



Education during 1912-1939 in Albania. The Influence of the Legislation on its Development

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Abstract

Education as one of the basic human rights, is one of the basic elements to make one able to face the challenges of life, to give one the opportunity to do the best with his life and to break the barriers of poverty, discrimination, and social inequality. Through this article, it is intended to be provided from a historical perspective, the evolution of school and education legislation in Albania. The independent Albanian state that was established in 1912 did not inherit a national education system. The starting point for its establishment and development was the educational program of the Provisional Government of Vlora that included the opening and organization of the primary school, the declaring of the primary education as compulsory for both sexes, measures taken for the design of school programs and textbooks as well as the initial foundations of educational legality. Education in Albania during the period 1912-1939, had the profile of the Albanian state itself, which was fragile and not well formed. This is one of the important periods in the history of the Albanian education system. The development of education system took place under difficult economic and social circumstances, but due to the patriotism and hard work of intellectuals, there were great achievements. It is crucial to mention that during this period education became part of the legitimate human rights that can be evidenced at the legislation in force. Numerous efforts were also made to open schools, design new programs, and above all to enable learning in the Albanian language. To develop this work, the study relied on historiographical literature and archival documents. In conclusion, it can be said that the state and society tried not only to develop education in

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Albania but also to put it on a legal basis. Although incomplete, the legislation on education in the years between 1912-1939 laid the foundations of education in Albania.

Keywords: *Education, Legislation, Period between 1912-1939, Albanian schools.*

Introduction

1. Historical background of the right to education

Nowadays, we live in a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world, where knowledge and innovation are the main drivers of development. In a global environment, education as one of the basic human rights serves to equip the individual with knowledge, to make him able to face the challenges of life, to enable him to do the best with his life and to break the barriers of poverty, discrimination, and social inequality. Of course this equipment with knowledge about life and throughout life, that man tries to do it himself, must have the support from the state which will help him in this process. Mico indicates that (2019):

"We are born weak, we need strength; hopeless, we need help; mindless, we need reason. Everything we lack at birth, everything we need when we become human, is the gift of education (Mico, 2019: 24)".

First of all, this can be achieved through education. Such education must be equal, comprehensive, qualitative, and lifelong. What is the path through which education has gone in Albania during the years 1912-1939? What is the role of the state in this process, what did the government of Vlora do, and how did the process of education development continue? Did the government of Vlora and others consider it a right and a duty for its citizens and itself? These are the research questions that guide this work. The right to education is one of the most important human rights, because it serves as a reinforcement of other rights when it is guaranteed and as an exclusion for their enjoyment, in case it is denied (Tomasevski, 2003:1).

In our country, there are several periods when this right is valued and measures were taken by the state to include all children in the education process. The purpose of the study is to document the efforts of the Albanian state in the years 1912-1939 for the education of its citizens and the achievements in this direction. There is a positive effort during the time to open schools in the Albanian language and put education on a national basis. For the purpose of this article, we analyzed the education situation from 1912-1939, the legislation and its evolution during this period. It is noted that during this period Albanian language schools of different levels are being opened. However, even though there are efforts, they are modest in relation to the needs of the Albanian society.

2. Theoretical background

This work is developed from a historical perspective combined with legislation. The focus of this study is on the law on education in the years between 1912-1939 and its impact on Albanian society. The right to education in Albanian society was given late, alongside some other rights. Although there were initiatives in this direction, it was included in the Albanian legislation after the Declaration of Independence. The independent Albanian state in 1912 did not inherit a national education system. The starting point for its establishment and development was the educational program of the Provisional Government of Vlorë, in which the opening and organization of the primary school was foreseen. Primary education was declared compulsory for both sexes, measures were taken for the design of school programs and textbooks, as well as the initial foundations of educational legislation. From this moment onwards, the law on education was enriched and further developed. In accordance with this, the education of the population was moving at a satisfactory rate and was spreading throughout the country.

3. Formulation of the problems and goals of the study

Education in Albania was put on a legal basis with the Declaration of Independence. Firstly, this study aimed at exploring how education in the Albanian language has evolved? Secondly, this

work aimed at examining how education in Albania was supported by the legislation in force? One of the problems is why the improvement of legislation has proceeded at a slow pace? However, even though it was legally accepted late, the desire and efforts for education of the Albanian people have been great, especially since the National Renaissance until 1939.

4. Questions and hypotheses

The main question addressed in this study is: how has the legislation for the education of the Albanian people evolved in the years between 1912-1939? Has the state considered it as its obligation during the period mentioned in this study? Why education in Albania has progressed at a slow pace? Is it related to the political and cultural level of society? The right to education from all the consulted literature shows that it has not proceeded properly, even if it is in accordance with the law.

5. Materials and method

To develop this paper, it was relied on the rich historiographical literature. It was also searched at archival sources. The literature was reviewed in a new perspective, that is, not simply as an achievement in education, but as being under the influence of legislation. In order to analyze the situation of education as a right and an obligation, the data from Albania were referred.

Results and Discussion

5.1 Education in Albania during 1912-1918 period

The period from the 1930s-1940s of the 19th century in Albania is known as the "National Renaissance". This period was accompanied by the strong rise of the educational and cultural movement in Albania. One of the main tasks, which was set from the beginning of the Albanian National Renaissance, was precisely that of cultivating the Albanian language, spreading Albanian education, spreading scientific knowledge, and new literature with patriotic content (Myzyri,

1978:12). The spread of education and the Albanian language would lead to the awareness of the Albanian people about the national issue.

However, even though there were efforts in this direction, the achievements until the Declaration of Independence were modest. After the Turkish Constitution of 1908, the Albanian people with efforts and sacrifices managed to open about 70-80 schools in the Albanian language and one school for teachers' preparation (Shaplo, 1973:64) in Elbasan.

The Declaration of Independence of Albania, on November 28, 1912, marked the crowning of the Albanians' efforts to free themselves from Ottoman rule, but also the beginning of a long and difficult process of state formation for them. The newly created Albanian state faced a number of priorities. It had to ensure international recognition, establish the state administration, etc. In the framework of priorities, education also took an important place.

The independent Albanian state in 1912 did not inherit a national education system, and this is the reason why it was defined as a top priority. The starting point for its development was the educational program of the Provisional Government of Vlora, in which the opening and organization of the primary school was foreseen. Primary education was declared mandatory for both sexes, and measures were taken to draft school programs and textbooks, and the initial foundations of educational legislation were laid (Historia, 2003: 265).

In the field of education, the Albanian government had to provide the minimum conditions to begin the long and difficult process of educating a population dominated by a majority of illiterate people. The Declaration of Independence found the country with a very limited number of educational institutions, where there were about 250 primary schools and several dozens of schools (Historia, 2007: 44). In the main cities, there was a small gymnasium. Albanian language schools were few. Lessons were given in Turkish, Greek and Italian. Many of them worked with religious programs (Historia, 2007: 44).

In its entirety, the educational program of the Provisional Government of Vlora had as its final goal the creation of a secular national education system, the introduction of compulsory primary education, the compulsory use of the Albanian language in schools, the preparation of teachers through Normal schools and pedagogical courses. The Minister of Education, Luigj Gurakuqi played an important role in the design of this program and in the establishment of the structures of

the Ministry of Education and educational directorates in the main prefectures of the country (Rama, 2005:11).

During the implementation of the policy for the creation of national education, in August of 1913, the Albanian government "decided that every ruler should have a preparatory school of teaching as a profession (in the Albanian context named as "normale përgatitore") where students would be accepted on the basis of certain criteria" (Përlindja e Shqipëries, 1913: 2). In 1913-1914, there were opened and provided education about 64 Albanian schools, most of them found in villages.

Also, the entire educational system had to be subject to the laws of the Albanian state. Schools had to receive official permission from the government, use the Albanian language as the language of instruction, and implement programs and books recognized by the Ministry of Education. The Relevant Law (Kanun) of Civil Administration (November 22, 1913), in article 29, among others, noted the following duties: "the directorate shall strive for the construction of schools, which are opened and governed by the prefecture, organize examinations for primary school teachers, and award diplomas where the level of preparation for the teacher being tested is indicated. In article 30, it is determined that the director of education is the chairman of the prefecture council, executes the orders given by him, and tries to establish schools in places where there are none" (Historia, 2003: 273). It can be seen that since 1913, there is an attempt to make primary education compulsory and take other important measures for the school.

After the arrival of the International Commission of Control, in October 1913, the Provisional Government of Vlora was faced with pressure to open foreign schools, in particular to reopen Greek-language schools for the Orthodox community, financed by the Patriarchate of Istanbul (Puto, 1987: 614-617). This tendency was contrary to the measures taken by them, to establish the education system on a national basis, where in all schools the education would be conducted in the Albanian language. The opening of foreign schools, although it served the right to education of Albanian citizens, did not satisfy their need for an education on a national basis.

This is because in those schools teaching was conducted in a foreign language, in accordance with the educational system and political interests of each of the states that would open schools in Albania.

It is also worth to mention that there was also a shortage of teachers. For this reason, during the period between 1913-1914, courses were opened at "Normalja" to prepare teachers, from the contingent of young people who had graduated from the civil schools and high schools during the Otoman period. The ratio was 1 teacher for 41 students. In 1915, in the area occupied by the Italians, elementary schools were opened. In every school there were Albanian teachers and one Italian teacher. The teachers were prepared through courses and later, in 1917, 17 people were sent to San Demetrio Corona College for 3 months (Dervishi, 2006; 81).

Even during the years 1916-1917, efforts to open schools continued, starting with the "Popular Schools", with the reopening of foreign schools, etc. The regulation, the orders, and the circular, which came out from the General Directorate, had to be implemented by the schools in Albania. There, among others, it was intended to support schools for the implementation of compulsory schooling, or school attendance by all students (Gjedia, 2013:32). The Austro-Hungarian occupation, during the First War, gave impetus to the organization of education and its development. Albanian language schools were opened not only in the cities but also in the villages of Albania. The new directive made primary education compulsory (Gjedia, 2013:32). Already for the Viennese diplomacy, the circumstances were created to fulfill the implementation of their projects in Albania. In August 1916, the General Directorate of Education was established in Shkodër, which functioned as the Ministry of Education headed by Luigj Gurakuqi. Its first decision was compulsory education for children aged 7-12. In the city, education in primary schools was 5 years, while in the villages it was 3 years. During this year, in the Austro-Hungarian zone of occupation, 200 schools operated in which about 250 teachers were providing education (Asllani, 2000:97).

With the support of the Chief Consul Kral, Normal teaching (Normale) classes were also opened in Elbasan and Shkodër, where each class lasted 6 months with 32 hours each (Asllani, 2000:97).

In the years between 1916-1917, there was an increase in the numbers of schools, teachers and students, so in Elbasan there were 49 schools, 61 teachers and 1750 students, in Tirana there are 26 schools, 39 teachers and 100 students, in Durrës 40 schools, 67 teachers and 1542 students, in Shkodra 30 schools, 66 teachers, 610 students, and in Berat 23 schools, 25 teachers and 1031

students (Asllani, 2000: 35). The opening of these schools shows the functioning of the law on children's right to education, but also indicated that Albanian people embrace and value education.

5.1. Education in Albania during 1918-1939

The end of the First World War (1918) also brought developments in the field of education in Albania. The Congress of Lushnja, convened in January 1920, and made important decisions about education in Albania.

These decisions influenced the construction of the national institutions of the Albanian state and the recovery of national education. The extended statute of Lushnja, approved in 1922, constitutes the first case of the affirmation of basic human rights and freedoms in Albania, in relation to the right to education. In the period of 1920-1924, three educational congresses were organized in Lushnja and Tirana, which gave impetus to educational developments in the country.

The first educational congress organized in Lushnja on August 15, 1920, made a series of decisions for the preparation of laws and regulations that were very important for the beginnings of the educational system. The most important decision was that: all schools in Albania should work with one program. This led to the unification of school content. Other important decisions were related to placing private schools under state control, extending education throughout the country, and the fight against illiteracy. The Congress also decided on the structure of the school (Repishti, 1987: 65). As a result of the people's awareness of the problems of education, in the period 1920-1921, the female primary school was reopened in the district of Elbasan (Musaj, 2002:106), which, according to a document from 1929, was opened for the first time in school year 1912-1913 (Musaj, 2002:106). The document does not give the time and reasons why the school was closed, and this may be due to the impact of the First World War.

The second Education Congress was opened on July 22, 1922. Among the most important decisions were: Primary education would be compulsory, primary school would be made up of 6 classes divided into three periods, each of two years. Also an important decision was the

approval of the new program where morality was separated from religion and the teaching of clergy in schools was prohibited (Repishti, 1987: 71). From this congress, the positions and prestige of the clergy was weakened. On August 12, 1924, the third educational congress was held in Tirana. The most important decisions were: compulsory primary education for both sexes in state schools, private primary schools were closed, the opening of semi-high schools in the main cities and the opening of a "Normal" school for girls. (Repishti, 1987: 75).

During the educational congresses organized in Tirana in 1920 and 1924, efforts were made to nationalize, secularize and unify the structure and content of the Albanian school.

These decisions were also supported by Fan Noli's government program (June 1924), which provided measures for the democratization of education, for the implementation of compulsory primary education, for the distribution of state scholarships with fair criteria, for increasing the authority of the teacher, the connection of learning with life, the secularization of schools, etc.

The Albanian government in 1925 encountered a number of problems in the field of education. The statistical data for the school year 1924-1925 testify the slowness of the development of education from the Declaration of Independence until 1925. The extent of the network of public elementary schools was limited. There were 447 such schools operating throughout the country. They covered no more than 20% of the villages of the Albanian Republic. It was lower in the northern and northeastern areas of the country" (Musaj, 2018:644).

During the years 1925-1939, called the years of the Republic and the Zogist Monarchy, in addition to the consolidation of the Albanian state and the drafting of the complete legislative corpus based on the European experience, systematic actions were also taken to consolidate the Albanian school and education. The number of primary schools in cities and villages was increased, the physiognomy of preschool education was created, general and professional secondary education was developed.

However, the school was characterized by low student attendance, as a result of the high illiteracy rate of the population and low economic level especially in the village. In those areas where the population was illiterate, they did not understand the importance of school. Children were forced to work and contribute in the family economy. Even the lack of traffic, conservatism, as well as the insufficient efforts of state law-enforcement bodies for

compulsory school education, influenced the low school attendance. During the school year 1926-1927, 536 elementary schools were operating in Albania, of which 470 were with only one class. There were around 830 teachers who taught in them and the total number of students was 26,612, which is very small for a population of 834 thousand inhabitants. Although the number of students attending the school was small, a positive development had begun in this direction.

5.3. The content of the right to education 1912-1939 and its distinguishing elements

The right to education was given late compared to the history of freedoms and human rights (Volio, 1979: 24). Sami Frashëri elaborated in relation to the right of Albanians to be educated in his work "Albania, what it was, what it is and what it will become" published in 1899. He requested: "All young boys from the age of 7 to the age of 13 should be forced to attend school and guardians will be forced to send them. The teaching will be free of charge where even the poor will be given notebooks and cards free of charge (Frashëri, 1988:76)". Sami also envisioned that, in Albania, there would be open secondary schools for boys and girls, vocational schools for various crafts, agriculture and the army, as well as the creation of the all-teaching (at university level) and the Albanian academy. But above all there was Sami's strong call to spread education among the Albanian masses. "Let's open schools, let's learn, so that no Albanian remains uneducated" (Frashëri, 1988:76). With special emphasis, he claimed the need and importance of education for Albanian girls. The well-known teacher and patriot Sevasti Qiriazhi wrote that "the Albanian woman has been the most powerful factor in preserving the country's traditions, language and customs" (Myzyri, 2004: 29).

After the Declaration of Independence, the government of Vlora decided that primary education should be compulsory for both sexes, measures should be taken to draft curricula and textbooks, and the initial foundations of educational legislation would be laid (Historia, 2003: 265).

The Organic Statute of the Albanian Principality (April 10, 1914) sanctioned the right of Albanian children to be educated. According to Article 35 of Chapter III, primary education

should be provided for free and it should be compulsory for Albanian children wherever there are public schools.

While the obligation to teach in the Albanian language was sanctioned, the 12th chapter of the Statute legitimized the variety of schools, but also recognized the state's obligation to take care and supervise their operation.

The educational congresses during the years 1920-1924, despite the efforts to complete the constituent elements of the right to education, failed to ensure the implementation of this right, which was legally recognized to Albanian citizens.

The program of the government led by Fan. S. Noli in 1924 would foresee the organization of education, on a modern national and practical basis, so that schools would form valuable citizens, patriots and workers, anticipating the measures for the implementation of compulsory primary education for Albanian citizens. But the government of Noli failed to draft and approve laws implementing the program (Repishti, 1987: 75).

The right to education was officially included for the first time in the country's constitutional law in 1928. The Basic Statute of the Kingdom of Albania treated it as a fundamental human right, marking progress for the development of this right itself. Articles 206 and 207 of the Statute sanctioned the right to primary education recognized by the state for all citizens, making it compulsory and free. These two elements required guarantees from the state for their implementation, which were not received in the internal legal framework. As a result, the citizens' right to education failed to be fully legitimized. Likewise, the Organic Law of Education of 1933 did not offer such measures for the state to guarantee the implementation of this right (Omari, Anastasi, 2010: 87-88).

During the period of Zog's government (1925-1939), the formal legislative aspect and the legal provisions in the field of education also covered in detail various aspects of the school's activity and the constituent elements of the educational system.

The Organic Law of Education of 1933 (Mico, 2019:36) drafted in accordance to the spirit of the Basic Statute of the Albanian Kingdom (1928) dealt extensively with the constituent elements of the education system, trying to establish new standards in a number of its aspects,

but it failed to realize the right to education, at least as far as it was sanctioned in the Statute, as well as it did not provide guarantees from the state for its realization.

The “1933” law was complete and contained clauses. Two of the most important were: Compulsory education, but not always free and not necessarily compulsory. Lawmakers justified this intervention with the infrastructure and the economic situation in Albania and its citizens, especially in the countryside.

In 1934, the entire school system was reorganized. Primary education became compulsory for children between the ages of 4 and 14, although such a rule was never strictly enforced in peasant families (Mico, 2019:36).

Despite the sanctioning of free compulsory education (1928), at the same time, the Organic Law of Education sanctioned the obligation of the family to equip their children with books and didactic tools necessary for the learning process. It also sanctioned the collection of money on a monthly basis from every child who was enrolled in school (0.10 fr. gold for each month in the city and 0.05 fr. gold for each month in the village) in order to create the budget for schools, which burdened the budget of every family that had children enrolled in school (Mico, 2019:36).

Thus, in this way, the state was relieved by providing the necessary conditions to implement education for children, reducing at the same time the tracking of their attendance. On the other hand, children could not enjoy the possibility of attending primary education, which was recognized by law.

In the years between 1925-1939, there were the most important educational reforms, from the reformation of the programs to the reformation of professional education. The first minister, Xhaferr Ypi, paid great attention to professional education. The second minister of education, Hilë Mosi, in addition to the efforts to reform the curricula, also emphasized the fact that qualified teachers should also go to the villages. Education was considered as a priority and the responsibility of the state only. In 1938, the number of schools reached 622. During that school year, there were 1,349 teachers working in 649 elementary schools with about 60,000 students. These numbers show a great improvement compared to the period of 15 years before (Jacques, 1995: 433).

In the press articles of the time, there was great support by the government to make education compulsory, as the right of every child to attend it, but also make it as an obligation.

CONCLUSION

1. Considering the importance of the right to education for the development of human beings, the right to education was given late in the history of freedoms and human rights.

2. Regarding the right of Albanians to be educated, Sami Frashëri was the first to demand compulsory education for all boys and girls between the ages of 7-13.

3. After the Declaration of Independence of Albania, one of the main problems of Vlora's leadership program was that of education. This program described education as a basic human right, declared primary education compulsory, and worked to open primary schools throughout the country.

4. As a result of the inclusion in the law of the right to education in the period 1912-1939, there have been an increase in the number of school institutions and an increase in the number of students as well.

5. Although the right to education was included late in the constitutional law in Albania, education itself became mandatory. Education has always been a priority for Albanians, such intentions have been cultivated over centuries.

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