

# **The Geographic distribution of the non-public education in Albania**

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## **Introduction**

In the overall framework of the social factors that influence the general development of the population in a particular territory, a special role belongs to the education system. In Albania the importance of this system is being emphasized in this particular moment as an important priority in the framework of realizing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with EU. Taking this as an initial point, there should be a lot of value in the role that this system plays, and at the same time a maximal importance should be shown toward the main components of this system. The education system in Albania shows some special features and characteristics that are closely connected with the development stages of the society itself through different periods. Until democracy and pluralism started to take place, which is till 1990, the education system in Albania was 100 % a state offered service. There were no legal space that could have made possible for the existence of the non-public education or similarly called private education, which could have made possible the realization of the multilateral interests, that of the business and those intellectuals and at the same could have created different opportunities for a bigger access toward the knowledge for different educational categories of people. At the beginning of democracy in Albania many groups of people were open and interested toward this direction, which influenced in the intensification of attracting the attention from the state authorities in order to take steps toward its development. It was merely the beginning of the 1990s, which also as in other fields opened a green light for the beginning and the development of the private alternative in the education sector. Below we will try to submit some aspects which have to do with the progress of the this education system in Albania, the problems it was associated with, the innovation that brought in the Albanian education life, its geographic distribution together with the factors that have influenced for this.

## **The Problems that associated the private education development in Albania**

The alternative of the private system in Albania came as a necessity that many different representatives of the education fields in all the levels such as pre-school, the obligatory education, high school education and the university one, in cooperation with different representatives in the Business field felt that they should make it possible to give their worthy contribution in this field. At the same time, the change of the economic system from a centralized one and socialist planned economy toward the free market economy, was seen as in other fields even in education as chance that would have high chances to realize good financial profits. But in order to realize these things and that these things could take place, it was important that there should have been created a strategy that was clear and understandable that would help in the creation and in the drafting of the programs and curriculums in connection with the measures that should have been taken for stimulating and encouraging such an initiative, which is worth mentioning that it was completely unknown in the Albanian Education system.

The difficulties and the obstacles were many and different ones. Firstly there was a lack of the legal basis in the licensing aspect but also in the functioning of the educational system of the non-public sector. This meant that there should have drafted different criterions

and clear rules in order to forecast the procedures for taking the license in order to start this kind of business activity, that has a double character. In one hand it is a private business but at the same time its an educative and education activity for which the society and the whole state are and should be very much interested to know and to control the qualitative level of the teaching, the school documentation, basis that compose the curriculum, on how these people are being formed and on what educational material.

Secondly another important problem had to do the fact that there was an absence of the tradition of functioning in real of a private school, because as we have heard for a long term period there were no Non-Public Institutions in Albania. The lack of experience was a factor for the creation of different doubts in the decision-making institutions that were responsible for the licensing for the functioning, the desired outcomes, and its future progress. Thus in the early years of democracy as we mentioned above there were many hesitations toward this new sector of education.

Thirdly another problem had to do with the fact that even in the direction of this activity as a private business there did not exist the necessary trust in the Business people that aimed or desired to take such initiatives for opening such activities. This came as a result that this kind of initiative was not only new for the Albanian public but also for the Business field.

Fourthly there was a lack of the physical facilities that an institution of non-public education such as this should have, that were the building, the equipments, the didactic-material basis, etc. These things required a considerable starting financial contribution when the financial sources in Albania were less and provided with a great difficulty. This for sure was not a small problem for the entrepreneurs within the conditions where they were not sure how secure this investment would be. At these early stages there was a lack of law and practice of privatization of the existing buildings. This was a barrier and an obstacle for the reconstruction and the use of these currently existing buildings a educational facilities. At the same time there were not clear procedures and legally correct toward the opportunities that could have been created toward the different businesses to allow different buildings in different rural zones of the country.

Fifthly another concerning problem was related with the fact of providing professionals with a professional training and teaching, trained from the didactic overlook and well-prepared from the scientific part. This aspect was very important and delicate because at the given conditions where many things lacked, the pedagogic staff represented one of the key factors for having a well-maintaining and achieving success in building a School with values and with good name in the public which would create the chances for the advancement of the started business.

All these elements that we mentioned above, had the need to get harmonized in a special legal framework, through which there could have been possible the regulation of the normal functioning for such a new alternative in the education system. In this area there had to be shown a lot of carefulness as there needed to be presented in a very detailed way all the elements that it involved that consisted not only of the educational and teaching aspect and side of it but at the same time the financial and investing side of it, which had not existed before. Such a thing would influence in the creation of a new attitude in the gradual replacement of the legal and administrative basis created in the period of the last regime or the centralized socialist system. Thus it would open the ways of creating and improving the democratic educational legislation in Albania. This thing represented even a standard that had

to be created for the inclusion of Albania amongst the democratic countries of Europe and its future integration within the European Union. Based on these legal dispositions, there started to be taken steps for the development of this kind of educational sector.

The first step is the approval of the regulations and of the Directing decision for the way of getting permission regarding the educational institutions and that was currently approved from the Ministry of Education and Science in 1994. In continuity this directive has changed in relation with its adaptation with the current conditions in the development of the educational system as in the adaptation with different legislative acts in the education field. In this decision there were being described all the conditions and the obligations that a private educational institution had to fulfill in order to get the license for exercising the educational entrepreneurship. Lets mention some of the main conditions determined in this decision: the definition of the type of educational system that the interested party is interested to open, the abiding of the educational system law, the pre-undergraduate law for the institutions falling into this category and the law regarding the universities for the institutions falling into this other category, legal documentation as a proof regarding the ownership of the facility where the learning process will take place or a hiring legal proof documentation. A full list of the teaching personnel and leading staff together with the curriculums and the programs, the registration within the law institutions as a juridical person to exercise the right of developing this activity in the field of education, an record of the lab equipments and of the didactic materials, financial guarantee of the subject that takes in responsibility to open the institution and in this framework there will a particular sum of money in the form of being frozen in the Bank etc.

All these requests should be fulfilled from the interested subject with the aim of getting a permission from the Ministry of Education. In this framework an important role should have been taken from the State authorities and especially from the Ministry of Education and Science. This ministry in order to assess all the requests for the opening of these institutions, with a special decision for the creation of an ad hoc commission which was being directed from one of the most highest officials and that was usually the Deputy-Minister. This commission through the controllers follows directly the procedure and realizes the verification of all of the requests that this subject presents in order to get the license. When the Commission considers all the criterions fulfilled in conformity with the legal basis and the regulations, then it was taking a positive decision, meanwhile that did not approve the applications that were not compatible with the procedures and the legal criterions. Though the role of the Ministry of Education and Science is not seen only seen in the fact of granting the right of the license for the opening of this private institutions but also with the continual control over them through frequent inspections. These inspections have to do with the evidence of the application from these institutions of the curriculums and the programs that had previously approved by them, their progress and level, the preparation and the training level of the personnel and staff that lectures and teaches, the documentation of developing the educational activity.

It is very important to appreciate the fact that the educational private institutions in general have progressed in the direction of increasing their levels and in all aspects are related with the continual improvement of the education quality and with the betterment of the physical conditions of the educational buildings where the lectures take place and with a widening of didactic material supplies, with a more qualified staff and the whole lecturing and assisting personnel, with the drafting and improvement of the inner regulations of the daily functioning of the school by each one of them creating a work system or tradition of

functioning in dependence of concrete conditions and of the experience and contribution of each lecturing personnel member, etc.

An important indicator is the numeric increase of these institutions each year and the geographic space increase and distributive character. At the beginning the private schools were only in the big centers of the country, which is being connected with the quick creation of private education concepts and of raising the quick financial resources and the bigger opportunities to find number of students to attend due to the very rapid increase of the population in these big cities. Today we have the private schools almost in every city in Albania and gradually there are ideas of opening them even in rural areas, through different cycles, mainly on the kindergarten and pre-school education etc.

What is worth mentioning is the fact of the distribution of this kind of system, the private one in all cycles of school, from the kindergarten or the pre-school to university. There is a tendency that is an indicator of such an increase due to the fact that these institutions are following a development pattern that are bringing them to their consolidation from one cycle of education to a bigger one by including the cycles of schooling from the kindergarten up to the university.

Another attribute of the private education in Albania is the presentation and the existence of foreign private educational institutions beside those that are Albanians. Some of them are gradually increasing their capacities every year and are trying to expand geographically not only in the capital of Albania, Tirana, but also in other urban centers. Among them we should mention the Turkish College, a composing part of the Gulistan educational colleges that every year is increasing not only in the absorbing capacity of the students but the quality of education as well. We should value the role of attracting these private educational institutions that are related with the accommodating, lab-didactic state but also with the lecturing staff, that is mainly Albanian. Even in these schools you could see the presence of all the schooling cycles from the pre-university and the high school one, by excluding till now the presence in University Level.

### **The Geographic distribution of the private education in Albania**

Today we have a variety of the private educational institutions in Albania, their geographic distribution almost in every urban area of the country and to a certain extent even to rural areas and as in the directions of different schooling cycles. This current situation is a result of entering with courage in the initiatives that involve private entrepreneurship even in the educational system and the fact that this market is a new market as it is being seen and it is passing with a big success its test.

According to the official statistics today in Albania we have about 328 educational institutions in the non-public sector of the pre-university and about 6 institutions of the non-public at the University level. In the non public institutions the main weight is carried by the pre-school or kindergarten institutions where there are about 119 of them and of the 9 year schools of the obligatory education where there are about 92 of this kind. When it comes to the lower level of the obligatory education there are actually 23 schools, the higher cycle of obligatory education about 9 schools, general high schools about 67 of them and about 18 professional high schools. In the non public higher education there is a presence of about 6 universities. By taking into consideration the above mentioned evidence we could mention that the nonpublic educational institutions are mainly centered in the capital of Albania, which is

Tirana, where there are almost 40 % of all these types of schools for the national level. There are other cities like Durrës, Fier, Shkodra, Korça, Vlora, Lushnja where there are many of these non-public schools. When it comes to the Universities their concentration is mainly in Tirana.

In the aspect of the geographic distribution the main part as we have mentioned is filled by the major cities in Albania, and as we have mentioned is closely related with certain factors, amongst them we should mention the economic opportunities infrastructure capabilities, the quality level of teaching and lecturing, the market and the marketing side of it. It is a known truth that the major businesses are concentrated in the urban centers where the biggest private capital is being invested which makes it possible that even the biggest and strongest financial capitals to be concentrated in these areas. This composes an important supporting element for financing the non-public education that find the main support at the private financial investment of one individual or a group of individuals.

Another aspect is also the problematic that has to do with the infrastructure capabilities that are available to be provided within these urban centers. Such a thing is closely related with the fact that in these centers we have present different institutions that as a result of being included in the process of the privatization have changed their destinations by turning into a resource and an important supply to be turned into education facilities through private investments. At the same in these major cities there exist different territorial spaces that can serve as important sites for building educational institutions and schooling complexes. Another helping factor is the fact that shows an increase in population in these urban areas that at the same time increases the possibility to find pools of students in increasing and that makes it possible for the continual of this business and the orientation to further increase of possible investment toward the private schools.

The last element that should be mentioned in this direction that serves as an incentive for bigger possibility presence of the educational nonpublic institutions in the urban centers has to do with the fact of the new market for this kind of service and marketing that is connected with that. Thus from one side the education is something that goes parallel with the development and emancipation of the human society, the forms of its presence change and improve continually. The private service of this educational system is something new for the Albanian society and its aims are not only to present itself with dignity but at the same time to show a higher level and a superiority in comparison with its competitor that in this case is the public education, or the state run schools. This means that even the engagement in this case will be maximal to realize these objectives. At the same time this service makes a new kind of market that had been unknown before to the Albanian society and as such it aims to attract daily and yearly as many customers as possible, and these customers more then anywhere else are found in the major cities we talked about before for the simple reason that the Albanian population has the tendency to leave the rural areas and move to the urban areas.

The quality level of the education is closely related with the fact that there exists a clear difference between the quality and level of education between the rural areas and other urban area. According to the different data published from different statistic providers from the official authorities and from the state inspections being done there can be seen a smaller number of professional lecturers and personnel trained and qualified that impacts directly even in the qualities of teaching and lecturing. Thus there is seen an obvious difference between the infrastructure and lab basis between rural and urban schools.

Even the marketing has its importance and role and this factor is mainly present in cities then in rural areas that has influenced for these institutions to be concentrated in the urban areas.

However this does not mean that the private education does not have a future in the rural areas but such a thing will need to aim the existence of these areas with a growing economy that will make it possible to afford even big investments that are demanded by such an initiative and the development adapting of this alternative with the particular customers. Today in a sporadic way we have this nonpublic education in forms of certain kindergartens with a limited numbers of kids.

## **Conclusions**

The development of the private education in Albania already presents a concrete reality in the whole education system. A main characteristic of its development is the increase and its expansion in all the directions. The private education has already reached all the level of the schooling cycles, starting by the pre-undergraduate studies up to private universities. Each passing year there is an indicator that shows a continual rise of the numbers of students that attend the nonpublic education institutions. There can be seen a better geographic distribution and well known of these institutions which are almost in all the districts of Albania.

The open of the non-public institutions in the education field has impacted in a quick way in the increasing competition in the education field as the presence of two different alternatives functioning at the same time in the education system helps toward this point. At the same time their presence has increased the demand and supply when it comes to the staff of the lecturers. Whom beside the public offer employment in the public sector have been given an open door to institutions such as the non-public schools.

Although it is in the first steps this kind of education is being presented with important models when it comes to the comfort and the materials regarding the labs and teaching facilities that offers so making itself very attractive daily for more potential customers. There is an increase of the media marketing for the private education field as something new and important by raising in this manner even the informative character in regard to this system.

More then ever these private institutions are becoming important centers not only of bringing out talented elements in different fields of the schooling curriculums but also of the education, their promotion and support. At the same time such a thing is being confirmed from the fact that members of these institutions every year are winners of different trophies in different scientific competitions in the local, national and even international levels in certain disciplines.

We could see a growing cooperation between many non-public universities in Albania and other nonpublic institutions in the pre-undergraduate system with many homologue institutions in the European countries and in the United States. This is influencing not only in the preparation and in the common cooperation for building their curriculums but also in other aspects as the transfer, share and exchange of common experiences. We have seen student, staff, personnel exchanges etc. Some other things that are happening is that they are making possible to transfer students and pupils in relation with their level to continue further studies in European countries and United States.

The Albanian Business is being aware that the investment in the education field is not only a serious investment but also an indicator of an innovation in the market economy area. Many of these major businesses are looking for the possibility to invest in the private education in Albania.

The opening and the development of the private education in Albania has played an important role to facilitate in a very good way the heavy load that the public sector education found itself after a major increase of demand, where the state had not real capabilities to cope and afford it. This can be expressed with the good relief that the public education system has felt. Without the private it would have been impossible to cope and deal with the high needs in major cities due to the big and rapid fluxes of population emigration toward the western areas and of the urban ones in general. Even in the circles of different experts in education, the private education in this direction is being considered as an unloading place for the number of the students that absorbs and attracts in the general framework of the students especially in the cities.