



## The Third Millennium Teachers Train on their Really Needs: the Albania Case

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### Abstract

*The aim of this article is to provide an overview on the training of Albanian teachers thus far and the implications for future teacher training policy in Albania. Recently, in pre-university education a new curriculum was introduced to replace the old one. This initiative had to be based on specific research to reveal the problems of the old curriculum. In addition, the current state of human and infrastructure resources was ignored in making this decision. This move has caused a fair amount of chaos regarding the training of teachers in order for them to respond to the requirements of the new curriculum and pupil achievement. In this respect, this paper provides important insight regarding: a) What are the teachers perceptions of trainings provided by public and private organizations and the universities? b) According to the legal framework it is obligatory for each individual teacher to obtain one credit in teacher training. The issue is: Is this enough or is it necessary to provide teachers with complementary training modules. c) What are the criteria which determine the training modules in which teachers are to participate? d) Have the previous training seminars changed the quality of teaching and learning? e) Are Albanian teachers trained to teach in ways that will provide pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills that citizens of today's society need. It is hoped that the findings of this paper will help policy makers to make informed choices and establish a well thought out strategy.*

Keywords: *training, new curriculum, teaching, learning, educative policy*

### 1. Introduction

The curriculum framework is one of the most important aspects of pre-university education reform. The purpose of this article is to know if reforms are being implemented to accomplish their objectives. In this regard, the quality of teachers pre-service and in service, takes a special importance. In Albania there are problems with the quality of teachers and they have difficulty in the implementation of the curriculum for the fact that they lack knowledge of ICT and the adequate infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process. Given the problems raised, teacher training plays an important role. We will therefore see the impact of these training courses on the teaching and learning process and whether the legal basis for compulsory credits is sufficient for teachers. Finally, we suggest that educational policies should pay more attention to finding the most appropriate ways of implementing curricular reforms, also looking at the social and economic level of the country.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1 Changes in the preuniversity curriculum and their connection with the universities

In the period before the 1990s, in-service teacher's qualification was carried out without interruption in an organized manner by the Ministry of Education, periodically every five years, ideopedagogically and scientifically [6]. Curricula in Albania have been constantly changing, especially after the 1990s. Institutions responsible for their improvements and monitoring also undergo changes. In year 2003 the Institute of Curriculum and Standards and the Training and Qualification Center for Education were established. Then in year 2007 the Institute for Curriculum and Training was established and finally in year 2010 the Institute for Education Development was established [1, 2, 3].

Until 2009 we have the "Subject-Based Curriculum" model then shift to the "Learning-Based Curriculum" model and in 2014 the "Competency-Based Curriculum" enters into force where it still applies today [2, 3, 4]. These constant changes and improvements have not always been very well organized and well thought out. In all pre-university education strategies it is read that there is still much work to be done and often agrees with the main trends of education development in Europe but it is not said that these trends will suit Albania at social and economical levels.



The implementation of today's curriculum remains a serious problem due to the lack of supportive infrastructure in schools. Putting this curriculum into practice remains a challenge for many teachers. The methods that work best in the classroom, in terms of enhancing teaching and learning, suggests that teacher-led behaviorist style is more effective than constructivist-style education [5].

Pre-service teachers preparation has not been at the right rhythm, the challenges of improving new programs are high and the need for well-trained staff is unquestionable. It is also found that university curricula are often overloaded and no attention is paid to what study programs are needed for successful teachers [2, 3, 4].

Thus, there is a need for connection between school and university in unifying and adapting programs [3, 4], as there is little or no similarity between programs offered by universities nationwide. In this regard, the relevant entities have set up working groups and completed the first drafts of this adaptation but still at university the course development is still characterized by behaviourist pedagogy rather than pupil-centered techniques [5]. So pre-service teachers have deficiencies in the application of today's curriculum.

## 2.2 Trainings and infrastructure

The period 1990-2002 was characterized by a lack of rigorous teachers' training. Universities were responsible for providing initial teachers training, but their on-the-job training was not coordinated. The lack of a coherent approach has led to a decrease in the quality of teachers and an increase in the number of unqualified teachers in schools [2].

In the years to come, there has been some change with the introduction of alternative models for providing teachers' training. However, shortcomings are noted and substantial and comprehensive interventions are required. Trainings were not always planned from the teacher's professional standards and their content was not designed based on clear competency objectives, so spontaneous tendencies were introduced [2, 3].

The 2009-2013 training service was unaccredited through quality assurance standards, deficient in the diversity of training agencies, imbalanced between courses and a very low adaptability to the needs of individual and group of teachers in general and towards new teachers in particular [3].

Today, IED (Institute of Educational Development) is the leading provider of training, but there are also private agencies, non-profit organizations and universities, which are subject to accreditation by a special commission. The database of training programs lists 52 accredited training providers and 418 accredited training programs. However, little is known about the quality and impact of training programs, an area which, in the near future, IDE plans to examine more closely [5].

Currently, teachers have the obligation to attend three days of training (18 hours) in one academic year. They can select from a training catalog the topics they want. Current three-day training is not enough to reduce the gap that exists in curriculum implementation, so additional training lasting more than 18 hours should be provided [5].

One of the main problems with curriculum implementation is the lack of adequate ICT infrastructure. Many schools lack internet access in classrooms and even libraries. There are not enough computers, so it is clear that pupils have more access to information technology at home than at school.

Even staff also has limited knowledge of available technologies. There are teachers who use traditional teaching when they are increasingly faced with a lack of resources in the classroom (especially the need for ICTs, smart boards, etc.) [5]. ICT is recognized as a priority in the advancement of education in Albania; the challenge lies in integrating and using it within the current curriculum model.

## 3. Methodology

The methodology of the study is designed to draw conclusions and compare the opinions of all pre-university teachers involved. The methodology is of a descriptive type. The study is conducted in two stages:

- Survey of teachers through a questionnaire
- Interviews of teachers surveyed on deepening responses.

The instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire and consisted of 35 assertions, 25 of which were closed-ended responses and 10 were open-ended responses. The study was conducted nationally and the sample of this study consists of about 200 teachers, a number of whom also obtain qualitative analysis of open-ended responses. The teachers were informed in advance about the purpose of this study so the data obtained are valuable. During the application of the questionnaires ethical issues were taken into account while ensuring the anonymity of the individuals. Data processing was done with SPSS and Excel software.



#### 4. The Albanian context - data

From the analysis performed using Chronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the reliability of the instrument used, we conclude that the instrument has a very good reliability: 35 assertions,  $\alpha = .831$ .

There are many training providers in Albania, the teachers' perceptions of the training provided are given in the table below:

Agencies	Evaluation in %			Weighted average 1-3 Points
	Not good	Good	Very good	
IED	6.9	50.7	42.5	2.35
Universities	3.6	53.6	42.7	2.39
Non-profit organization	8.3	52.1	39.6	2.31
Private	12.6	58.3	29.1	2.15

Table 1 Evaluations of trainings

In table 1 we find that teachers feel better at universities, then at IED, the lower ratings are received by private agencies.

Let's see participation and what teachers think of the legal framework for compulsory training. Attendance at one year training is given in the table below

Trainings at one year	%
One time	19
Two times	23.6
Three times	22.4
More than three times	27.6
Sometimes yes sometimes no	7.5

Table 2 Number of trainings

In Table 2 we can see that 19% of the teachers strictly apply the law, 7.5% of them sometimes yes sometimes no. 73.5% have more participation than required by law. The questionnaire also shows that 70% of teachers disagree with the legal basis, so teachers require more frequent training.

The criteria that teachers choose for trainings are:

- the need for the school-teacher-pupil trinome,
- the place where they are developed,
- it is enough to be certified with a course of any kind.

Looking at the criteria we have three types of teachers, those who choose the right criteria for training, those who want to choose the right criteria but fail economically, those who do not see the topic of training at all. The third category is in a not small percentage. The annual training curriculum exists but is not carried out.

A delicate problem is the impact of training on the teaching and learning process. In most cases the training provided does not affect this process because:

- the Albanian school does not have the right infrastructure, the training provided is for conditions not like ours,
- a large number of pupils per class,
- short class time and many intense schedule.

The survey shows that for 30% of teachers the training provided does not help the implementation of today's curriculum. Next, 45.1% of teachers are still in favor of the old curriculum, 40.1% in favor of the new curriculum, 14.8% speak of a combination of both. The trainings provided are of general category where 21% of teachers say they do not receive training for their subject and 38.3% say sometimes yes and sometimes no.

#### 5. Conclusions and recommendations

In the current state of pre-university education in Albania, teacher trainings plays a important role. Educational institutions need to be more careful in monitoring and continuously updating training. The following conclusions and recommendations emerge from the study:

- Of the training agencies, universities have the best perception of teachers but for many teachers their distance limits participation. As a solution, we think that universities and other agencies offer online training. This format solves problems of place, time and costs.



- Teachers require additional, free and frequent training. The legal framework needs to be reviewed, we suggest mandatory training courses of over 30 hours.
- There are many teachers who choose any kind of accredited module without even looking at the needs of the school-teacher-pupil trinome. The annual training syllabus must be strictly carry out and as training monitoring does not work well, a form must be found to ask teachers what they have been trained for.
- In most cases, the training provided does not affect the teaching and learning process due to the lack of school infrastructure, the large number of pupils in the classrooms. For many reasons, the Albanian government should significantly increase the budget for investment in education.
- The trainings are of general categories, with more theoretical than practical approaches, teachers do not find specific trainings for their subject. Training is needed to be close to the Albanian reality and the voice of the teacher to be felt in their updating.
- At the foreign language competence should be given greater prominence, with non-on-the-service teachers leaving university with this deficiency.

Finally, there is still a lot of work to be done to make trainings more effective for teachers and to provide pupils with what they need as citizens.

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