

Albania

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Principles and general objectives of education

The education system in the Republic of Albania is under the jurisdiction of the Parliament. The right to education is based on and defined by the main constitutional provisions, according to which education is a national priority. In the provisions it is stated that citizens of the Republic of Albania enjoy equal rights to be educated at all levels regardless of their social status, nationality, language, gender, race, political convictions, health and economic level. In compliance with the law, members of national minorities have the possibility to learn in their own language, and to learn about their history and culture in the framework of school curricula. The general principles and objectives of education include:

- equal right to education for all citizens, encompassing primary, general secondary education and certain vocational education programmes;
- creating the conditions for complete personal development and offering educational opportunities appropriate to the contemporary requirements;
- revision and modernization of the content of education in accordance with contemporary social requirements, including scientific achievements and the utilization of information technology in instruction;
- adapting vocational education to the guidelines of social development and the changes in work and production;
- providing conditions for lifelong education;
- increasing quality and efficiency of education.

Current educational priorities and concerns

The development of the Republic of Albania, in particular the reforms in the economic, technological and scientific sectors, requires a further adjustment of education to social needs, and the definition and implementation of educational policy directives for the period 1998-2000.

Taking into consideration the constitutional orientation according to which the State shall regulate and provide aims and guidelines for the development of the economy, science and technology, as well as the conditions for the fulfilment of the rights of citizens in the field of education, the development of education is an integral part of the development of the country.

The significance of education in the demographic, environmental, economic and cultural development has been taken into consideration. This is particularly



important at the primary level, in order to mitigate the factors related to depopulation, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas. Improvement in quality and the rationalization of education at all levels, increased efficiency of the education system, greater engagement of assets allocated (appropriated) by the users themselves in the process of education, are the main requirements imposed by the educational development programme.

The further development and enhancement of the education system have had two primary directions: (a) development in the field of information systems and its introduction into the educational process to a greater extent; and (b) a more intensive teaching of foreign languages. The aims of the reforms carried out in recent years have been the achievement of a better and higher quality of education, as well as the promotion and spreading of environmental studies. To this end, educational authorities have envisaged special in-service teacher training and education.

Educational reforms implemented in Albania during the period 1992-1998 included innovations in curricula and the definition and introduction of new regulations in several domains, such as foreign language teaching, school management, school year, evaluation of teachers' performance, etc. The aim of these innovations has been to provide the necessary preconditions that would enable the education system to be a function of the cultural development and progress of the entire society. Within the context of difficult financial conditions, it was necessary to find out the best solutions for the regular functioning of the system.

Innovations in the curricula of primary and secondary education have been introduced from the 1997/98 school year. This process enabled the rationalization and reduction of curricula in order to provide greater prospects for the teaching process and enhance efficiency.

The process of modernization of curricula and of the educational process in primary school started in 1993 and was continued later on. Certain innovations have been implemented in schools in 1997/98. These changes have been based upon a critical estimation of objectives, content and complexity of curricula concerning subjects, content correlation and functionality of optional instruction and extracurricular activities. Changes included the reduction of school curricula and teaching time (number of lessons), as well as more logical arrangement of the content. Since 1998/99, all pre-university schools operate five days per week. Some subjects like civics, history and literature have been completely revised, while others were only partially changed.

The re-examination of optional subjects within the curriculum and the introduction of extra-mural activities in primary school have also been considered. In addition, other initiatives have been launched in order to modernize some forms of work at school, to introduce information technology into instruction, to enhance regulations concerning the required qualification of teachers, etc.

As regards secondary education, after several years of examining the achievement results at this level it has been concluded that it is necessary to introduce changes in the curricula and in certain domains of activity, to reduce part of the curriculum content, and to introduce innovations reflecting the recent achievements in



science and technology, changes in social relations, ways of doing business, laws, etc. A new subject, computing and informatics, was introduced in all four forms of general secondary schools and it has been planned to introduce the application of the computer technique in certain subjects in vocational schools. Due to the introduction of this new subject, a better equipping of schools with computers has been foreseen. It has been planned to divide the general school programme into two streams after the second year, i.e. humanities and natural sciences streams. In the same way, the possibility of opening three- or five-form combined vocational secondary schools has been envisaged.

Concerning post-secondary and university education, the new laws adopted in 1991 led to the establishment of some local universities in Albania's main cities. By adopting the Law on Post-Secondary Education, a segment of non-university, post-secondary education has been regulated.

The education of class teachers (Grades I-IV) has experienced deep structural reforms. Following the international trends concerning teacher education and training, higher education has been introduced as a requirement for this category of teachers, who are now prepared in faculties of education located in several universities.

In summary, the main objectives of educational development in recent years have been as follows:

- developing democratic values, tolerance and mutual understanding among people, and the relationships necessary for life and work in a pluralistic society;
- fostering the development of personality and abilities, taking into consideration the individual characteristics of each person;
- providing knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for life and work in the contemporary society;
- cherishing desirable social and moral values, beliefs and relationships;
- developing research and critical thinking, creative and aesthetic abilities;
- stimulating physical and mental development;
- creating and maintaining optimal conditions for the fulfilment of individual potential and successful integration in the community;
- instilling a sense of belonging to the community and to the world in general;
- providing vocational knowledge and skills necessary for professional work;
- developing awareness concerning the need for continuing and lifelong education.



The National Education Strategy 2004-2015 focuses on pre-university education. The strategy identifies four priority areas: (i) reforming and strengthening the management capacity (governance); (ii) improving the quality of the teaching and learning process; (iii) financing pre-university education; and (iv) capacity-building and human resource development. This strategy is expected to help strengthen the sector's performance and serve as a basis for concerted efforts to achieve better learning outcomes in a more equitable and efficient manner.

To upgrade the quality and relevance of pre-university education, curriculum and textbook reforms have been initiated, aiming to complete the implementation of the revised curriculum of basic education by 2010 and of secondary education by 2015. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching include the development of competencies for teachers and a teacher accreditation system, introduction of an in-service training programme and reforms in pre-service training. The National Center for Assessment and Evaluation has been established to carry out independent assessment of learning achievement and support university entrance examinations.

Decentralization of the education system management and service delivery at the pre-university level is a core aspect of the country's ongoing broader efforts. The decentralization process of the pre-university education system is based on the following guiding principles: (i) striving for high academic achievements and administrative effectiveness and transparency; (ii) a culture of measurement; (iii) performance-based management; (iv) a new role for school principals; and (v) participatory approach. Under the decentralized system, schools are required to take increased responsibility for planning and managing the development of services they deliver along with the associated quality improvement procedures.

Finally, as Albania became a full member of the Bologna Declaration in 2003, the reform agenda at the tertiary education level includes the modernization of the course structure and curriculum, the improvement of legislation and funding formula, stronger linkages between research and teaching, an enhanced quality assurance and accreditation mechanism, and enhanced linkages with the labor market. Recent measures include the amendment of the Higher Education Act (2003) and the introduction of the two-cycle structure as of 2005/06.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

After the multi-party elections held in 1992, and the new main constitutional provisions which were adopted during the period 1992-1995, new acts were passed. By these acts, the education sector has been regulated on a new basis and with new characteristics.

The initial basis for the new legal framework of the education system is the citizens' right to education. Schooling is available to everyone under equal conditions, and the assets for achieving this are provided from the State budget. The basic legal instruments concerning education include the **Pre-University Education Act No. 7952** of June 1995 (amended in 1998), the **Normative Provisions for Public Schools**, the **Labour Code of the Republic of Albania** (1995), the **Private Education Act** (1995) and the **Higher Education Act No. 8461** of 25 February 1998.



The latter was amended in July 2003 in order to establish a higher education system based on study cycles in accordance with the Bologna Process.

In accordance with these laws, a series of rules and regulations has been passed concerning various important issues, such as: the assessment of students, appraisals and rewards to be given, enrolment into secondary schools, standards for the lessons, in-service teacher training, etc. Rules are sub-acts regulating more closely certain aspects of education; their passing and application are the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The **Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 156** of March 2001, concerns the recognition of non-public higher education programmes. The Parliament approved on March 2002 a **Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training (VET)** in order to support the development of a common VET system in the country.

According to **Instruction No. 20** of 2004, all universities and the majority of programmes are based on the two-cycle structure starting from 2005/06. Programmes at undergraduate level (bachelor's degree) last a minimum of three years, while programmes leading to the award of master's degree last 1 to 2 years (in the case of medicine, dental studies, pharmacy, architecture, and veterinary, programmes take 6 years to complete). The duration of doctoral programmes (not yet reformed according to the Bologna process structure) ranges between 3 and 5 years. (EURYDICE, 2007).

Article 57 of the **Constitution** (1998) states that: everyone has the right to education; mandatory school education is determined by law; general high school public education is open for all; professional high school education and higher education can be conditioned only on criteria of abilities; mandatory education and general high school education in public schools are free; pupils and students may also be educated in private schools of all levels, which are created and operated on the basis of law; the autonomy and academic freedom of higher education institutions are guaranteed by law.

Compulsory education lasts eight years and all children aged 6-14 must attend school.

Administration and management of the education system

According to the main constitutional provisions, the Government and the Parliament determine the educational policy. They formulate and pass laws and other regulations and execute other activities in the field of education as envisaged by the law. The Ministry of Education and Science and provincial or municipal authorities take care that certain requirements in the field of education are met.

The **Ministry of Education and Science** is responsible for the administration of the education system at the national level. The functions of the Ministry of Education and Science include: the implementation of laws and other regulations approved by the Parliament and the Government; decisions on legal matters, management and professional supervision; approval of statutes, curricula and other



documents; execution of professional work; work improvement, planning, and programming; development and financing of education.

The implementation, management and supervision of the laws on pre-university and higher education, including the regulations which have been passed in this field, are within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science. The supervision includes both legal aspects and inspection of activities in schools and universities.

The Ministry of Education and Science, as part of the State administration, determines the network of primary and secondary schools, decides on the establishment of post-secondary schools and universities, elaborates the higher education financing standards and handles development requirements.

The **municipalities**, as form of local government, satisfy within their overall competencies certain requirements of citizens in the field of education, co-operate with the educational establishments within their territories and participate in the financing of certain services such as school rehabilitation, teacher transport, etc.

The school managing bodies and their functions are defined by the Law on Pre-University Education. These are the **school board** and the **school principal**. The school board adopts the report on work, decides on school activities and investments, announces open competitions to fill the vacancies of school teachers, and gives its opinions on candidates for the posts of teacher and school principal. The school principal manages the school and is appointed by the local educational authorities. His/her responsibility refers to the overall scope of school work and the implementation of curricula. He/she provides instructional insight in and supervision of the teachers and professional associates work, handles the promotion of educational work, undertakes measures against inappropriate behaviour of teachers and associates, convenes the sessions of teacher councils, directs the work of professional bodies and co-operates with the community in connection with school activities.

The Law on Pre-University Education envisages that post-secondary schools have **managing bodies** and **professional bodies**. Managing bodies include the school principal and the deputy principal, while the professional body is the **Teachers' Council**. The school principal manages the school, makes proposals concerning the employment and dismissing of the teaching staff and is responsible for the implementation of the curriculum and the school work in general. The **Teachers' Council**, which includes all teaching staff, makes proposals on the curriculum and monitors its implementation, executes special programmes for some types of in-service teacher training, as well as programmes for gifted students and programmes for development and research in order to improve the teaching process.

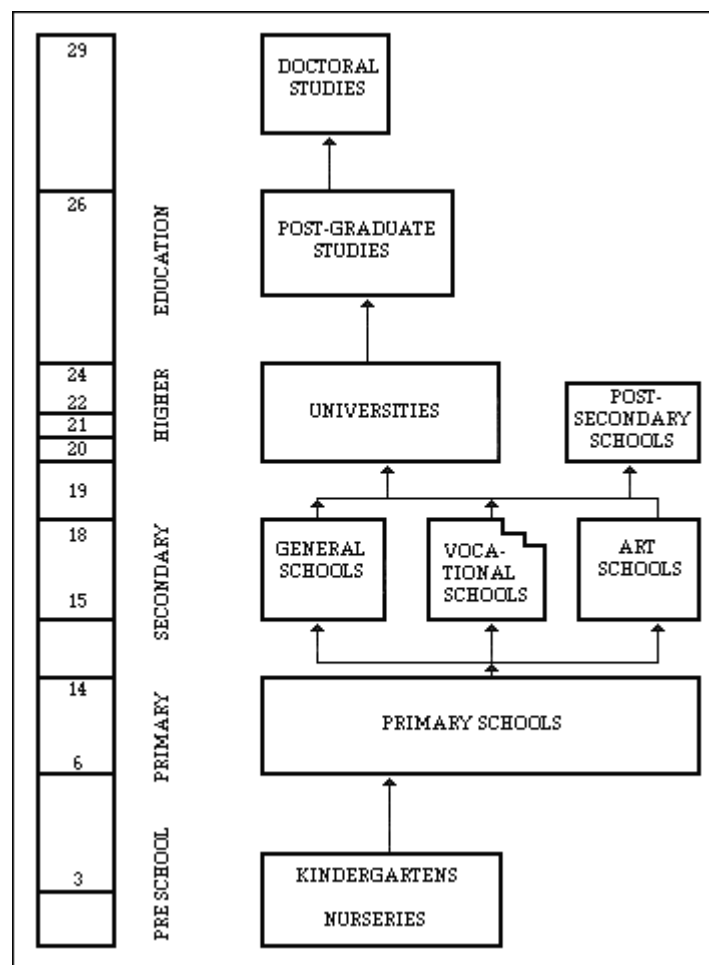
The Higher Education Act regulates the activities of universities and faculties, the establishment and functions of managing bodies, the recruitment of teaching staff, etc. The role of universities, their scope and the basic working conditions and objectives are regulated by the law, while the overall organization and activities are more closely elaborated by their statute.

The university has managing and professional bodies. The rector manages the university, while the top managing body is the Senate, consisting of the representatives of associated members and founders. Members of the Senate are elected for a two-year period. Their responsibilities include: passing of the university statute; adopting curricula and the financial plan; studying the reports on work and business activities; approving the statutes of faculties; proposing the students enrolment plan to the government; making decisions upon the funding of university establishments; promoting students standard activities, etc.

In order to examine some specific matters concerning the work domain and groups of related faculties, special professional councils referring to the particular field of studies can be established; their scope and structure are determined by the university statute. The **Accreditation Agency for Higher Education** was established in January 2000, while the **Accreditation Council** was established in March 2004. The Agency, a public state-funded institution accountable to the Ministry, defines criteria and procedures for higher education quality evaluation and, after consulting with higher education institutions, submits proposals to the Council for approval. (EURYDICE, 2007).

Structure and organization of the education system

Albania: structure of the education system





Pre-school education

Pre-school education is not compulsory and caters to children aged 3-6.

Primary education

Primary education lasts eight years and is compulsory (age group 6-14). Children enter primary schools when they reach the age of 6. Primary education is divided into two levels: Grades I-IV and Grades V-VIII. At the end of primary education, successful pupils are awarded the certificate of completed primary school. In 2004 it has been decided to start the implementation of a nine-year programme.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts three, four or five years and is offered in: comprehensive schools; vocational schools; art, sports, foreign language and pedagogical schools. Secondary vocational schools offer students general and vocational (theoretical and practical) education and prepare them for work and further education. The secondary school provides vocational qualifications at the level of three-form and five-form education. Secondary art schools educate students in the fields of music, art and ballet. Upon completion of general secondary education (four-year programme), successful students are awarded the maturity certificate.

Non-university higher education is offered in postsecondary schools. The duration of studies is not less than two years and not more than four years. University higher education is provided by universities (faculties and departments), art academies, and higher physical training institutes. The faculty is an educational and scientific institution offering basic, specialized and doctoral studies. The duration of all basic studies is three to six academic years. Specialized studies last one or two academic years. The duration of doctoral studies ranges from three to five years. From 2005/06 programmes at undergraduate level (bachelor's degree) last a minimum of three years, while programmes leading to the award of master's degree last one to two years (in the case of medicine, dental studies, pharmacy, architecture, and veterinary, programmes take six years to complete).

At pre-university level, the school year generally begins in September and ends in June. It is divided into two terms. The school year at the primary level comprises thirty-three five-day teaching weeks (165 working days) for pupils attending Grades I-VIII. At the secondary level, the school year comprises thirty-five five-day teaching weeks (175 working days) in the first three forms of general school, in the first four forms of the five-form vocational school and in all forms of the three-form vocational school; it comprises thirty-four weeks (170 working days) in the fourth and in the fifth forms of the five-form vocational school.

At university level, the academic year begins in October and ends in June. It is divided into two semesters, each having a duration of fifteen weeks. Students have summer, Christmas, New Year and national holidays. Examinations take place at the end of each semester. They may be oral examinations, written examinations or both. Classes are held from Monday to Friday.

The financing of education

Education in Albania is financed from government revenues and private funds. State educational establishments at all levels are financed from government revenues, while private schools are financed from private funds.

In 1997, public expenditure on education amounted to approximately 11% of the national budget. Expenditure on education is far below the real requirements considering the context of economic crisis and declining national product.

Due to aggravated working conditions in recent years, the greatest part of educational expenditure is for current expenditure. From the total assets allocated for education in 1997, the major part was for salaries and current expenditures of educational establishments.

Besides regular expenditure for post-secondary schools, universities and pupils' and students' dormitories, significant assets have been allocated for scholarships. During 1997/98, about 1,800 secondary students (or 2% of the overall pre-university student population) received scholarships. Furthermore, a total of 4,096 university students received scholarships, corresponding to 22% of the overall student population at the higher education level. Significant assets are also allocated for health security, cultural centres, publishing, sport and similar activities.

Private education has been recently introduced. At pre-school, primary and vocational secondary education levels there are several private schools which are self-financing establishments. The setting of fees and financing is within the domain of competence of each school. Considering the small number of pupils and students involved in private schooling, the total financial resources are small in comparison to the overall educational financial resources. In addition, the State in some ways finances private education: textbooks are subsidized; private schools use official curricula and educational plans; teachers have been prepared in State schools and they do not pay taxes.

It has been planned that, in addition to public revenues, State schools and universities will also have in the near future other income from sale of their services and products, money-making projects, scholarships, etc.

Educational expenditure as percentage of general expenditure in Albania

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
%	9.87	7.55	7.94	9.38	10.0	8.7

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2002 the public expenditure on education represented 2.8% of GDP.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-school education is a functional part of the education system and, at the same time, constitutes an integral part of the system of social care for children. Pre-school education is also part of basic education.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted a draft programme for pre-school education concerning children aged 3-6. This draft programme was defined as an overall framework offering pre-school teachers a common orientation for their individual creative work on the basis of real conditions and requirements where they live and work. The programme should be implemented through integration of different fields of educational activities via games and the creation of activity centres. In the main cities of Albania there are pilot pre-schools applying new methods and advanced didactic elements of educational models. These activities are monitored by local educational authorities and the staff of pilot pre-schools. The Ministry of Education is planning to develop the new preschool curriculum based on the preschool standards approved in 2003. Additionally, the Ministry has approved the standards of achievement for children of 3, 4, and 5 years of age.

The Normative Provisions for Public Schools determine the number of children in upbringing groups of pre-school establishments as follows:

- children 3 to 5 years old: not less than 25 per group;
- in villages is permitted to have: not less than 15 children per group;
- in remote villages is permitted to have: not less than 10 children per group.

The educational activity of the kindergarten is understood as an addition to the family and as a preparation for the elementary school. Pre-school education aims at:

- The education and formation of the free and conscious individual, participating in social life.
- The acquisition of the communicative, expressive, logical and operational ability and competences.
- The development of psychomotor, cognitive, emotional, social and moral abilities.

Pre-school establishments usually offer 240 teaching hours (lessons) per year. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2002/03 the gross enrolment ratio at the pre-primary level was 47%.

The Gardens of Mothers and Children 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 offer social and educational services. They operate daily from 8.00 am noon, providing children with pre-school education and the opportunity to play and learn to interact with their peers. At the same time mothers and other women in the community participate in training and discussions on child health and development, nutrition, play and children's rights. The Gardens of Mothers and Children are situated primarily in remote and poor rural areas in the north and northeast of Albania, where about 15% of the population is children under age 6.

Opened in 2004, the centres are benefiting up to 1,800 children. Around 760 fathers take part in activities and training aimed at encouraging active fathering and participation in the community. More than 2,000 mothers and other young women receive training on child health and development and the importance of play and interaction.

Primary education

The aim of compulsory education (eight-year primary school programme, to be transformed into a nine-year programme according to a decision taken in 2004) is to develop intellectual, creative, practical and physical skills; to develop pupils personality and offer general education and upbringing; to promote harmonious personal development; and to prepare for adult life and further general, vocational and civic education. Primary education aims to:

- provide readiness for citizenship, work, further education and self-education;
- provide the basic elements of general education;
- prepare for the application of acquired knowledge and skills and the creative use of leisure time;
- develop intellectual and physical abilities, independence and interest in acquiring new knowledge;
- provide the basic principles concerning the development of environment, society and human beliefs and develop awareness of the need to protect health, nature and the human environment;
- develop human values, love of truth, patriotism and other ethical characteristics of the individual;
- encourage human and cultural relations among people irrespective of their sex, race, religion, nationality and personal beliefs;
- develop the need for culture and the preservation of cultural inheritance;
- provide the basic knowledge of appropriate behaviour in all occasions.

In order to prepare pupils for adult life and further education on the basis of scientific, technical, cultural and art achievements, the overall aim of primary

education is to enable them to acquire the basic elements of general education and to develop curiosity and interest in new knowledge, as well as to develop in them love for work and for homeland.

Primary school curricula are prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum includes the list of compulsory and optional subjects, their schedule by grades, and the weekly and annual number of lessons; it also defines the content of each subject, teaching aims and objectives, and provides instructions on how to accomplish these tasks. School councils, in collaboration with the municipality, take decisions on which optional subjects and foreign languages (both compulsory and optional) will be taught in schools.

Primary education is divided into two levels: Grades I-IV and Grades V-VIII. The major part of teachers at the first level are class teachers. At the second level, there are subject teachers. Some schools prefer subject teachers for Grades IV-V as well.

Compulsory subjects include: mother tongue; foreign language; music; art; knowledge of nature; history; geography; physics; mathematics; biology; chemistry; civic education; technical education; and physical education.

Foreign (second) language as an optional subject is taught in Grades III-VIII, two lessons per week. The lesson timetable is shown in the table below:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Albanian language	–	5	5	5	4	3	3	3
Literature	10	5	5	4	3	3	3	3
Foreign language	–	–	–	–	2	2	2	2
History	–	–	–	1	2	2	2	2
Knowledge of nature	–	–	2	2	3	–	–	–
Geography	–	–	–	–	1	2	2	2
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Physics	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	1
Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Biology	–	–	–	–	–	1	2	2
Civic education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Art education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music education	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1
Technical education	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	21	21	23	23	27	27	28	28

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998. Each teaching period lasts forty-five minutes.

Beside compulsory and optional subjects, primary school pupils are exposed to other types of upbringing and learning:

- Form meeting with the class teacher;



- Sports (one week during the school year for sport, recreation and cultural activities);
- Excursions (one to three days per school year);
- Additional work for gifted pupils;
- Remedial instruction for pupils with learning problems;
- Preparatory instruction for pupils taking the catch-up examination;
- Social and free activities with a group of pupils;
- Preparation of pupils for participation in various competitions or Olympiads;
- Cultural and other activities.

The achievements of pupils in each subject are separately assessed, publicly and with explanation, in numeral marks ranging from 1 to 10: exemplary (10); very good (9); good (8 or 7); satisfactory (6); sufficient (5); and insufficient (4 to 1). The marks 1-4 are the failing ones. Pupils' behavior is expressed by words, i.e. exemplary, very good, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

At the primary and secondary levels, the monitoring of pupils' performance and the assessment process are carried out almost every day. The assessment is carried out two times during one term and at the end of the school year, when the general pedagogical opinion and final grades are given. If the subject syllabus includes several fields, or theory and practice, the performance and progress of pupils are monitored in each field separately and, at the end of the term and of the school year, a unique, final mark is assigned. The pupils' general achievement is calculated on the basis of the arithmetical mean of non-failing marks in each subject. Evaluations given for pupils' behaviour do not constitute part of the pupils' general achievement.

Besides assessment during regular instruction, pupils are also assessed at examinations. The content depends on the type of examination and the syllabus. The examinations can be: the catch-up exam in the subject in which the student failed to achieve a sufficient mark during instruction; the class exam in subjects in which the student has not received any mark during instruction; the remedial exam in the subject in which the student failed; and the final exam at the end of schooling. The latter is taken in the presence of a commission appointed by the school principal; this commission includes at least two members who are experts in the subject in which the examination is taken.

By rule, pupils pass to the next grade if they have non-failing marks in all the compulsory subjects. Grade I pupils are promoted to the next grade even if they have failing marks. Primary education shows a certain drop-out rate particularly in the higher grades. Drop-out rates are especially high in rural areas. Pupils who turn 16



without completing primary education may acquire compulsory primary education in adult education schools (evening schools) as part-time students.

At the end of primary education, successful pupils are awarded the certificate of completed primary school.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 there were 252,829 pupils enrolled at the primary level; the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 104%. There were 11,762 teachers and the teacher to pupil ratio was 1:21.

Secondary education

The general and vocational knowledge and abilities for further education and for work, based on scientific, technological, cultural and artistic achievements, are acquired in secondary schools. The upbringing is acquired, ethic and aesthetic values are fostered, physical and spiritual individual abilities are developed, conscience about humanistic values, personal and social responsibility is developed, and health protection cherished.

In order to prepare students for work and further education, the aim of secondary education is: to provide the necessary general, specialized and vocational knowledge, skills and habits based on scientific, technical, cultural and artistic achievements; and to develop of intellectual, ethical, aesthetic and other personal abilities and characteristics, in particular love for vocation and love for homeland as well as the ability and readiness to defend its independence.

Secondary education is offered in comprehensive schools, vocational schools, sport schools and art schools. Comprehensive secondary schools are general schools (gymnasia); they provide four-form general education in humanities and sciences which qualify students for further education at post-secondary schools and universities. It has been planned that, in the near future, students who have completed the first two years will have the possibility to choose between two streams for the next two years: humanities or science. In addition, there are four-year comprehensive schools for music and arts, dance, sports, pedagogy, and foreign languages.

As in the case of primary education, secondary school curricula are prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum consists of compulsory and optional subjects. Optional subjects include, among others, foreign languages and informatics; local educational authorities decide upon optional subjects. The lesson timetable for comprehensive schools is shown in the table below:

Comprehensive school: weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form			
	I	II	III	IV
Language and literature	3	4	4	4
History	2	2	2	3
Geography	3	2	2	–
Foreign language	2	2	2	2
Knowledge of society	2	2	–	–
Knowledge of economy	–	–	–	2
Introduction to philosophy	–	–	2	–
Mathematics	5	4	5	5
Physics	3	3	3	4
Chemistry	2	3	2	2
Biology	2	2	2	2
Technology	2	2	–	–
Computer studies	–	–	2	2
Astronomy	–	–	–	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	28	28	28	29

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998. Each teaching period lasts forty-five minutes.

A student repeats the grade in secondary school if he/she, at the end of the school year, has at least three failing marks in compulsory subjects and if he/she does not take the catch-up examination or the class examination or fails to pass them. At the end of each form, a student who has non-failing grades is awarded a certificate of successfully completed schooling for that grade. At the end of secondary education, successful students are awarded a maturity diploma.

Secondary vocational schools offer students general and vocational (theoretical and practical) education and prepare them for work and further education. Secondary schools provide vocational qualifications at the level of three-form and five-form vocational education.

The choice of curriculum in vocational secondary schools creates the vocational profile which includes general and vocational content based on the achievements of science and technology. There are vocational schools for industry, agriculture, economy, construction, technology and services. The profiles include a variety of work fields: forestry and wood processing; agriculture; veterinary; sewing; geology and mining; metallurgy; mechanical, engineering and metal processing; electrical engineering; chemistry; textile and leather processing; trade; catering and tourism; economy and administration; etc.

Three-form vocational education includes about thirty-five different vocational profiles representing almost all work fields. General education covers 40% of lessons. Theoretical and vocational education represents 20 to 25%, and practical training 35 to 40% of the total number of lessons. At the end of the third year, students take the final exam. The content and modalities of this exam are defined by the syllabus of each individual vocational profile.



Five-form vocational education involves fifteen different vocational profiles. The curriculum comprises: compulsory academic subjects (50% of lessons); theoretical and vocational subjects (25%); and practical instruction, representing 25% of the lessons. Schools may also offer optional subjects which should meet the specific and special interests of students, their choice of vocation and broader knowledge. At the end of five-year vocational education in vocational schools, students sit the final examination and, if successful, they are awarded a maturity diploma and a certificate specifying their professional and practical skills.

Art, sport, pedagogical and foreign languages secondary schools are four-form schools educating students in the fields of music, art, ballet, sport, teaching, etc. These schools are rather different from all other types of secondary schools in several aspects, including enrolment conditions: to be enrolled in secondary schools students must pass entrance examinations, while students who want to enter these schools have to pass special tests on talents and abilities. At the end of education in these four-form schools, students sit a final examination and, if successful, they are awarded a maturity diploma and a certificate (professional skills).

In 1997/98, the gross enrolment rate at the secondary level was 48.7% (78% in 2003 for all secondary programmes). The Law on Pre-University Education envisages not less than 35 students per class at the secondary level.

Assessing learning achievement nation-wide

In Albania there is a unique system of assessment which is regulated by the relevant educational laws. Students are regularly assessed during their instruction and by means of examinations. Recently, test examinations are considered as a useful tool for students' assessment. The National Center for Assessment and Evaluation has been established to carry out independent assessment of learning achievement and support university entrance examinations.

Higher education

Higher education in Albania is offered in universities and higher schools. Higher education at the university level enables the acquiring of both post-secondary and higher education through post-secondary schools functioning within the universities.

Postsecondary schools offer programmes lasting not less than two years and not more than five years. Universities organize and perform scientific, educational and training work, research as well as other activities in compliance with the law and their statutes. A university may have some faculties and each faculty may have some branches. The duration of basic studies is three to six academic years. Specialized studies last one or two academic years. Doctoral studies last three years. Universities carry out independently, or in co-operation with other organizations, applied research which is a function of scientific and educational activity development.

Higher education is ruled by several categories of legislative acts including Higher Education Act and its amendments, which regulates the organization of higher education institutions, the level of university education and the types of degree



courses, the financing, the scope of research activities, etc. There are specific laws under preparation concerning the accreditation procedures and the recognition of diplomas. Some governmental decisions regulate a series of aspects, such as student quotas for the first year, financial support to students, scholarships, etc. Universities and high schools also have internal regulations. The most important normative document is the statute of the university.

The first establishment of higher education that functioned in the territory of Albania was the University of Tirana (1957). Currently, there are eight universities: University of Tirana, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana, University of Shkodra, University of Elbasan, University of Korça, University of Vlora, and University of Gjirokastra. In addition, there are the Higher Academy of Arts and the Higher Institute of Physical Training. There are also two military higher institutions. All are financed by the government. In the future, a law concerning private higher education will be adopted.

Some universities include post-university schools. Universities offer both basic and post-graduate studies. Basic studies last two years, while degree programmes last four to five years. All post-graduate studies lead to the degree of specialist. Specialized studies last one to two years. The degree of Doctor of Science can be acquired in basic scientific disciplines at the faculties or universities offering post-graduate studies.

Universities are autonomous establishments. This autonomy concerns the performance of their activities, scientific, art and educational work and a partial management. Universities and faculties have managing and professional bodies. The managing bodies are the Rector and the Senate, while professional bodies include science-teaching councils and professional councils by scientific fields and disciplines and larger groups of related faculties. A faculty represents the functional basic unit and is organized by departments and chairs. The faculty includes the teaching and research staff, the students and the auxiliary and administrative personnel. Faculties are individualized by their study programmes and field of specialization. The managing bodies at the faculty are the Dean and the Faculty Council; at higher education institutes these are the School Principal and the Council. The professional body is the science teaching, i.e. art teaching council. The Dean manages the faculty assisted by one or several Vice-Dean(s); usually, there is a Vice-Dean for instruction, scientific research work and finance. Every two years the Faculty Council elects, among the professors, the Dean and Vice-Dean(s). Half of the Faculty Council's members are appointed by the founder while the other half is elected by the science teaching/art teaching council of the faculty. The Faculty Council formulates the faculty by-law, work programme, and financial plan; it makes decisions on the establishment of departments, accepts the report on business activities, etc. The Department is a sub-unit. It carries out teaching and research activities. A Department may include several chairs with a narrow specialization in a specific academic field.

The Science-Teaching/Art-Teaching Council of the faculty is its professional body consisting of faculty teachers and associates. It is competent for the most important matters concerning the faculty activities: defining the curriculum for all studies (basic and doctoral) by departments, groups or streams; creating the scientific research programmes; giving consent to the topics for doctoral dissertations; giving an



opinion on the number of students to be enrolled; defining the faculty statute; etc. The Dean, according to his/her function, is the President of this Senate.

Evaluation of the performance of educational activities falls within the competence of university managing councils (Senates) and science-teaching/art-teaching councils in individual higher education establishments.

Statistics concerning higher education in Albania

Year	No. institutions	Total enrolment	No. lecturers
1980	8	15,000	1,103
1985	8	22,000	1,468
1990	8	27,000	1,806
1991	8	28,000	1,805
1992	10	31,000	1,680
1993	10	30,000	1,715
1994	10	28,000	1,504
1995	10	29,000	1,517
1996	10	34,000	1,576
1997	11	36,000	1,609

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998.

Students enrolled in higher education institutions (1990-1997)

Institution	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Polytechnic University	–	4,435	4,050	3,008	2,426	2,121	1,842	1,884
University of Tirana	12,745	8,812	9,140	8,602	8,021	7,730	8,002	8,429
Agricultural University	4,231	4,076	3,538	2,482	1,620	1,244	809	816
University of Korça	643	643	615	685	734	883	883	1,079
University of Shkodra	1,522	1,692	1,692	1,677	1,651	1,719	1,636	1,746
University of Gjirokastra	724	812	975	983	911	851	916	974
University of Elbasan	1,124	1,305	1,647	1,649	1,418	1,347	1,406	1,722
University of Vlora	–	–	–	–	163	330	580	778
High Inst.of Phys. Train.	341	328	404	388	292	316	271	255
High Academy of Arts	729	700	765	716	556	472	422	430
High Nursery School	–	–	–	–	–	–	295	437
Total	22,059	22,705	22,835	20,190	17,792	17,013	17,094	18,550

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998.

After 1991, a major reform was initiated by higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science. The main objectives of the reform are: further decentralization regarding administration of funds and elaboration of diversified and multidisciplinary study programmes; market orientation of curricula and services; preparation for integration into Europe; introduction of information technology and quality management systems; accreditation and transferability, mainly through the introduction of credit transfer systems; and promotion of scientific research in universities.

As mentioned, and according to the Bologna Process structure, starting from 2005/06 programmes at undergraduate level (bachelor's degree) last a minimum of three years, while programmes leading to the award of master's degree last one to two years (in the case of medicine, dental studies, pharmacy, architecture, and veterinary, programmes take six years to complete).



In 2003, the total enrolment at the tertiary level was estimated at 43,600 students (gross enrolment ratio: 16%).

Special education

In Albania, special education constitutes an integral part of the education system and is regulated by the Law on Pre-university Education. In 1997/98, there were six special schools and about forty special classes with 654 pupils. According to the Law, special education and care are provided in special education establishments, pre-school establishments, special classes in regular primary schools, and special primary schools.

Special education is organized according to the type of disability:

- children with sensory impairment: blind/poor-sighted;
- children with mental deficiency: slight, moderate, serious or heavy;
- children with sensory impairment: deaf/hard-of-hearing.

The type and degree of developmental impairment is established by a medical commission. Special schools for children with sensory impairment (deaf/hard-of-hearing) and children with mental deficiencies follow the normal programme of the first four years of primary education in nine years. Schools for blind/poor-sighted children are eight-year schools. The curriculum is prepared and adopted for each type and degree of impairment, on the basis of special methods and using various and specific teaching materials and aids (technical, audio-visual, electrical-acoustic, etc.). The educational process includes: methods of correction and rehabilitation, exercises, audio training, speech therapies, corrective gymnastics, psychomotor exercises, phonetic rhythms, etc.

Instruction in special schools is provided by teachers specialized for working with disabled children, psychologists, special education teachers, and physical therapists. Subject teachers are trained at the higher education level.

Private education

Private education was re-established after 1996 and covers all types of pre-university education. The Law on Pre-University Education allows for the opening of private schools at all pre-university education levels. The decision on establishing a private school is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science if the educational process is carried out in Albanian. If more than half of the subjects are taught in a foreign language, or if there are religious subjects, the decision is taken by the Council of Ministers. There is a period up to three months between the presentation of the required documents and the giving of the licence, provided that all legal preconditions concerning space, equipment, teaching staff, etc., have been fulfilled. Private education institutions should comply with national standards. They have organizational and functional autonomy (employment of teachers, establishment

of fees, etc.). Educational plans and curricula are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

In 1997/98, there were:

- six private pre-schools (five in urban centres and one in a village) with 408 children and twenty-five teachers;
- nine primary schools with 1,575 pupils (twenty foreign pupils), eighty-nine Albanian teachers, and eleven foreign teachers;
- three primary religious schools with 288 pupils and forty-one teachers;
- six secondary schools with 626 Albanian students (eighteen foreign students), twenty-nine Albanian teachers, and twenty-seven foreign teachers;
- five secondary religious schools with 523 students, seventy-one Albanian teachers and two foreign teachers.

State and private secondary schools follow nearly the same curricula. Private schools offer some optional subjects.

The decision on the number of students to be enrolled in private pre-schools or primary and secondary schools falls within the competence of the founder(s) and managing bodies of these establishments.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

Since 1991, the financial and economic difficulties have had a direct and severe influence on the education system, causing its impoverishment, the non-renewal of its financial and technical base and a serious problem of attrition of the educational infrastructure. In particular, during the period 1992-97 the number of educational establishments decreased, the number of employees was reduced, many teachers left their profession, and problems arose concerning the maintenance and provision of necessary assets for staff salaries.

The growing number of students and the lack of assets to renew and provide new equipment has caused a great degradation of the existing means of instruction. This problem has been particularly evident in the teaching of subjects requiring equipped classrooms and laboratories.

All primary schools suffer from the lack of computers, overhead projectors, television sets, slide projectors, cassette decks, and modern classrooms and teaching materials for the teaching of physics, chemistry, biology, technical subjects and physical education. Secondary schools face the same situation, although it differs from school to school.

In the period 1992-1998, several donors (among others, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Soros Foundation, the World Bank, and the Italian Government) provided



significant support for school rehabilitation, provision of teaching materials and equipment for primary and secondary schools and universities.

According to legal provisions, the preparation and publication of school textbooks is assigned to special institutions (publishing houses for textbooks and teaching materials). These institutions are still under the Ministry of Education and Science, but for the near future a process of privatization is foreseen with the support of the World Bank. The plan of required textbooks for primary and secondary schools is determined by the Ministry, while the professional opinion on them is given by the relevant experts.

In accordance with the plans concerning obligatory textbooks in primary education, 95% of the titles were published for the school year 1998/99. This met the demands of the entire primary school population. In addition, publishing houses for textbooks and teaching materials prepare additional textbooks (teachers handbooks, collections, auxiliary textbooks for pupils, etc.). At the secondary level, publishing houses also print obligatory textbooks and cover about 70% of the total envisaged needs for compulsory textbooks.

There are publishing houses for textbooks at the higher education level. It has also been envisaged to oblige professors to prepare textbooks for the subjects they teach. As a result, a large number of universities independently publish and print textbooks written or prepared by their professors.

There is no organized importation of textbooks to meet educational requirements, although foreign literature is used in higher education establishments as well as in certain types of foreign language teaching. In some universities there are cultural centres established with the collaboration of foreign universities or embassies.

Adult and non-formal education

Non-formal education includes separate courses (for typists, cosmetologists, dressmakers, etc.) and schools for learning foreign languages. Programmes lasting more than six months are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. Otherwise, they are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour. Courses for pre-qualification and additional qualification of workers with different vocational profiles are also provided.

Persons aged 16+ may obtain their elementary education in special schools for adults, i.e. in classes for adult education, part-time schools, or evening schools. The teaching process is carried out according to the curriculum for adults approved by the Minister of Education and Science. Instruction includes classes from the fifth to the eighth year. There are both comprehensive and vocational secondary schools offering three-year programmes.

The financial assets are provided from the State budget. The municipalities keep files on illiterate persons and persons without complete elementary education. Special programmes offering complete elementary education to those who have

exceeded the age for attending primary schools or have not completed all grades are being organized.

In 2001 the literacy rate (population aged 15+) was estimated at 98.7%.

Teaching staff

Pre-school teachers must complete four-form pedagogical secondary schools or be graduates from faculties of education in order to teach in pre-school establishments. Recently, some faculties have established three-year training programme for pre-school teachers.

Primary school teachers working with Grades I-IV pupils must have the same qualifications as pre-school teachers. Subject teachers in higher grades (V-VIII) of primary schools must hold a diploma of higher education (university level). All teachers must sit the professional examination.

Theoretical and practical instruction in secondary school can only be provided by teachers having completed their higher education. Teachers working in medical schools must have relevant specialization in the subjects they are teaching. Practical instruction in secondary vocational schools can only be provided by teachers with higher education or with a secondary school qualification in the case that they have completed a relevant specialization after the secondary school.

Curricula for pre-service teacher training encompass three basic groups of disciplines: (a) the disciplines in the field of academic education; (b) pedagogical and psychological disciplines (pedagogy, psychology and teaching methods for vocational subjects); and (c) teaching practice. Psychology includes developmental and pedagogical psychology.

All universities provide pre-service teacher education. There are differences concerning the number of teaching hours provided for pedagogical/psychological and methodological disciplines, as well as the subjects taught. Most programmes include pedagogy, psychology and didactics. Methods (with demonstration classes and practical lessons) are considered by all programmes, but with different numbers of teaching hours. The duration of studies is three years.

Concerning teachers' workload, at the pre-school level teachers work 36 hours per week. At the primary level (Grades I-IV), teachers work 23-26 weekly hours. In Grades V-VIII, teachers of language and literature work 20 hours per week; teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, 22 hours per week; and other teachers, 24 hours per week in direct educational work with pupils. At the secondary level, teachers of language and literature normally have 20 teaching hours per week. Other teachers and vocational school teachers have 22 hours per week; professional internship work 33 weekly hours. (data refer to 2003; see Musai, 2006).

Qualified teachers at the different levels of education

Level of education	No. of teachers			% of qualified teachers		
	1990	1995	1997	1990	1995	1997
Pre-school	5,664	4,413	4,116	...	...	76
Primary (Grades 1-4)	12,418	13,000	13,077	...	...	90
Primary (Grades 5-8)	16,380	17,900	37,034	...	...	79
Secondary	9,708	6,321	5,989	...	...	92

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 1998.

The educational laws determine the necessity of a permanent in-service training of educational staff. Permanent in-service training is more precisely detailed by separate regulations on in-service training of primary and particularly secondary school teachers.

The content of in-service training programmes includes the following: children's developmental psychology; methodology and didactics; teaching methods; pedagogical psychology; methods of pedagogical work; informatics; application of new teaching technology; social psychology; etc. Universities, professional societies, scientific and professional organizations, and some non-governmental organizations offer in-service training programmes in several scientific-teaching fields.

In-service training at the school level can be individual or collective. The individual type is accomplished by mastering the approved programme, studying professional and scientific literature, applying professional and scientific achievements, performing experimental lessons and professional lectures, issuing professional papers, as well as by acquiring a higher degree of qualification. Collective in-service training is conducted within the professional teachers' work groups and teachers councils of one or several schools in the area of a municipality or region, or within professional societies. The school principal, inspectors from local education authorities and the Ministry of Education and Science monitor in-service training activities.

Educational research and information

Research in the field of education is carried out by scientific, professional and educational institutions, individual teachers, scientists and researchers. Within the universities and faculties of education, especially in the fields of didactics and psychology, education represents a significant part of research.

Institutions dealing with the educational research in Albania are the Pedagogical Research Institute, teacher training faculties and other universities providing pre-service teacher education. The topic and content of research projects include broad educational problems ranging from theoretical to practical ones, and



from pre-school to the higher education level. The results are disseminated through publications or articles in various Albanian and foreign scientific reviews.

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Web resources

Ministry of Education and Science: <http://www.mash.gov.al/> [Mainly in Albanian. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>