing – Tirana (HSN),

b. of the Ministry of Defense and Public Order system

High concentration of these institutions is noticed in the central area of the country, where the largest part of the population lives, so it is a distribution relatively in harmony with the number of the population in the other parts of the country.

Registrations in the Public Higher Education according to the Universities and Faculties
School year 2005-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities and Faculties</th>
<th>Students Full time</th>
<th>Students Part time</th>
<th>Students Distance learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. University of Tirana</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Faculty of Economy</td>
<td>3873</td>
<td>2553</td>
<td>1024</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Faculty of Foreign Languages</td>
<td>2403</td>
<td>1631</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Faculty of Natural Sciences</td>
<td>2256</td>
<td>1639</td>
<td>366</td>
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| 3. Agricultural University                               | Faculty of Agriculture     | 4684               | 1719                              | 1468                          | 521                             | 336                         | 104                       |
|                                                          | 1719                       | 1719               | 1468                              | 521                           | 336                             | 104                         | 1468                      |
|                                                          | 1719                       | 1719               | 1468                              | 521                           | 336                             | 104                         | 1468                      |
|                                                          | -                          | 62                 | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | 62                        |

| 4. "Aleksandër Xhuvani" University of Elbasan           | Faculty of Agriculture     | 5612               | 4014                              | 2916                          | 1876                            | 875                         | 640                       |
|                                                          | 4014                       | 4014               | 2916                              | 1876                          | 875                             | 640                         | 2916                      |
|                                                          | 2916                       | 2916               | 1876                              | 875                           | 640                             | 2916                        | 1876                      |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 5. "Luigi Gurakuqi" University of Shkodra                | Faculty of Social Sciences | 5490               | 3437                              | 1783                          | 1162                            | 2816                        | 1566                      |
|                                                          | 3437                       | 3437               | 1783                              | 1162                          | 2816                            | 1566                        | 1162                      |
|                                                          | 1783                       | 1783               | 1162                              | 2816                          | 1566                            | 1162                        | 2816                      |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 6. "Erqem Çabej" University in Gjirokastër              | Faculty of Social Sciences | 3436               | 1916                              | 1171                          | 637                             | 390                         | 262                       |
|                                                          | 1916                       | 1916               | 1171                              | 637                           | 390                             | 262                         | 637                       |
|                                                          | 1171                       | 1171               | 637                               | 390                           | 262                             | 637                         | 390                       |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 7. "F.S. Noli" University in Korça                      | Faculty of Education Science | 2970               | 1855                              | 551                           | 365                             | 149                         | 77                        |
|                                                          | 1855                       | 1855               | 551                               | 365                           | 149                             | 77                          | 365                       |
|                                                          | 551                        | 551                | 365                               | 149                           | 77                              | 365                         | 149                       |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 8. "Ismail Qemali" University in Vlora                  | Faculty of Education Science | 4849               | 3345                              | 2025                          | 1230                            | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | 3345                       | 3345               | 2025                              | 1230                          | -                               | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | 2025                       | 2025               | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 9. Academy of Arts                                      | Music                      | 859                | 381                               | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | 381                        | 381                | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | -                          | -                  | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

| 10. Physical Education Academy                         | Faculty of Teacher Training | 528                | 100                               | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |
|                                                          | 100                        | 100                | -                                 | -                             | -                               | -                           | -                         |

**TOTAL**                                                 |                            | 50567              | 29826                              | 13843                          | 8295                            | 8055                        | 4263                      |
Admissions in higher schools

Admissions in all higher schools are done on the basis of the results of the Maturity exams including the grade point average of high school, the two exams of the compulsory subjects and the two exams of the elective subjects. The yearly admission quotas, before being declared, are consulted with the respective higher schools to better harmonize the possibilities with the demands. The quotas have been liberalized in a lot of branches. According to the governmental plan, the admission quotas are determined in total for each institution, but divided for each branch of study. The candidates are allowed to apply in more than one branches of study, to choose then one of the branches where they have been ranked as winners.

In the academic year 2005-2006 the open quotas were introduced for the first time bringing about the liberalization of the admissions in Universities which was accompanied by a considerable increase of the number of the first year students and the attenuating of the previous requirements.

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Every year, about 5000 people graduate from the public higher schools in both systems: the full time and the part time one. The largest number of the graduates is in the University of Tirana, especially in the Faculty of Economy and that of Law.

In 1995 the National Center of Distance Learning was set up, creating the first experience in terms of distance learning. Through videoconferences and nowadays teleconferences as well, our
system of higher education managed to provide the European experience of receiving university level knowledge without direct participation in the process of formation. The national center was included in the network of Italian universities which use this system to assist the special centers in the universities to be equipped with a considerable number of teaching aids of this type such as VCR-s, computer software, textbooks etc. Thanks to the gained experience, nowadays the polytechnic character of this formation manages to organize a regular system of schooling of this type in the Polytechnic University. There are two complete programs of conferring diplomas of a 3-year cycle in the areas of telecommunication engineering and computing-automates.

*Teaching plans and curricula* of the university courses make up the most important documentations of higher schools. The comprehensiveness of the knowledge courses, elected for the completion of the formation of the specialists of various branches, is organized according to teaching plans. They consist in the spread of the courses in years and the elements of teaching load containing the total hours of lectures, exercises, laboratory sections, home-assignments and professional practices. The teaching hours per week/term and the academic year are also defined in this document. Recent years, credits for each course and total credits for a year and a complete course of studies have been included in these plans, in conformity with the European system.

**Curricula in higher schools**

The knowledge disciplines/courses selected to complete the formation of the specialists of various branches in higher schools is organized through teaching plans. It systemizes the distribution of the courses in years, and defines the elements of the teaching load in lectures, exercises, laboratory classes, professional tasks and practices. The teaching hours for each week, term and academic year are also determined in this document. These plans have recently included the credits for each discipline and the total credits per one year and a complete course of studies adapting to the European system. The teaching plans are developed in the faculties and approved by higher school senates in harmony with the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science which requires the observance of the same ratio of teaching hours of general educational courses in different schools.

*Teaching programs* are developed for each university course, defining clearly the main topics to be included, the ratios of their spread in time regarding the volume together with the most necessary exercises and practical parts. They also provide the titles of the most necessary publications in support of the content. The programs are developed in an independent way by lecturers or group of lecturers, are discussed in the section and the department and finally receive the approval of the head of the department.

The evaluation of the quality of the formation of the specialists from higher schools is performed by the National Accreditation Agency, a new consolidating structure for a very important mission.

**Post-graduate studies and university degrees and titles**

Post-graduate studies are part of the entire system of higher education organized in higher schools. They include post-graduate trainings and specialization.

*Post-graduate qualification* realizes preparation of new scientists, enabled to carry out research work. Only some universities perform post-graduate qualification. It consists of post-graduate disciplines and doctorate thesis. Post-graduate studies are accomplished at least in one year and conclude with a “Master” degree, based on article 10 of the law No. 9120, dated 28.07.2003 on
Higher Education in the Republic of Albania. Then the work continues with the dissertation of the doctorate, which completes the post-graduate course of studies with the degree “Doctor of Sciences”. The complete cycle of these studies is estimated to be developed in no less than three years and the maximum up to five years. The candidates usually come from the academic world and the admissions are done on the basis of high criteria of individual qualities. These schoolings mainly serve the careers of the employees of higher schools and scientific institutions of the country. Post-graduate studies for specializations and master are organized according to the nature of basic graduate studies. Specializations are more often in post-graduate studies in medicine, whereas the master studies mainly in the areas of economics. These studies are offered to higher specialists and continue 1-2 academic years.

The academic personnel of higher schools after having received the PhD can receive the titles “Professor” and “Associated Professor”. The highest scientific title “Professor” is achieved after success in career with lots of scientific publications, university textbooks and monographs, research work guiding and other professional requirements. The professorship is recruited through contests for the position of the lecturer and assistant lecturer. The post of a lecturer is the task of an independent one and can be achieved only by an individual who bears the degree “Doctors of Sciences”. The teaching load of the professorship is determined by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Several month updating courses depending on the higher specialists’ interest are held in the higher schools to get new knowledge in short time cycles.

**Teaching System and Degree Titles of Higher Schools**

The duration for the complete accomplishment of higher studies varies from the type of the school, which is minimally 3-4 academic years and not more than 5 years. According to the nature of the studies, they are completed with an independent diploma work or final examinations.

Higher studies consist of university teaching disciplines. The latter are developed through theoretical parts and exercises or practical parts. The theoretical parts (lectures) are not compulsory to attend whereas the participation in the exercises and practical parts is compulsory. The teaching system is organized in two terms and there are exams at the end of each one. The way of the examinations is determined in special regulations of every higher school depending on the peculiarities of university disciplines.

The new branches of study are opened through decision of the senate of the higher school after the approval of the MoES regarding the accomplishment of the standards set by it. MoES harmonizes the rules of the education system of higher studies with the specifics of the numerous schools.

The European credit system of higher schools has been accepted by the Albanian schools, which are at the level of the determination of the details of teaching load and independent work for each subject.

On September 18, 2003 Albania officially signed the Bologna Declaration, thus becoming a full-right participant in a process, which started in 1999 and whose final aim is the establishment of a European Area of Higher Education. This means that the system of higher education in Albania will be reformed on the basis of declared standards and already accepted by the member countries of Bologna process, making it comparable and compatible with the other European systems.

Bologna Declaration anticipates achieving the following objectives, in a near future, not later
than the first decade of the third millennium:

1. Adaptation of an easily read and comparable system of diplomas through implementation of the Diploma Supplement, to promote employment of European citizens and international compatibility of the European system of higher education.

2. Adaptation of a system based mainly on two cycles: university and post university ones. The criteria to enter the second cycle should be the completion of the first cycle of studies, which takes at least 3 years. The diploma received after the first cycle should carry weight in the European labor market as a suitable qualification level. The second cycle should lead to a master’s degree and/or doctorate (PhD) as in a lot of European countries.

3. Establishment of a credit system such as, e.g. the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), as suitable means of promotion of the students’ movements. The credits might be earned even through trainings beyond the higher education framework, including constant education, making sure that the respective host universities recognize them.

4. Promotion of circulation, overcoming obstacles towards effective exercise of free movement, with special attention:
   a. to the students so as to insure possibilities to study, training opportunities and services related to these,
   b. to the lecturers, research and administrative staff so as to recognize and evaluate their periods spent in a European research, teaching or training framework, without prejudicing their statutory rights.

5. Promotion of a European cooperation in quality assessment, based on the viewpoint of the development of comparative criteria and standards.

6. Promotion of necessary European dimensions in higher education, especially in curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research.

**Private higher education**

The private higher education has also expanded in recent years and the number of private institutions has reached fourteen.

Since this is a new system, it is still early to provide an accurate evaluation of the quality of education and validity of their diplomas. At first sight, the private higher education is another opportunity offered to young people for higher education. Furthermore, it increases market competition. Some universities of this system like the public higher education are facing their first difficulties related to the academic staff, students’ skills to compete in the job market, inadequate environments and lab equipments, technology, literature, etc.

The private education institutions are:

1. “New York University-Tirana”
2. “Luarasi” Higher School
3. “Ufo University”
4. “Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë” University
5. “Marubi” Higher School
6. “Marin Barleti University”
Higher Education Master plan

A higher Education Master plan has recently been prepared in the framework of the total education system reformation. This Master plan is still in the project phase and discussions have started in academic environments. These discussions will be included in the final version of the Master plan, which will be later approved by the Government and the Parliament.

The Master plan aim
The Master plan determines the direction and strategic changes in the Higher Education in Albania for the next 10 years, until 2016. Furthermore, it defines a number of necessary immediate tasks to start the implementation of the long-term strategy.

The higher education is actually facing the following problems:

1. **Institutional framework.** The legal and regulatory framework obstructs the reaction to changes in the economy and society. The system is very homogeneous and the differentiation in mission is insufficient. University autonomy is insufficient, but every increase of it should be balanced with:
   - more accountability towards external factors
   - a better and more transparent internal management

There is a small number of professional diplomas and non-university courses. Research institutions are separate from teaching and MoES has a limited analytical capacity.

2. **Teaching and learning.** Teaching methods are not contemporary to prepare students for the needs of the 21st century. There are still few investments for the improvement of teaching methods, while a part of their content is not coherent. The specialization concept through “course attendance” is not considered as different from the one through research work.

Teachers’ training programs are overloaded with theoretical lessons. Teaching practice and its supervision are inadequate.

Quality assurance is not applied for all and it is not mandatory for all universities. This system does not include the teaching methods and is not applied to part-time courses.

3. **Finance.** The financing of the system is insufficient for the development, especially the improvement of the teaching methods. No bases for the calculation of the students’ payments are given and there is no transparency in their usage. It has not been well defined how students will be supported financially.

Universities have administrative problems regarding income from third parties. There exists a limited flexibility for the usage of income regardless of their source.
Internal accountability is inadequate and creates opportunities for financial abuses.

**Higher education objectives**

- To help the development of the society and set democratic and civic standards.
- To help the economic development of the country through qualified people and at the same time also help the development of the districts of the country.
- To fulfill the aspirations of young people for education by providing all of them with the opportunity to pursue an education.

**Trends and Challenges for the Future**

Higher education system in Albania is well widespread all over the territory of the country having quite a high number of these institutions compared with the number of the population. This system prepares higher specialists of almost all areas of social and economic development, a merit of this system but also a heavy burden for the qualitative accomplishment of this mission. There dominate studies on social and economy areas whereas the number of those interested in natural sciences and engineering is much smaller.

In the development of the last decade it is noticed:

- Massive leaving of qualified and young faculty.
- Material shortage of higher schools for the increase of the rate in technological and research renovations as well as human ones.

Some of the *most important challenges* of the entire higher education system are:

- The sooner and more successful involvement in the rates of the reformation of this system according to the model of European schools following the Bologna process.
- Its involvement in the regional and European competition regarding the quality of the preparation of the specialists and the need for the reorganization of their structures.
Pre-service teacher education is accomplished in teacher education branches of the University of Tirana, “Aleksandër Xhuvani” University of Elbasan”, “Luigj Gurakuqi” University of Shkodra “Eqrem Çabej” University of Gjirokastër, “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça, “Ismail Qemali” University of Vlora and “Vojo Kushi” Sports Academy in Tirana. Teachers of vocational schools who teach professional subjects are generally graduated in the Polytechnic University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana, and Agricultural Faculty of the University of Korça, Faculty of Economy and Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Tirana. They have been nominated and continue to be nominated in education, without doing any complementary courses, i.e. without any kind of psycho-pedagogical and methodical preparation. The teachers who teach music usually have completed high schools of music and Academy of Arts, which do not have special branches of teacher training.

The study and teaching methods of for the pre-service teachers are similar to those of all the students of higher schools described in the previous chapter. The system of pedagogical practices for the pre-service teachers implemented in our universities is named mentors’ system. This kind of system provides a better partnership between university and school regarding pre-service teacher training.

A mentor is an experienced teacher, with constant very good results and experience with pre-service students, whereas the tutor is a university staff member, with scientific authority in his/her area, not only in university but also in pre-university education. As a rule, tutors are preferred to be specialists of didactics and education sciences.

The periods of school practice are divided into four phases starting from the acquaintance with the school environment, organization of work in school, involvement in various aspects of teaching up to full teaching which is the concluding phase of the practice. During their practice, the students are accompanied by their tutors (university lecturer), who assist the student in terms of teaching. Recently, it is aimed at the extension of pedagogical practices throughout the years of study and at a longer duration, which in most universities is actually 8 weeks

**Students’ graduation and nomination at work**

Students’ evaluation is done through exams, seminars and laboratory works. The department decides about the way of testing the students. In general, the exams are in writing, but in certain cases they are oral, too. Promotion from one academic year to the next one depends on the results in exams. If the student results to have two failed exams after the fall session, s/he might normally
continue the following year, but should take these exams in due time. When the student results to have three or more failed exams after the fall session, s/he is obliged to repeat the school year. Students of teacher training branches in all the universities of the country graduate immediately after having taken the formation exam, whereas in some special cases they graduate after having defended their diploma thesis.

The criteria and competences of personnel hiring have been set by decision of the Council Ministers. The basic criteria for the definite nomination of the principals and teachers are: higher school diploma, subject profile, as well as their qualitative indicators. But in cases when hiring teaching staff with relevant education is not possible, and this occurs in a considerable part of the districts of the country, especially in rural areas, the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Science define the criteria of temporary employment of teachers without proper education. Thus e.g. hiring of teachers with higher education in close profiles is allowed (employees with higher education not in teacher-training such as agronomists, vets and zoo-technicians for the subjects of biology-chemistry; economists and engineers for mathematics-physics etc.). In special cases hiring of temporary teachers with high education, mainly general high education, is allowed.

The Ministry of Education and Science, every year, offers to the educational directorates of the districts the students who have completed their higher studies in teacher education branches and are residents of that district. In all cases, teacher hiring is done in conformity with the plan of the number of the employees.

The hiring procedures of the education employees are as follows:

- The Minister of Education and Science, with the proposal of the prefect of the area, nominates the director of the education directorate of the district.
- The director of the education directorate of the district nominates all the staff of the education directorate as well as all the running and teaching personnel of the schools of pre-university education.

After 1991 a large number of teachers left their jobs, which brought about the increase of the number of the teachers without appropriate education. The reasons of leaving were numerous but the major ones were: low wages which led them to employment in other sectors with higher wages and immigration abroad as well. The teachers’ movement is noticed to have been stabilized these two or three last years.

According to the legislation in power, the institution responsible for the qualification of the teachers is the district education directorate. TQCE develops orientating programs of qualification and publishes periodical bulletins and modules according to the subject. On the other hand, quite a lot of NGOs and different associations organize qualifying activities with particular groups of teachers. The common activities of educational directorates and TQCE through 2-day activities however involve a relatively low number of teachers and do not meet the range of topics. Lack of teacher standards, legal and sub-legal acts for the trainer’s payment, shortages in the evaluation and self-assessment system, shortage of competent people in the trainers’ role in districts, are some of the main concerns in this aspect.

In 2006, 32423 teachers and 3642 educators of preschool education worked in the institutions of the public education of the pre-university education system. The students’ number in the pre-university education system was 626243 pupils and 78610 children in the kindergartens of preschool education.
Schools, classes, students and teachers in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Major data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>1 573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>3 096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>74 642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>3 642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>1 725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>16 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>450 702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>26 670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General high education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>3 051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>111 770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>5 017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>26 956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1 736</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Status of the Teacher, Salaries in Education, Trade Unions, Labor Time, Holidays

Job relationships between the employer and the employees in education are regulated by Law No. 7661, dated 12.07.1995 and No. 1925, dated 29.07.2002 on the Labor Code and Collective Contract which is signed yearly between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization on the one hand and the Syndicate Federation of Education and Science and the Independent Trade Union of Education on the other one. The signing parties in this contract agree on the job conditions, labor time and holidays, salaries and supplements on basic wages, criteria of movements and transfers of the personnel, syndicate liberties, solution of disagreements etc. Albania lacks the code of the professional ethics.

Salaries in Education

As for the entire budget system, the salaries in education are determined by decision of the Council of Ministers. The last salary structure for the teaching employees was approved through decision of the Council of Ministers No. 639, dated 18.09. 2003.

The salary consists of the group salary and salary supplements. Group salary is determined on the basis of the educational level of the employee. Salary supplements are: supplements for years of work, attestation supplement and position/rank supplement (depending on the task and educational cycle).

Labor time in education is divided into:

a) class work time which includes:
   - the weekly norm of the teaching hours

b) out of class work time including:
   - individual preparation for teaching
   - different meetings,
   - pedagogical council,
   - work with the parents,
   - extracurricular activities.
The teaching-work loads in the pre-university education are:

**In pre-school education:** Principal: 6-24 hours/week, teachers: 36 hours/week.

**In 8-year education:** School principal: 8-10 hours/week of teaching and 4 hours of control. Deputy-headmaster: 10-12 hours/week of teaching and 6 hours of control. Teachers of lower cycle (grades I-IV): 23-26 hours/week (according to the teaching plan). Albanian language and reading teachers: 20 hours/week, math, physics and biochemistry teachers: 22 hours/week, the teachers of other subjects: 24 hours/week.

**In high education:** School principal: 4-6 hours/week teaching and 4 control hours, deputy-principal: 8-10 teaching hours/week and 6 control hours, the teacher of literature and foreign language in the school of foreign languages: 20 hours/week, the teacher of other subjects: 22 hours/week, the teacher of professional practices: 33 hours/week.

The conversion of the laboratory classes, professional practices, school leaving and maturity examinations, diploma work preparation etc. is done as follows: 1 class of lab work is equal to 1.5 teaching hours; 1.5 hours of accompanying into practices equal to 1 teaching hour; for diploma preparation 3 students equal to 1 teaching hour; for the school leaving and maturity examinations in writing 3 students equal to 1 teaching hour and orally 5 students equal to 1 teaching hour.

Teachers’ holidays consist of the annual leave and official holidays. The annual leave is 51 payable days (15 work days according to the Labor Code and 36 work days of supplementary leave). The working week in education is 5 days.

**Teachers’ constant training**

According to the legislation in power the institution responsible for the qualification of the teachers are the Regional Education Directorate (RED) and the District Education Offices. On the other hand, quite a lot of NGOs and associations organize qualifying activities with particular groups of teachers. The common activities of RED and the central institutions of training and qualification through short workshops involve a relatively low number of teachers and do not meet the range of topics.

The teachers’ continuous training system is characterized by the lack of vision and policies and the lack of needs and competition analysis.

Apart from the above-mentioned deficiencies, there are some institutional uncertainties, which arise from the Council of Ministers Decision No. 655, dated 09.25.2003 “For the Establishment of the Training and Qualification Center for Education”. According to this decision, the institution has a conflict of interest in his status between its mission and its main activity; it compiles the qualification strategy and organizes the training and qualification of teachers and institution directors. Another irregularity is related to the employees’ recruitment in contradiction with law no. 8549 “Civil Servant Status”.

Lack of teacher standards, legal and sub-legal acts for the accreditation of the training programs, the trainers’ payment, shortages in the evaluation and self-evaluation system, shortage of competent people in the trainers’ role in districts, are some of the main concerns in this aspect.
Number of teachers in high schools, as of 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total teachers</strong></td>
<td>6753</td>
<td>3936</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high school education</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With higher education</td>
<td>6524</td>
<td>3842</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Teachers in general high schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me arsim të mesêm</td>
<td>5017</td>
<td>2915</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With higher education</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4906</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Teachers in Tracked high schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high school education</td>
<td>1013</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With higher education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Teachers in Social Cultural high schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high school education</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With higher education</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>689</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Teachers in Vocational schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high school education</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With higher education</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>929</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transfers and Removals for Job Reasons

Practically, transfer implies moving of teaching staff from one district to another whereas removals are promotions or lower job position, mainly within the district and especially from one educational level to another as well as parallel transfers from school to school.

The transfer is generally done to fulfill the wish of the interested person when s/he changes his/her residence or because of job needs of the district asking for him/her, but always with the consent of the interested person. In all cases, they are checked by the Ministry of Education and Science.

In the removals within the district, the completion of the schools with staff according to their profile is taken into consideration in the first place, in conformity with the teaching load norms. In most cases, terminations and nominations of school principals have not been based on professional merits, whereas teachers’ transfers from one school to another are almost done without justification and without the teachers’ consent.

Teachers’ attestation is done after 5 years, 10 years and 20 years of work in education. The teachers who pass the attestation exam receive the third, second and first grade of qualification respectively. Every teacher is awarded the corresponding certificate. This is also accompanied with a pay increase, which is shown in table 5.
Relation between Preparation and Employment

Teacher training universities which prepare teachers, provide them with the respective diplomas on which is written the level of teaching. This level has generally been respected. However, due to a large number of village schools, mainly in remote areas, which have a small number of students and classes, many teachers have been obliged to teach subjects other than their own, (without mentioning the large number of teachers without proper education). This year the Ministry of Education and Science has released an order which clearly defines the criteria for the teachers without the relative education. This order prompts all those teachers, considered to be without the relative education, to pursue the higher education so as to earn the right to be nominated in this profession.

Other Educational Staff

Apart from school teachers and principals and kindergarten teachers and headmistresses the educational staff of pre-university educational consist of: housemasters of high and 8-year school boarding, inspectors and directors of district education directorates and the instructors of professional practices. This staff is trained in the area they have studied about and not their actual job position due to the fact that they are in minority on a district basis.

Problems and Challenges

The improvement of the current quality of the education level of the teaching staff and the stimulation of new staff employment in education require these necessary changes:

1. Regarding constant training:
   - Teachers' profession licensing through one-year courses set up on the basis of higher school completion.
   - Establishment of teacher training regional centers to analyze, plan and develop training programs for the district teachers.
   - Establishment of teachers and school principals training center, as a national coordinating center of all the resources, institutions and financings in the field of constant formation, as well as coordination of its work with the regional centers.

2. Regarding staff hiring:
   - The proposal for the nomination of the director of the education directorate should not be made by the prefect, but by the regional council as a pluralist organ.
   - Decentralization of the nomination of the school personnel and employees of the education directorates, which until now is done by the director of the education directorate, using the contest for its selection. The Ministry of Education and Science should do the organization of the contest for the schoolteachers and principals and for the employees of education directorates, whereas for the kindergartens and elementary schools, the contest might be organized on regional basis. This would also obviously minimize doubts about politicization and corruptive and nepotism abuses in nominations.

3. Regarding salary structure:
   - To considerably increase the compensation on distance of working place from the living area.

4. The three degrees of qualification (attestation) should be through a scheme different from the current one, based on merits and contest.
School assessment

Assessment and self-assessment in Albania have traditionally had a merely advising character for the teachers about the lesson management. Recent years a new concept and practice of assessment and self-assessment is being introduced. In the normative dispositions for pre-university education, approved by the Minister of Education and Science in 2002, it is also defined that the structure of internal assessment of school consists of the assessment areas, respective indicators for each area, topics and levels of assessment. Areas, indicators and topics of assessment are defined at a central level (Inspection Directorate in MoES). Assessment levels are defined by the schools themselves. School self-assessment is one of the responsibilities it has to supervise the work and its progress through control of the students’ results, fulfillment of the plans of activities, curriculum materials and teaching quality, improvement of physical environments etc. It serves to constantly get to know the situation in school. The outcomes of this self-assessment are used to develop new policies of school development.

This process has a remarkable collegial character, which is performed by the teaching staff themselves under the guide of the school principal. The annual plan is developed by the school directorate and is discussed in the teachers’ council. The opinion of the parents’ board is also taken into consideration for its development. For the development of the annual plan, the school directorate is based on the guidelines of the MoES, which are sent to schools at the beginning of the school year, as well as to those sent by RED/EO. Schools are required an annual plan, which would reflect the general goals of the school, planning of an internal control and the targets the schools will reach for the running school year. These two last years school self-assessment is based on the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators shown in the “School Principal Handbook”.

The school uses various techniques and means of assessment such as class observations, interviews with teachers, students, evaluation of the students’ achievements, follow-up of working plans or teachers’ daily plans etc. As regards the progress of the plan and the assessment report, the school principal informs the heads of the departments and the teacher’s council, the parents’ council and the students’ government in the schools where they operate. The assessment reports of all departments or subject commissions are discussed in the meeting of the self-assessment groups, which approves the action plan for the quality enhancement on this basis. For the school assessment, importance is given to the results achieved in national school-leaving and maturity exams.

Assessment at a Local Level

The education directorates are responsible for the functioning and quality of the entire work of the education institutions under their dependence. School inspection is a major right and duty
Education Directorates are responsible for the functioning and quality of the work in the education institutions dependent from them. School inspection is a right and main duty of RED/EO as well as of expert groups set in motion by it. The control performed and the help provided by the team of inspectors of RED/EO encourages the self-evaluation of the school as well as the quality of education at a national level. In recent years the aim and functions of the inspection performed from RED/EO have changed from only advisory to leading, supporting and promoting school's self-evaluation and quality assurance. Under this framework, the team of inspectors from RED/EO trains principals of respective schools how to perform the self-evaluation of the school. RED/EOs perform the operating inspection, which relies on the documentation control, the implementation of work discipline, etc. as well as platform based inspection. The latter is performed twice a year at the end of each semester. In this case, RED/EOs rely also on the evaluation of students for the evaluation of the school and teachers’ and principals’ work. The National Educational Center of Evaluation and Examinations supports the RED/EO with exams in fundamental courses, mainly in the compulsory education. The exams’ content is the same for all RED/EOs.

After the schools assessment, the RED/EO-s inform MoES and the schools themselves about the conclusions of the assessment based on the percentage of promoted or failed students. Shortages of capacities in the field of assessment, lack of educational standards etc. make the work of school inspection by RED/EO difficult. The evaluation techniques and schemes of school teachers and principals or schools in general are changing in accordance with the institutional changes and roles of RED/EOs.

Assessment at a National Level
School assessment at a national level is accomplished by the Directorate of Inspection (DI) in the Ministry of Education and Science. The aim of school inspection is not only the collection of information about their achievements, the students’ results and the way they their teachers and principals work, but also to offer them decision-making consultancy at a central level, for the compilation and review of educational policies at a national or institutional level. The establishment of this directorate has a positive impact on school self-assessment, through giving advice and developing the assessment platform. DI, for the school assessment, sets up groups of inspections, which consist of inspectors of DI, ED or district school principals, which are not object of inspection. The main areas of inspections are: school management and administration, teaching and learning.

But the concept of external assessment of the educational system is not yet a working practice for the institution of inspection. Efforts are being made to define a new model of educational inspection with its modalities, suitable to the conditions of our country.

The lack of clear strategy of external assessment, the lack of educational standards and respective indicators, the insufficiency of capacities in the area of inspection, are some of the problems, which affect directly the credibility, validity and objectivity of the obtained data and the quality of the education assessment. These problems surely ask for quick solutions.

Assessment at a National Level, Compulsory Education
The national school-leaving examination for grade VIII of compulsory education plays an important role for the assessment of the education system as a whole or of the school in particular.
With the gradual consolidation of a new evaluation structure of learning depending on MoES such as the National Education Center of Evaluation and Examinations (NECEE), the system of national examination is changing, passing towards an external and standardized examination system. Actually, NECEE has been carrying out the national school-leaving exam for the last grade of compulsory education for a number of years now. The procedures for the accomplishment of the national leaving exam are standard for all the schools of the country sanctioned in the regulation of the performance of the national examination of grade VIII of compulsory education approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The national school-leaving exam for grade VIII of compulsory education is developed in the subjects of math, Albanian language and reading. Mathematics is done only in writing. The students is evaluated with a single mark for the subjects of Albanian language and reading (50% to 50%), wherein Albanian language is a written exam whereas reading is oral and is realized by school itself, based on uncombined questions sent by MoES at the beginning of the school year. The evaluation of the written exam is based on a score system, which is converted into marks. For the development of the examination thesis, NECEE is based on subject groups consisting of curriculum specialists and teachers of respective subjects. Subject groups also develop the correction scheme on whose basis the correction of the examination thesis is made. NECEE sets up the network of the examination accomplishment such as coordinators at a local level (representative of ED), examination administrators (school teachers but not of the subjects tested), monitors of the examination quality (representatives of MoES, NECEE and ED) and the correctors of the exam papers (teachers of the subjects being tested, but if possible, not teachers of the students taking the exam). NECEE trains the network of the collaborators before the examination performance.

**Evaluation at a national level, high school education**

NECEE also prepares the Maturity examination of the general, professional and social sciences high school education as regards mandatory and elective courses. The procedures for the preparation of the Maturity examination are defined by the Maturity Examination Committee with the approval of the Minister of Education and Science.

The examination is administered by the RED/EO, whereas the evaluation of the students is centralized; it is performed by the NECEE.

Students and central and local education authorities are informed of the results of the Maturity Examination. Education institutions, including schools, RED/Eos and MoES, receive descriptive and statistical information on the achievements of students in every subject.

The implementation of the maturity examinations from the necee in 2006 is a step forward in albania towards the establishment of a new national evaluation and examination system.

**Assessing Institutions**

**National Education Center of Evaluation and Examinations (NECEE)**

National Education Center of Evaluation and Examinations aims to accomplish the national system of evaluation and examinations. It acts as a technical, professional and supportive unit for education employees and has the mission to:

- Develop and administer tests and other evaluation instruments of learning;
- Elaborate and carry out statistical and psychometric analysis of the data obtained from national tests and examinations, so as to improve them;
Monitor the students’ progress in the crucial cycles, to inform and give respective recommendations to MoES;
- Collect quantitative and qualitative data on the development of the educational system as a whole and represent data, results and respective recommendations to MoES;
- Organize programs for the preparation of the assessors and other people involved in the development of national evaluation examinations and daily evaluation in class;
- Train teachers, network members and specialists of education for the national examinations assessment and daily evaluation in class and school progress, too;
- Publish reports on the outcomes of evaluation and national examinations and other materials of education assessment area;
- Carry out research work in the area of education evaluation;
- Develop regulations of organization and performance of national examinations, which should be approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

**Directorate of Inspection in MoES**

The Directorate of Inspection (DI) in the MoES was set up in the restructuring framework of the MoES, in January 2003. DI does external and objective independent evaluations of the quality of schools. It supports educational institutions (schools) in the process of self-evaluation in partnership with the advisory and training work of ED for the improvement of school quality.

The functions of DI are:

- to ensure evaluations, information and advice for the MoES and ED-s;
- to report on the quality of education, teachers and school principals training;
- to give to schools advice on self-assessment.

In addition to the above-mentioned institutions and structures, the Regional Education Directorate and the Education Office also exercise assessing functions.

**Trends and Challenges for the Future**

The accomplishment of the reform in the area of education aims to establish a new system of evaluation and self-evaluation which identifies the quality of the educational system. It serves to undertake analysis and draw conclusions which later build up the terrain to support the reform in other aspects.

The main difficulties the system of evaluation is facing are:

- Shortage of capacities in the assessment area and lack of a culture of assessment and self-assessment in education;
- Lack of educational standards;
- Lack of a legal framework for a normal functioning of the new assessing institutions and lack of coordination of activities between education institutions;
- Insufficiency of funds to take part in national evaluations which would provide conditions to make our system comparable to that of other countries.
CHAPTER 16

RESEARCH

The scientific research network in Albania commenced with the Institute of Sciences, which was established in 1947 and later integrated with the University of Tirana (UT), founded in 1957. The Academy of Sciences (AS) was established in 1972 and absorbed all the research centers of the UT, narrowing the mission of the latter mainly to teaching and dimming its research aspect. Research was defined as the mission of AS, which was maintained as the most important research institution. Thus, for the first time, there was a separation of teaching from research as an application (as in other fields) of the Eastern model. Research was defined as the mission of AS, which was supported as the most important research institution. Thus, for the first time, there was a separation of teaching from research as an application (as in other fields) of the Eastern model. This ratio between AS and higher education was consequently reflected in the primary support given to AS with staff, investments and other means. Several research-scientific institutes were created apart from the AS during the eighties and they were dependent from ministries.

During the transition period, from an institutional point of view, the scientific research network in our country has changed very little and consequently it has not been able to reflect the major changes in the Albanian economy and society; especially as regards the connection between the higher education and the scientific research.

The approval of the Law for Science and Technological Development in 1994 was the first effort for the reformation of the scientific research system. This resulted only in a decrease of the number of personnel of overcrowded institutions. The second effort was made in 1996. A program was prepared in cooperation with the European Council that anticipated the creation of a single system for higher education and scientific research, as well as the steps needed to be undertaken to achieve it. However, the accomplishment of this program remained only an effort. The third effort was made eight years later. An ad-hoc team recommended a reorganization of all the non-university research institutions in three big national centers, classified based on areas (social, technical, and natural) and non-dependent from ministries and the Academy of Sciences. The three centers should have functioned based on the Law for Science and Technological Development and being administratively dependent from the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The report from the Central Team reached the Scientific Policies Council but a clear-cut decision was not made. Attempts to reform the institutions of different ministries have been made from time to time but they have been very fractional and without a clearly defined aim. Furthermore, groups of foreign experts have been engaged in the framework of different programs and have prepared very high cost reports but without concrete results. The main cause of this has been the lack of a clearly defined objective in the governments’ program.
The financing of the scientific research system includes:
- The institutional financing, which is the budget directly related to the institution.
- The program financing, which is the financing related to specific scientific research projects or programs.

The program financing includes:
- National programs and projects.
- Bilateral agreements.
- International programs.

**Policy-making in scientific research**

Policy-making in scientific research has obvious deficiencies as regards modern standards. It is difficult for the Scientific Policies and Technological Development Council (SPTDC) to fulfill its legal obligations. The main mission of SPTDC, as defined in the Law for Science and Technological Development (1994), is to approve platforms or policy packages previously prepared from the technical-professional levels based on analyses and scientific research. But, after the disintegration of the Science and Technology Committee and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) after that, no new structure was established for the development of scientific policies. Actually, according to the 1994 Law, the SPTDC should have been supported by the Science Foundation, which was foreseen to be created according to this law. However, it has not been established yet. MoES has actually a totally inadequate structure for scientific research, even though it calls it a directorate.

**Administration of scientific research**

*At a national level,* a clear structure for the administration of scientific research is currently missing. As emphasized above, the actual structure within MoES is totally insufficient and to date it has administered only small sums provided by the government for national programs. The structure foreseen by the 1994 law to carry out this aim was the Science Foundation.

*At a departmental level,* ministries that have dependent institutes actually do not have developed structures and capacities for research administration. Directorates or sectors, which theoretically cover institutes, are not able to offer the basic information on research. Ministries are not able to provide correct details on incomes and expenses of the institutes’ network for 2004, which demonstrates that the administrative capacities of these departments for research are almost inexistent, while AS has relatively well developed structures which possess a database of projects and institutes’ output.

The lack of such qualified structures for the administration of scientific research has brought about a very low level of administration of financial means and research materials.

The lack of real structures for the administration of scientific research and technological development at a national level has made it difficult to enter international bilateral and multilateral partnerships in this field because partners are usually governmental foundations and agencies, which rely on experts’ recommendations not being part of the executive power and who have
decision-making independence.

Even at an institutional level, where the scientific research should be carried out (institutes and universities), and the research administrative capacities are very underdeveloped. The numerous leading organs make decisions to utilize the research funds for other purposes not related to research, deviating very much from the anticipated goals, even in approved projects. A basic unit, which should be directly responsible for scientific research such as the research Team in institutions and research-teaching Team in universities, is obviously needed.

**Financing**

Scientific research financing in Albania is almost totally afforded by the state. Research financial means from foreign donors are almost inexistent, whereas those from the private sector are almost zero. This results mainly from the lack of research funds attracting structures.

Program financing, i.e. financing for real scientific research reflected in national programs and projects, makes up less than 10% of the whole fund given to scientific research and development non-university institutions and less than 2.5% of the total fund, including universities. Even a part of the fund, received through research projects, changes direction within the institution and is used for totally different goals. If we would refer to this information, then we could talk about the financing of the staff that conducts the research and not about the financing of the scientific research. Some ministries’ institutes appear to be self-sustainable, but they are actually financed through indirect funds, claimed to be used for research and development.

**Human resources**

The number and composition of staff in the research system outside of universities is very large and does not justify the volume of activity carried out. There are 2,240 employees in total and from them only 632 are scientific employees. This is an unacceptable ratio for a research and development system (3.5 assistant employees for each scientific employee). There are 2,484 employees working in the whole higher education system and 521 of them are assistant employees. Assistants with part-time contracts have also been included in the calculation of the number of staff in higher education schools. Only AS employs 620 employees. About 16% of the scientific personnel of the whole system and 20% of the staff of AS is over 60 years old.

**Accountability and evaluation of the scientific research quality**

The evaluation of scientific research in our country almost does not exist as an organized system, which is also related to the lack of policy-making organs and especially to the administration of the research. The only case when one can observe the efficiency of scientific work (and even in this case in a superficial way) is the moment when requests for scientific titles are made. Experience has shown that the Scientific Qualification Committee and the criteria set by it for passing from one title to the other do not reflect the real level of qualification and scientific work efficiency of the candidate. The criteria are more concerned with the necessary time that a candidate needs to get a title than with the scientific research.

Accountability for scientific research is almost inexistent. Only AS has a somewhat developed system for verifying the utilization of means and achieved output, while ministries’ institutes and universities do not apply anything like this for scientific research.
Content and the level of scientific research

In general the research activity seems disoriented excluding the projects that are being carried out in the framework of national programs, which are considered as priorities. Most of natural sciences and technical institutes pretend to be involved with environment studies.

The actual activity on scientific research in institutions demonstrates that:

- AS conducts mainly applied scientific research and services.
- Research institutes of ministries perform mainly services and very little research, although some of them possess not so bad laboratory equipments and materials.
- There are only individuals who conduct scientific research in universities.

The publishing activity shows that AS publishes mainly monographs of a scientific level. Institutes have reported many conferences, which they consider international, but which do not have proceedings cited in the international index. In general, laboratories of scientific research institutes are outdated. Only some institutes possess new equipments, but they are not utilized. Internet expansion is only in its first steps. Libraries are very poor. Foreign scientific magazines and books cannot be bought because of the lack and misuse of funds.

Future trends and challenges

Scientific research is facing the challenges of its full reformation, which in a summarized way are listed below:

Creation of a unique higher education and scientific research system in Albania

The achievement of this aim will:

- Increase the effectiveness of the usage of human and material resources of the higher education and scientific research on a national level.
- Increase the quality of university schooling for the new generation.
- Approach a standard, which is almost widely accepted in the higher education and scientific research system.
- Achieve an approach between scientific institutes and universities for the creation of a unique institutional system

The institutional approach will be performed through:

- The integration of the research institute with the respective department of a university faculty. In this case, the scientific research institute becomes part of the respective department and of the university as well losing its independence. The integration is recommended in case the areas of scientific research or the departmental teaching programs have a large overlapping with the areas of scientific research of the respective research institute.
- The contract signed between the research institute and the respective department of a faculty. In this case, both parties retain their institutional independence but they have contractual
obligations to each other. It is essential for these contracts to include the teaching obligations of the scientific research staff and the basic usage of its materials from the students. The contract is recommended in case there is small overlapping between the research field of the department and the research field of the respective research institute. Contract signing is recommended even in the cases when the institutes conduct little or no research at all and the object of its work is performing services on a national level.

- Establishment of Research Centers within a faculty or University
Projects and Cooperation

During the last decade, Ministry of Education and Science has pursued an ever more opened policy towards cooperation with different international partners, aiming at strengthening and increasing quality at all levels of education.

MoES has constantly established and supported relationships of cooperation in the education area with other countries, international organizations, organisms and institutions, foreign foundations or individuals, population of Albania regions in other countries and Diaspora.

During these years there have been developed implemented agreements, protocols and programs of cooperation in the area of education with other countries, international organizations such as UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, European Community, OPEC, KulturKontakt, GTZ, Swiss Contact, DANIDA. Similarly, there has been coordinated cooperation of Albanian institutions with educational institutions of other countries for post-graduate qualifications and post-graduate studies in Japan, Israel, India, EC, Grac Center in Austria, and for other levels in the framework of programs of European Union such as Tempus, Phare, EFT etc.

The most important projects regarding pre-university education have been the ones with World Bank named Education 1 and 2, which have been focused on various aspects of reforming the content of education, strengthening the responsibility level towards stakeholders in providing educational services as well as school reconstructions.

The “Education Excellence and Equity” program was prepared from the Albanian Government in cooperation with the World Bank and it will help with the implementation of the National Education Strategy. The main objective of the project is the improvement of learning quality and conditions for all students, increase the attendance in the general high school education and commence the reform for the higher education.

The total cost of the project is forecasted to be $75 million and will be co-financed by the World Bank ($15 million), European Investment Bank ($15 million), European Council Investment Bank ($15 million) and the Albanian Government ($30 million). The duration of the project will be four years, October 2006 – December 2010.

In the framework of the Government’s program for the safeguard of the economic development, narrowing of regional inequalities and gaining the EU membership, the biggest challenge in the education sector is the development of a system and institutions, which will train people who
will effectively operate in the labor market and become active citizens contributing to the strengthening of the Albanian competition. This project will increase the quality of education on all levels and guarantee the continuity of recent reforms in this sector.

A sector-wide approach will be used for the first time in Albania in the “Education Excellence and Equity” project. The National Education Strategy constitutes the basis of this project and this approach. The Government will organize semiannual meetings in May and October of each year to present the Yearly Reform Program and review its progress. A sector-wide approach (SWAp) is expected to strengthen the government ownership of the reforms’ program, facilitate the cooperation and coordination between the development partners and strengthen the managing capacity of the education system.

The project aims at improving the learning conditions of students and increasing the attendance of high school education, which is expected to lay out the foundations of a better human resources formation. Furthermore, the project aims at improving the effectiveness and offering equal services through the reinforcement of leadership, management and governance. Thus, the EEE-P aims at contributing to the reinforcement of services offered as well as the private sector development.

The project includes the following priority fields: 1) reinforcement of the education system leadership, management and governance; 2) improvement of teaching and learning conditions; 3) improvement and rationalization of the education infrastructure; 4) preparation of the ground for the higher education reform.

The content of the project’s priority fields is as follows:

1. Reinforcement of the education system leadership, management and governance ($10 million)
   This priority field aims at reinforcing the leadership and managing capacities and reinforcing governance and increasing responsibilities of the education system. The activities included in this field are related to decentralization, strengthening of leadership, professional development of school principals, decision-making and management of resources at a school level, community attendance increase, introduction of management system based on performance and full utilization of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) for decision-making. The offer of decentralized services will be based on pilot projects in 2-3 regions before introducing them in a general plan. This will constitute the institutional foundations for the treatment of other priority fields.

2. Improvement of teaching and learning conditions ($26 million)
   This priority field is concentrated in the improvement of the teaching quality and learning conditions in a comprehensive way. Special attention will be devoted to the support of the teachers’ professional development in order for them to use more effective didactic methods in class. Furthermore, it will deal with curricular reform issues, including the development of a national curricular framework, courses’ rationalization and textbooks’ integration and development. Respective policies and practices will also be obtained for the implementation of the curricular reforms and education of pedagogic staff. The development of the education evaluation will continue through the reinforcement of the National Education Center for Evaluation and Examinations capacities, compilation of an education evaluation national plan and improvement of transparency and integrity of the national maturity examination system. This priority field enables teachers and students to use a wide range of appropriate instruments and methods in the teaching and learning processes.

3. Improvement and rationalization of education infrastructure, especially the high school
This priority field deals with **more effective investments and the (re)allocation of physical infrastructure** and human resources, especially in the high school education. This component will support the MoES in investment decision-making based on the schools’ map, which takes into consideration the demographic developments in Albania. Science laboratories and supplementary IT equipments will be supplied to general high schools in accordance with the new curricula. The second priority field will support the teachers’ training.

### 4. Preparation for the higher education reform ($7 million)

This priority field is focused on the support to the preliminary stage of the higher education reform. This component supports the MoES and universities in the review of the system, to identify and list the reforms’ activities, which include the reinforcement of university governance, increase of the universities’ financial autonomy and responsibilities, reinforcement of the quality assurance mechanism and stimulation of the universities cooperation. Furthermore, the development and implementation of the strategic development plan of the major universities will be supported. This component also aims at expanding the students’ opportunities through mobilizing private funds and ensuring a more effective use of public funds.

In higher education, a powerful impact was exercised by Tempus project, which aims at reforming higher education through individual training programs in the EC countries and joint institutional projects with those countries.

TEMPUS office near MoES implements the part of education in CARDS Program of the European Commission.

TEMPUS Program started its activity in Albania in 1992. Since that period it has gone through 3 important stages:

- **TEMPUS I** 1992-1994
- **TEMPUS II** 1995-1997
- **TEMPUS II Bis** 1998-2000
- **TEMPUS III** 2001-2006
- **TEMPUS IPA** 2007-2009

This program is an Inter-European cooperation to assist Higher Education so that it gets the sooner the better integrated into European higher education. One of the main goals of Tempus is the implementation of the Declaration of Bologna by the Albanian Universities.

The TEMPUS program offers three types of activities:

1. **Individual Mobility Grants (IMG)**

Individual mobility grants are complementary measures within the Tempus Program. They aim at providing the academic and the administrative staff of the Higher Education sector with the opportunity of benefiting from the visits in universities of the western European countries, carried out in limited periods of time abroad.

The allowed types of visits are:

- **Joint European Project Preparation (JEP)**
- **Participation in a particular event**
Retraining period, study period, cooperation in a specific academic subject such as design or updating of the curricula, dissemination of good practices.

This type is continuously used by the university lecturers in conformity with the requirements of the process of Bologna, adapting to the modular presentation and new cycles of study.

2. Joint European Projects (JEP)
They aim at the improvement of university structures, modernization of their management and getting them closer to European Standards. Restructuring of existing departments, building new departments, improvement of curricula and their updated development are some of the directions of this project.

Joint European projects are cooperation of Institutions of Higher Education in Albania with their homologues from EU and Southeastern European Countries.

The main types of the projects are:
- (CD – Curriculum Development)
- (UM – University Management)
- (IB – Institution Building)

3. Structural Complementary Measures (SCM)

This type of project has been introduced in recent years and includes three kinds of activities:
- Information and dissemination projects: seminars, conferences, joint publications for the implementation of the reforms and policies for the development of strategies in education.
- Training projects: training courses, planning visits, preparation and undertaking of higher education development reforms.
- Pilot projects: especially for narrowing the gaps of the developments of geographic areas in need. Creation of websites and appropriate regional networks which are related to university education systems such as quality assurance, accreditation, qualification recognition, credits, teaching methods, university methods, etc.

At the moment, 53 individual IMG scholarships have been awarded and 20 projects in cooperation with JEP have been fulfilled, 2 of which are regional projects in cooperation with other countries of the Balkans and 4 of them are new national projects with the Agricultural and Polytechnic Universities of Tirana.

CEPUS Program

The CEEPUS Program (Central European Exchanges Program for University Studies) became effective with the Law no. 9473, dated 02.09.2006 and approved by the Albanian Parliament.

CEPUS is a cooperation program in the higher education field between Austria and Eastern Europe countries including our country. This program has made possible the creation of a network of the faculties and departments of our higher education institutions and those of the counterpart countries participating in the program. In the framework of these networks, there are bilateral exchanges for lecturers and for students to attend courses (up to one semester) in the network countries, also receiving the respective credits. The program also enables collective degrees and
diplomas, development of the Master’s thesis as well as organization and participation in summer schools.

Our country has been given 110 months of scholarships for its first year of membership in this program. In the first year, our country competed in 10 networks and was qualified in 9 of them with the University of Tirana, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana, University of Shkodra and University of Elbasan.

The first movements of our lecturers within the networks as well as the movement of foreign lecturers in our country in the University of Shkodra, Agricultural University of Tirana and Polytechnic University of Tirana have already started. The mutual movements of other pedagogues and students have also been planned.

### Foreign Assistance and Support

Besides projects of collaboration, Albanian education after the ‘90s has received a foreign aid, which has been focused on physical rehabilitation of schools and other education institutions, their equipment with material basis and laboratory equipment, and support of various aspects of revising the curricula, of teacher and principal training, etc.

In addition to powerful world institutions mentioned above, education has been supported by quite a lot of foreign organisms, which have exercised their activity in Albania.

UNICEF has contributed to a wide range of topics starting from children’s rights in schools and continuing with teachers’ training and different curricular publications in pre-school education, development of the early childhood and pre-university such as the one for global education, education for all, prevention and conflict resolution, social cohesion development, etc.

The OPEC countries’ assistance has been focused on the reconstruction of school buildings, CRS focused on the mobilization of the parents’ community as school partners in the education of their children, whereas “Save the Children” helped in the promotion of children’s rights.

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