

PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

EDUCATION SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

The **Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)** as the highest executive authority of pre-university education management has the mission of the implementation of national educational policies, outlined by the Council of Ministers, and the continuous improvement of the quality of the educational service for all Albanian citizens.

MoES drafts and follows up the implementation of educational national strategies of the legal drafts for the education, the issue of bylaw acts, plans the budget, as well as cooperates with the basic units of the local governance. The Ministry of Education and Science sets the curricula, administrative and infrastructure standards, and drafts the policies of professional development.

MoES evaluates the national performance of students, legal and academic inspection, as well as auditing; accrediting; the continuous training programs of the teaching staff; functioning of the educational information management system; cooperates with the ministries and other domestic and foreign agencies (governmental and non-governmental).

MoES determines for each educational institution the starting and ending dates of the academic year, vacation periods for students and teaching staff, examination dates of the basic education for high school diploma; it determines with regard to the public schools the weekly and annual teaching work load for teachers; it determines for the public school the minimum and maximum number of students per school class.

MoES is supported by its subordinate national agencies: National Pre-University Education Inspectorate (NUEI), Education Development Institute (EDI), Student Performance Evaluation Agency (SPE), National Agency for Professional Qualifications and Training (NAPQT) and Agency for Admissions to Higher Education Institutions (AAHEI).

At local level

Regional Educational Directorates (RED) are responsible for implementing the policies of the pre-university education development at regional level, for the management of

human resources, ensuring the quality at public and private schools, as well as for organising the certification of teachers in the region, through the cooperation with specialised institutions. Their number is 13 and they cover 12 regions of the country.

Educational Offices (EO), located in 25 municipalities of the country, are responsible for the normal conduct of the teaching-educational process, management of human resources, collection of statistical information, supervision of classes and curricula-related and extra-curricula activities, as well as management of financial resources with regard to certain elements.

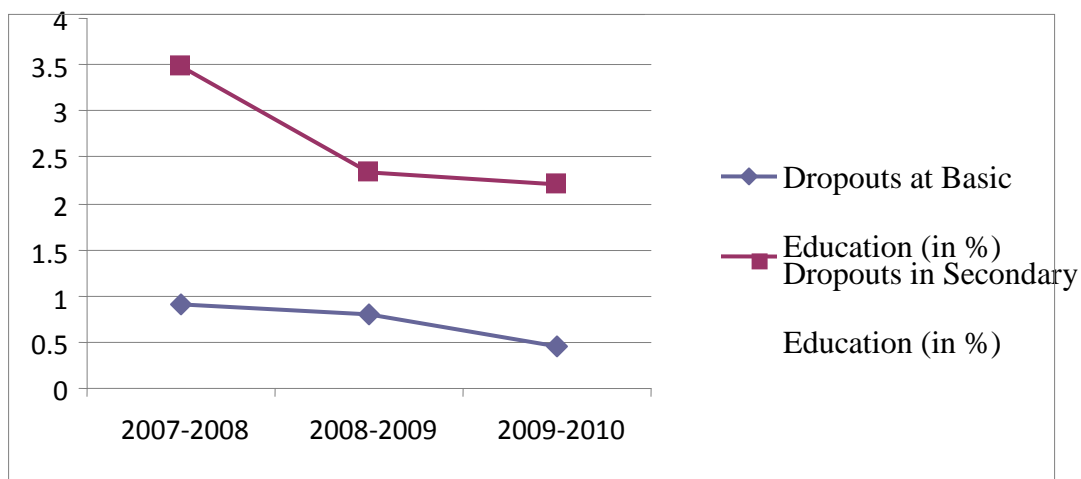
The Pre-educational System Structure

- **Pre-school education**
- **Basic education:** (elementary cycle, lower secondary cycle, special education);
- **Secondary education:** Secondary schools (*full-time and part-time*) and Secondary Vocational Schools.
- **Adult Education**

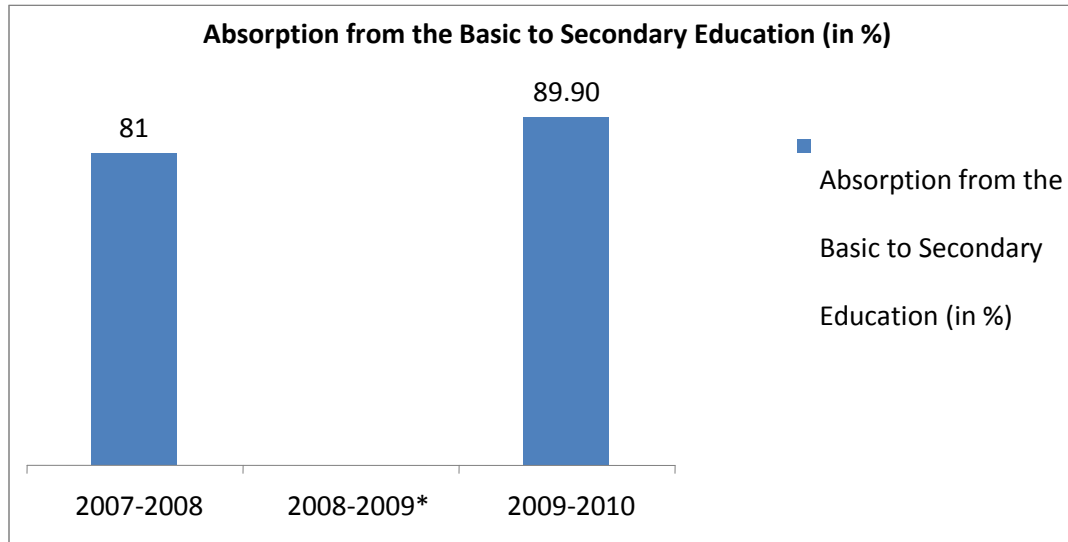
Pre-University Education Development Strategies

The development strategies of the pre-university education at its entire levels are:

- 1) The capacity for each 5-year old child to follow the pre-school education;
- 2) zero dropouts during the 9-year education level;



- 3) Ensuring the opportunity to each student finishing the basic education school (9th grade) to continue the secondary education;
- 4) Increasing the number of students for vocational education by at least 10%.



GENERALS ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The pre-school education in the Republic of Albania is public and private. It consists of the day-care centres and kindergartens. The kindergartens, not the day care centres, are institutions under the authority of MES and they include children of the age-group 3-6 years old. The objective is that every child being 5-year old attends the pre-schooling education. The pre-schooling education is not obligatory. The kindergartens are full or half day, and they open throughout the year.

The teaching and educational process in the pre-schooling education is conducted based on the educational curricula approved by MoES. The mission is to ensure education and development of personality of children and prepare them for school. For kindergarteners form minority groups the teaching process is conducted in their mother tongue.

BASIC EDUCATION EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The basic education is **obligatory** and aims at developing the intellectual, creative, practical and physical skills of pupils, developing their personality and providing them with the fundamental elements of the general culture and civic education.

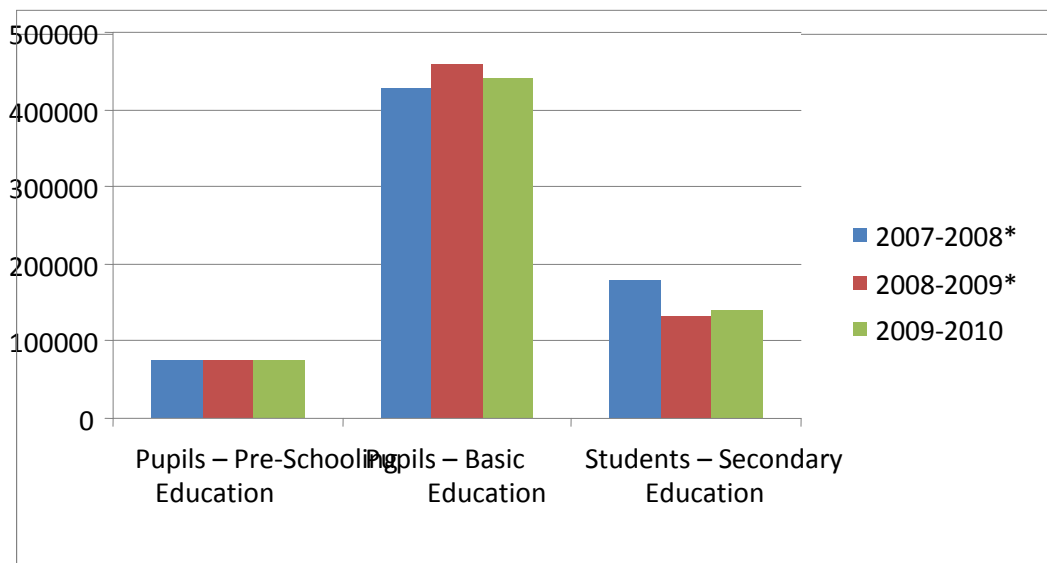
The basic obligatory education lasts 9 years and it starts with the age of 6 years old. The pupil is obliged to follow the basic education up to the age of 16 years old.

The basic education consists of two cycles:

Elementary cycle (*school classes I – V*);

Secondary low cycle (*school classes VI – IX*).

The children of national minorities learn and are taught in their mother tongue; they learn their history and culture within the framework of the teaching curricula and syllabuses approved by MoES. The right for education is offered to the entire remanded and convicted citizens in Penitentiary Institutions, in reliance on the Memorandum of Cooperation between MoES and Ministry of Justice.



EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

The education of special need students occurs:

- At special national institutions, such as: “Institute of deaf students” and “Institute of blind students”. The schooling of students in these institutions is free of charge, including texts and teaching facilities, stay in hostel, food, clothing and transport.
- Learning at the special school “Luigj Gurakuqi”, in Tirana, are mentally disabled students. 5 such classes are countrywide, respectively in Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, Vlorë and Korçë.
- Disabled students are also integrated in ordinary school classes.

ADULT EDUCATION

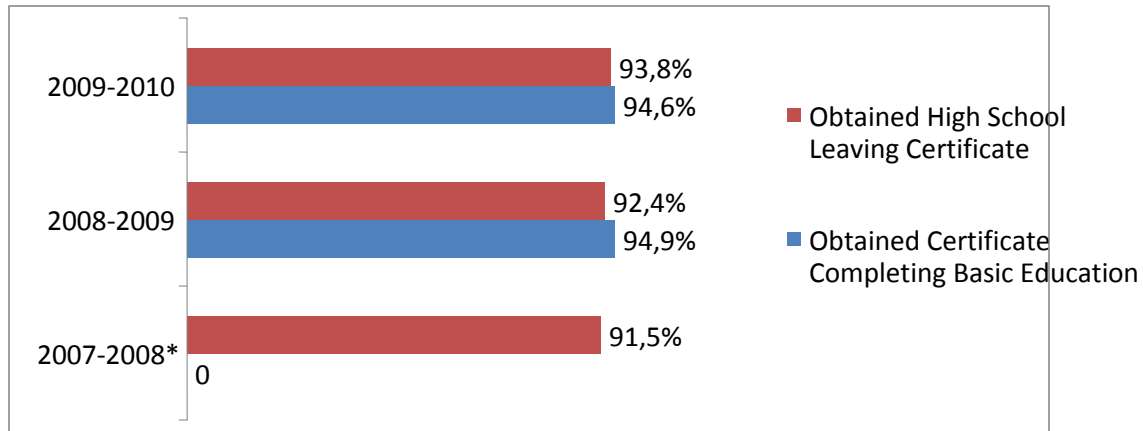
The all life learning principle in our country is conducted through these main forms:

- Specific programs of obligatory education offered to students older than 16 years of age which have not graduated from the obligatory education;
- Specific programs of secondary education offered by the gymnasiums on part-time basis for adults being interested to complete the secondary education;
- Informal training programs applied by private enterprises and businesses for the professional development of their personnel;
- Non-formal system of training courses offered for various categories of adults by public and non-public institutions as well as various organisations (specifically projects of donors and NGOs).

EVALUATION and GRADUATION from basic education

The evaluation of pupils in the first and second grades is done by words and phrases.. For the other school classes the evaluation of pupils is done within the range of marks from 4 to 10, where the lowest passing mark is 5.

Upon completion of grade IX of basic education, the students take two exams; Language and Literature, and Mathematics. At graduation they are get the the completion certificate.



SECONDARY EDUCATION

Increase of number of students at secondary education, 2010 the absorption rate to secondary education was 91 %.

The secondary education is not obligatory. It consists of the Gymnasiums (*with full and part time*) and secondary vocational schools.

General Secondary Education

Full time gymnasiums provide general cultural information being an extension and deepening of the knowledge and culture obtained in the course of basic education schools. The duration of gymnasium is 3 years and it is completed with the high school “matura” exams.

The new structure of the gymnasium and the new teaching plan was applied for the first time in the academic year 2009 – 2010.

Secondary Vocational Education

Vocational Education starts at secondary level and it is focused at training the students for obtaining the practical professional skills and knowledge. Students who graduate from these schools are trained professionals to work, and also able to continue the higher education.

Starting from the academic year 2009 – 2010, the Vocational Education functions based on a new structure, with levels and duration periods in accordance with the Education Structure in the Republic of Albania.

The new structure of the vocational education (in total 41 schools) is based on the structure of the professional training, recommended by the Albanian Qualifications Framework.

Long term professional schooling is offered in the Vocational Education (2, 3 and 4 years). Starting from the academic year 2009 – 2010, a new educational structure, broken down into three levels, shall be applied. This structure is in compliance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISED), the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Since the academic year 2009 – 2010, the vocational schools are working with the new Core Curricula of Level I, drafted by the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), in 22 teaching directions.

Two or more profiles shall be with the second Level of VTE, which shall open depending on the business needs.

SECONDARY CULTURAL- SOCIAL EDUCATION

Secondary schools of foreign languages shall have a duration of 3 years and they are part of the secondary education aiming, along with the general training of students, at providing deepened training in one or more foreign languages. Their curricula are broken down into: *Core Curricula and Selection Curricula*.

Bilingual schooling sections are schools offering schooling to students in two languages (*mother tongue and foreign language*) at a proportion approximately 1 : 1. Their progress depends on bilateral Agreements or Memoranda. The duration of bilingual schooling sections is 3 years in accordance with the secondary education structure.

Secondary education in the field of arts and sports has a duration of 3 or 4 years depending on the direction of education and it is offered to talented students with specific gifts in the artistic, choreographic or sports fields.

“MATURA”-High School Graduation

“MATURA” is a unified and general standard of obligatory and free-choice exams establishing the completion of the secondary school and awarding the right to enter higher schools, in accordance with the respective admission procedures.

- **For the first time** “MATURA” was applied in the Republic of Albania during the academic year 2006-2007, upon the Decision of the Council of Ministers no 78, dated 08/02/2006.
- “MATURA” conducts the maturity exams upon the completion of the secondary, 4 and 5 year, education, through external evaluation.
- “MATURA” implies sitting for four exams, two of which are obligatory and two of them are with free choice.
- The secondary education shall be considered to be completed where the student achieves passing results in the obligatory exams.
- Sitting for the free-choice exams shall be those graduates, who upon completing the secondary school wish to continue their studies at Higher Schools.

REFORMS

- 1) Structural Reform;
- 2) Curricula Reform;
- 3) Institutions Management and Financing Reform.

THE STRUCTURAL REFORM

The obligatory education 9 years, as to 8 years it used to be. The gymnasium passed over from 4 to 3 years, while the vocational schools were provided with a new structure and they have been split into: (2+1+1), (2+2) and 4-years (sports schools). All the secondary artistic schools shall become 3 and 4 years, while the fine arts schools remain 4 years.

CURRICULUM REFORM

This reform includes the reforming of the programs, texts, teaching, evaluation of students performance, as well as training of teachers. The new curriculum relies on comprehensive curriculum documentation including:

Curriculum framework, Standards of the fields of learning, Syllabuses, Instruction for applying the new curriculum and Instruction according to the subject fields and subjects.

The gymnasium curriculum consists of the core curriculum and free-choice curriculum. Included in the teaching plan are such fields as: Arts, Physical Education and Sports, Foreign language (or foreign languages), Technology and IT, Natural sciences and Social sciences.

In Vocational Education, the curricula reform has brought about drafting a two-level curriculum: curriculum at central level, drafted in accordance with the European qualifications framework and KSHK, and that at school level, ensuring the adjustment to the local market needs.

Part of the curriculum reform is the *reform of texts* which installed the model of alternative texts, in the selection of which an important role is played by the school itself. The reform opened the market of school texts to foreign and local publishers.

The performance evaluation reform, being part of the curricula reform, consists in applying the High School Completion and completion exams.

In 2005-2006, High School Completion started its functioning which relies on the external evaluation by means of a unique Test countrywide. It consists of four exams, two obligatory exams (*Mathematics and Mother Tongue*) and two based on free choice.

INSTITUTIONS AND FINANCING MANAGEMENT REFORM

Ranking of schools according to a system of indicators implies that each of the RED/EO ranks the elementary and secondary schools, in accordance with a number of measurable indicators, set by MES, but also eventual indicators added up by RED/EO, depending on their local policies.

The responsibility of the school for the quality of its service went high since its output became publicly transparent and RED/EOs were added the possibility of drafting concrete and detailed plans for enhancing the quality of educational service. This was accompanied with reforming the Annual Plan of the school, aiming at a plan relied on performance and statistical indicators readily measurable.

The Principle "Money follows the pupil" has started to regulate the financing at school level, through the two initial steps: Application of the formula "Per pupil", for teaching facilities, as well as for the books of the library.

The state reimburses the cost of the package of texts directly to the parents of pupils. According to the reimbursement policy for the texts, the basic education, families in financial needs and children with special needs are favoured.

Compared to later 2004, the average salary of teachers was doubled and approached almost 470 USD per month. One of the main aims of this reform is reducing dropouts from the teaching profession and absorption of qualitative students to the higher schools for teaching. In the two recent years, an increase in registration in the teaching branches has been marked. A further increase of salaries is foreseen to occur in 2011.

TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGICAL FACILITIES – PART OF EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

The schools in the Albanian educational system have established a technological infrastructure, thus enhancing the integration of the technology in the educational process. The initiative “Albanian in Digital Age” launched by the Albanian Government paved the way for establishing the technological infrastructure in the educational system, specifically in the pre-university system.

In 2005 a *Master Plan* was drafted for the Albanian program of e-schools, which was applied in the course of the period 2005-2009.

In the context of this nationwide initiative, MES drafted the program of *e-schools* and raised the necessary funds for the application of this program. The program of *e-schools* which was applied in the course of 2006-2009, was a successful program and attained its main objectives, i.e., that of establishing the IT infrastructure at schools, training of IT teachers and working out the IT curriculum for school classes VII-XII.

During the period 2007-2009, the Government invested with priority the extension of IT to schools.

To the effect of ensuring the continuation of the program of *e-schools*, the *E-Education and Statistics Department* as well as the IT and Statistics Sectors in RED and EO were established.

At the end of the academic year 2008-2009, the situation appeared as follows:

- Basic education: 2,7 PC/100 pupils;
- Secondary general education 5,3 PC/100 students;
- Vocational education 7,7 PC/100 students.

Training of teachers and teaching technological skills to students

Working continuously towards broadening the integration of IT into the teaching process, the objective is to transform the traditional classes into classes conceived on the basis of technology. This process requires teachers to be provided with the appropriate technological skills and learn the use of new technological means found in the teaching/learning process and their progress. Their focus shall be the professional training of teachers to the effect of familiarising them with the latest technologies and the skills of the use of new technological means supporting the teaching/learning and the students performance. Along with the traditional way for professional training of teachers, online transmissions shall be applied, through which teachers shall have the opportunity to obtain new skills and communicate with their colleagues to share their best experiences.

In the course of this process, the focus shall be teaching the new technological skills to students, thus making possible that they compete in the labour market and apply the obtained skills at the work station. This process shall be accompanied with the development of digital teaching contents and multi-medial materials; equipping schools with mobile laboratories and applicative programs to the effect of continuous improvement of the teaching quality, continuous training of teachers for the use of IT, as well as integration of IT into the various subjects of the schools curricula.

MES has, since early 2008, initiated the running of the project “*Information and communication technologies in the pre-university education*”, guaranteeing the functional use of 2000 laptops and video-projectors at the teaching process, which already have been purchased, and enhancing the efficiency of the teaching process.

This project provides for the training of teachers of all levels for the use of IT at teaching. 1750 teachers have been trained so far.

PUBLIC FINANCING IN EDUCATION DURING THE RECENT YEARS

The public financing in education (evaluated through the actual budget of MES as well as financing made by local government) has been characterised by an annual growing rate of 10%.

On average (*for the period 2001-2012*), 58% of the public expenses for the education have been invested in the Basic Education (excluding the expenses made for the

education by the local government). In Secondary Education (*general and vocational*), an average of 18% of the public resources of financing have been allocated, while the higher education is benefiting 19% of these funds.

In pre-university education for 2010, the funds for capital expenses translated into funds are round **3.78 billion ALL** or round 82.7% *of the total fund of investments*.

Benefiting from the new buildings are round 374 new school classes, round 8550 pupils and from restorations round 980 rehabilitated school classes, with round 22 600 pupils.

At the same time, to the effect of providing teaching facilities and furniture, a fund of round **423 million ALL** has been made available.

In 2010, round **30 million ALL** have been financed for the *school libraries*.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Initial training of teachers is done in higher education institutions.

The forms of initial training for teachers at higher education institutions are: full time studies or part time studies, as well as programs offered at Professional Master level.

Continuous training of teachers is organised and managed by the Development Programs Department at MES, supported by IZHA. Scheduled in MES budget is a specific appropriation for the continuous training of teachers. IZHA is the institution drafting the standards and modules for the modular training of teachers and it offers support through assistance (advice) and publications for their professional development. Licensed public or private entities are selected for the development of training modules, having sufficient capacities for meeting the objectives and contents provided for in the modules.

- **Training at local level** of teachers and directors is organised by RED and EO, according to the annual plan of training and qualification activities;
- **Training at school level:** every school has, in its annual plan, activities on the professional development in the context of subjects departments.

The training of teachers at pre-university education relies and is conducted even by a series of non-profit making organisations (UNICEF, UNESCO, IOM, ILO, UNDP, Save the Children, etc).

PRIVATE EDUCATION

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) consists an important dimension of the activity of MES. PPP is considered as an important alternative for offering this public service. It extends, through increasing the offer, the education market, enhances competition and encourages quality through broadening the access to educational service.

MES analyses the national and international experiences and seeks to increase the quality level of the service offered by the private initiatives, through:

- working out and implementing educational policies in private education;
- selecting the priorities and meeting the political aims;
- drafting and implementing educational reforms in the private sector;
- drafting and continuous improvement of the normative and regulatory framework for licensing and the effective activity of private educational institutions;
- monitoring the quality, standards, performance and granting of recommendations for the qualitative improvement service by the private education.