

# *Homeroom teacher – an important factor in the Albanian education system, for the education of the new generation*

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*Prof. Asoc. Dr. Tomi TRESKA*

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*Dr. Lindita TRESKA*

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*Msc. Ani TRESKA*

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## **Abstract**

*Homeroom Teacher (HT) today in Albania is a school teacher, who is in charge of taking care of a certain class to help in the educational teaching work, throughout the school year. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the quality of performance of HTs in “New York High School - NYHS” The raised hypothesis: NYHS HTs implement a good and very good performance of their role, responsibilities, and functions as HTs. The methodology of this study is a combined one: quantitative and qualitative. The study population is Pupils, Parents, Homeroom Teachers (HTs), School Principals, School Psychologist, and NYHS School Senator. The sampling of the population of Students and Parents is determined at the rate of 50% of all respective populations, while for the HTs is taken 100% as their sample. The main results of the survey support the raised hypothesis but there are reflected also some very sensitive issues.*

**Key words:** *Homeroom Teacher, high school, pupils, parents, Homeroom Teacher’s role, responsibility and functions, New York High School – NYHS.*

## **Introduction**

Homeroom Teacher today in the pre-university education system in Albania is a school teacher, who is in charge of taking care of a certain class to help in the educational teaching work, throughout the school year.

The Homeroom Teacher has an important role from the first grade to the twelfth grade. It should create an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation between students, for students with disabilities, for those with learning difficulties; should help newcomers; attend student attendance at school; advise students on curricular and career choices and work with parents.

His/Her legal obligation is to draft the annual plan of classroom hours, which is approved by the school director, for his/her obligations; prepare the diary and have a special page in the register. (Dispozitat Normative: 2013, page 41)

Based on the Normative Provisions (Dispozitat Normative), the Homeroom Teacher has the following concrete duties and responsibilities (Dispozitat Normative: 2013, Article 84):

### ***Duties of the Homeroom Teacher in relation to the pupils of his/her class:***

The Homeroom Teacher takes special care:

- to create an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation between pupils;
- for pupils with disabilities, pupils with learning difficulties, newcomers and those with behavioral disorders;
- for pupils’ school attendance;
- to supplement the consents of pupils with elective curricula;
- not to overload pupils;
- to advise pupils on curricular and career choices.

The Homeroom Teacher introduces the parents and pupils to:

- health and safety conditions in the institution;
- Normative Provisions (Dispozitat Normative) articles that discuss the rights and obligations of parents and pupils and the obligations of employees of the educational institution to parents and pupils;
- internal regulation of the institution;
- elective curriculum;
- the child’s career opportunities after completing an educational level;
- indemnification procedures;
- complaint procedures.

The Homeroom Teacher has the following duties:

- regularly inform parents about the well-being of their children;
- meet with priority the parents of pupils with learning difficulties, disturbing behaviors or problems attending school;
- increase the interest of parents for the well-being of their children.

The Homeroom Teacher prepares for each pupil the subjects' grades of the first semester and the end-of-year transcript and submits them to his/her parent.

The Homeroom Teacher invites all parents to a general meeting, with or without pupils, at least once every three months, in which it:

- raises issues that belong to the class as a whole;
- discusses topics about the role of parents in their children's success.

In these meetings, the Homeroom Teacher is forbidden to mention with by name the pupils of the class for their failure or achievement. Information about the pupil is given only to his parents.

The current obligations of the Homeroom Teacher (HT) in the Republic of Albania are based on the tradition of the Albanian school over the years and the most positive experience built by it. The Albanian school has a consolidated tradition in defining the role, responsibilities and duties of the Homeroom Teacher. He/She has been the central figure of the school and the entire Albanian pre-university education system for many decades. In general, in the tradition of the Albanian school, he/she is considered by pupils and parents as a "second parent" for each student. (Treska, L. Doctorate, 2017, page 63)

The Albanian school and the pupils who have gone through it, together with other parents and family members, "owe" to the figure of the HT the formation of hundreds of thousands of citizens who have contributed to the good of the country, society and their families. The truth is that specifically for the role, responsibilities and duties of the HT, pedagogical studies have been shown to be a little sparing, especially nowadays, while there are mostly many bylaws, normative provisions and regulations that define these functions. The improvements that have taken place so far in this field have a legal, political, administrative and practical character, rather than didactic, substantive, educational and functional.

**The purpose of this research** is to evaluate the quality of performance of Homeroom Teachers in high schools in Tirana, taking as a case study "New York High School - NYHS" This is the first study of this nature.

**The research question** of this study is: What is the level of quality of performance of the Homeroom Teacher in the high schools of Tirana, and specifically of the New York High School?

The raised **hypothesis**: NYHS Homeroom Teachers implement a good and very good performance of their role, responsibilities and functions as Homeroom Teachers.

The standard to which the study refers is the current legal framework of Albanian pre-university education regarding the role, responsibilities and functions of the Homeroom Teacher in the Republic of Albania.

*The independent variable* of this study is: The current legal framework of Albanian pre-university education on the role, responsibilities and functions of the Homeroom Teacher in Albania.

*The dependent variable* is: the level of quality performance of the Homeroom Teachers at New York High School.

## Methodology

The methodology of this study is a combined methodology: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative research method deals mainly with the collection and processing of structured data that can be presented numerically (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

The methodology is expressed in the instruments selected for conducting the study. Three structured questionnaires were constructed for quantitative data collection: one for NYHS *Pupils*, a second for *HT* and a third for *Parents* of pupils at this school.

The relevant questionnaires were constructed referring to the current legal framework of Albanian pre-university education, which defines the role, functions and responsibilities of the Caring Teacher in the Republic of Albania. Specifically, the aspects covered by the Student Questionnaire and the Parent Questionnaire are: General Information, including: Gender, Class, Age, for Pupils and Gender, Age, Education Child's Class and Current Occupation, for Parents. The questions addressed to the Pupils, Parents and HT themselves, try to measure the respect and application of the essential aspects of the role and responsibilities of the HT currently in this school. They specifically address how much and possibly the way how a HT: creates an atmosphere of understanding with students. takes care to cooperate with them, or to take care of pupils with disabilities (if there are such pupils in the class), how much he/she cares for pupils who have learning difficulties, for newly arrived ones, as well as for those who express concerns in their behavior, as well as the level of care that pupils

regularly attend/follow school and make as few absences as possible, how much he/she advises them about elective subjects, how much he/she cares to avoid overcrowding of pupils, or how much he/she advises pupils in his/her classroom on issues related to their career, or how much he/she informs students and their parents about the health conditions and safety at school.

The Questionnaire also tries to measure how much the Homeroom Teacher is acquainted with the articles of the Normative Provisions (Dispozita Normative), both those that elaborate the rights and obligations of pupils, as well as those that elaborate the obligations that all teachers have.

Specific questions are specifically formulated as to how well the Homeroom Teacher has informed its pupils and their parents about the School Rules, or whether he or she has informed them of the compensation procedures and disciplinary measures against pupils in case they violate the School Rules and the rules set out in the Normative Provisions.

In addition to these aspects that are common to pupils and parents, the Parent Questionnaire also has some additional aspects related to the requirements of how much the HT has regularly informed the parents about the child's well-being, if he/she has prepared grades of the relevant semester and the year-end transcript for the child and has delivered it to the parents, if the HT has invited the parents to a general parent-teacher meeting, with or without pupils, at least once every three months, and finally if the HT or school principal has notified and requested parental written permission for the children's after-school activities or extracurricular activities.

The reason why most of the questions are almost the same in both the Student Questionnaire and the Parent-Teacher Questionnaire is to be able to make a comparative analysis of the answers given by both the students and the parents of the caretaker teacher. This has been simplified by the fact that the duties and responsibilities of the HT are almost the same for both students and parents, with the exception of the last aspects, which we just mentioned.

Regarding the Homeroom Teacher Questionnaire, in addition to the aspects included in the Student and Parent Questionnaire, based on the Normative Provisions, there are also some additional aspects that relate mainly to the documentary part of the Homeroom Teacher activity, such as when a pupil from HT's classroom becomes ill or had an accident, the HT or head of the educational institution had immediately notified the parent, or if the HT had regularly filled in the class register pages. Also, if the Homeroom Teachers had drafted the annual Tutoring Hours Plan and approved it by the school principal/deputy principal, or if the Homeroom Teachers had always listed the tutoring hours on a special page of the class register and placed them in weekly school schedule.

The questionnaire asks if the Homeroom Teachers had regularly written the Classroom Diary, if they had regularly calculated the average of the annual grades of all subjects of each pupil, if they had assessed as reasonable/unreasonable absences of up to two days during a month, of pupils, if they have regularly collaborated with the school psychologist, or have consulted regularly with other teachers to write down pupils' characteristics.

The instruments built to obtain the quantitative data are the Likert scale and measure the frequency of application of the study variables.

The reliability level of Likert scales is as follows: (1) never; (2) rarely; (3) sometimes; (4) often; (5) always. These scales used in the structured questionnaire were determined by the Cronbach alpha coefficient. According to Laerd statistics (2012) Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used instrument, which serves to measure the internal consistency of the scales of a questionnaire, it is widely used in a Likert questionnaire with many measurement scales for which we are interested if the scales are reliable.

In addition to instruments that attempt to collect quantitative data, instruments for obtaining qualitative data were also designed for this study.

A semi-structured Interview Guide has been developed for qualitative data collection, which has been implemented for NYHS leaders, the School Psychologist and the School Senator.

The content of the interview guides is mainly built on the basis of the legal framework of the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania, focusing specifically on the role, responsibilities and functions of the HT, viewed in relation with school leaders, school psychologist and the school senator.

The content of the semi-structured interview includes dimensions and questions in order to answer the formulated research question and in order to verify the hypothesis raised.

The Interview Guide built for school board representatives considered the following aspects of the Homeroom Teacher-School Leader relationship:

- The work of HT towards students in their homeroom classes.
- The work of HT towards the parents of pupils in their homeroom classes.
- The work of the HT in relation to their responsibilities to the school principal and school documentation.
- Their relationship as leaders of the institution with the caretakers of the school.
- To what extent did the HT know the legal framework related to the duties, role and responsibilities of the Homeroom Teacher in the Republic of Albania?

A special Interview Guide was designed for the school Psychologist. The main sections that are included in this Interview are:

- Responsibilities of the Homeroom Teacher in relation to the School Psychologists and vice versa.
- Concrete relationships as a School Psychologist with the Homeroom Teachers of the school.
- In which aspects was the work of the Homeroom Teachers in the school mostly focused?
- The work of Homeroom Teachers towards students in their homeroom classes.
- The work of Homeroom Teachers towards the parents of the students in their homeroom classes.

A special Interview Guide was created for the school Senator. The main sections that are part of this Interview are:

Concrete relationships of HT with school students in terms of their care for students within the learning process, but also outside it.

The help and support that HT provide to students in their homeroom classes for their civic education and beyond the school premises.

HT's care is as broad as involves the aspects of their students' personal lives.

The semi-structured interview format contains spaces to deepen the respondents' answers, as well as to include their problems related to the variables in the study.

The study population is Pupils, Parents, Homeroom Teachers (HTs), School Principals, School Psychologist, and NYHS School Senator.

The sampling of the population of Students and Parents is determined at the rate of 50% of all respective populations, while for the HTs is taken 100% as their sample.

Quantitative data were processed according to the SPSS system.

Determining the sampling of this study according to the categories taken into consideration is intentional.

*For students*, the methodology of selecting respondents is defined as follows:

There is a total of 194 students.

There is a total of 83 students in the 10th grade. The student questionnaire for this class was distributed to 42 of them.

There is a total of 66 students in the 11th grade. The student questionnaire was distributed to 35 of them.

There is a total of 45 students in the 12th grade. The student questionnaire was distributed to 23 of them.

The condition for the selection of respondents for each class is selecting them according to the register of each class, one Student YES, one Student NO.

The same criterion was followed for determining the *number of parents*, but for their selection, although it was done according to the register of each class, the order was followed as follows: one Parent No, one Parent YES. The purpose of this selection method is to avoid questioning the student and his/her parent at the same time. This selection methodology for Students responders and Parents responders aims to cover as large a number of study populations as possible.

The NYHS School Principal has clarified the intentions of this initiative and ensured, together with the authors of the research, the understanding and cooperation of the students, their parents and the HTs of this school.

The questionnaire was completed by a total of 93 Students, or 48% of the total number of students, a total of 83 Parents, or 43% of the total number of parents and a total of 13 Homeroom Teachers, or 100% of their number.

The student questionnaire for classrooms in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was distributed to 42 of them, it was completed by 42, or 51% of the total number of students in this year; in classrooms of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade 35 questionnaires were distributed, of which 34 or 52% of the total number of students this grade year; in classrooms of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade 23 questionnaires were distributed, of which 17 or 38% of the total number of students in this class were completed.

36 questionnaires were completed by parents of classrooms in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, or 43% of the number of parents of students of this grade year (one parent is calculated per student), 20 of all parents of classrooms in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade completed the questionnaire, or 30% of the number of parents of students of this grade year, 17 of the parents of classrooms in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, or 38% of the number of parents of students of this grade year, have filled in the questionnaire. So, a total of 83 questionnaires were completed by parents, or 43% of the total number of parents of students of this school.

## **The main results of the survey**

### *Conclusion 1 (Students):*

From the results obtained from the students' answers, it results that the students are (in over 70%) satisfied and admit that the HT has acquainted them with the articles of the Normative Provisions (Dispozita Normative) that elaborate their rights and obligations, with the Internal Rules of the School, with Compensation procedures, in case something is damaged from the school inventory, with disciplinary measures, in case of violation of the School Internal Regulations and

the rules set out in the Normative Provisions, how he/she takes care that students regularly attend school and do as much less absences, that he/she cares for newly arrived students, also that he/she creates an atmosphere of understanding and takes care to cooperate with them, that he/she cares especially for students who express concerns in their behavior, and that he/she acquaints them with the conditions of health and school safety, etc.

From the students' point of view, the problem is the fact that the Homeroom Teacher does not advise them enough on issues related to their career (less than 50%).

### *Conclusion 2 (Parents):*

From the results obtained from the answers of the parents it results that over 70% of the parents confirm that HTs of the child's homeroom creates an atmosphere of understanding with them and that he/she cooperates with the parents, that he/she takes care that the child attends school regularly and does as few absences as possible and that the HT has informed them (the parents) regularly about the well-being of their children. The vast majority of parents confirm that the tutor has invited them to general parent meetings, with or without students, at least once every three months. They acknowledge that the HT has introduced them to the School Rules and to the health and safety requirements of the school. Parents also confirm in large numbers that in cases of after-school activities hours or extracurricular activities, the school principal or HT has notified them and requested their written permission. From the parents' point of view, the problem is that HT does not advise them enough on issues related to their child's career.

### *Conclusion 3 (Homeroom Teachers):*

The data collected from the questionnaires completed by HT, result that most of them think that they know the students of the homeroom and their parents about the health and safety conditions in the school, specifically acquainted the parents with the progress of homeroom students, that they have invited parents to general parent meetings, with or without students, at least once every three months. Homeroom teachers massively confirm that for after-school activities or extracurricular activities the school principal or HT has notified the parents and asked for their written permission. Homeroom Teachers confirm that when a student of their homeroom falls ill or has an accident, they as HT or head of the educational institution, immediately notify the parent. Homeroom teachers have regularly written the annual Tutoring Hours Plan and approved it by the

school principal/deputy principal. Also, they have always marked the homeroom hours on a special page of the class register and they have been mentioned in the weekly school schedule and have regularly become part of the Homeroom Teacher Diary.

From HT's point of view, the problem is that they do not take enough care of the students of their homeroom to attend school regularly and to make as few absences as possible. They also want to do more about advising students and their parents about the subjects that students in their homeroom should choose.

At the same time, they acknowledge that as HT they need to take extra care to avoid overloading the students during their homeroom hours. Finally, HTs acknowledge that they need to improve their work as HTs in advising their homeroom students, and their parents, on issues related to student careers.

### *Conclusion 4 (Interviews):*

#### **School Principal Interview Summary**

Regarding the evaluation of the relationship between the HT and the students of the homeroom, schools principal says: "When I talk about teachers, I almost always mean the teacher of a respective subject, but also the homeroom teacher. I do not divide these two categories, because you cannot be a good teacher in a subject and a bad Homeroom Teacher or vice versa. If you neglected one of these, I do not believe that you do the other one with dedication. The relatively small number of students in our classrooms enables the teacher to get to know each of them well, the problems they have and their transition to create a successful team. From my experience, success is achieved by the Homeroom Teacher who organizes with his/her students beautiful and educational activities in the school but also outside of it. Also, the teacher's cooperative relationship with the parents or the parents between them is created more naturally in a small group."

Regarding the evaluation of the relationship between Homeroom Teacher and Parents of students, the school principal states: "Cooperation and communication with parents is not left to chance. It is no coincidence that the first in-house training at NYHS was with parents. We have been active members in the initiative "schools for successful parenting" where participants are parents and teachers. Our efforts should be directed at attracting parental involvement in classroom problem solving. In this aspect we have much to do and learn."

Regarding the evaluation of the relationship between Homeroom Teacher, the Principal of the school and the school's documentation, the Principal of the school states: "The Homeroom Teachers complete the school documentation

in a timely and accurate manner. I would like everyone to make good use of statistics to organize a researched work and not just what the day brings.”

Regarding the evaluation of the Principal – Homeroom Teacher relationship, the school principal states: “The NYHS Homeroom Teachers are the ones I value most among other teachers. It is a difficult job, even more difficult than to implement the relevant curriculum according to the standards and not to be a dedicated and responsible Homeroom Teacher. The Homeroom Teachers are well aware of the problems of their classrooms and stay close to their homeroom classes, in their own way. The way of approaching the problems is often narrow, counseling, meetings with the psychologist about the problem, notifying the parents, etc. It would be necessary to organize, with a lot of fantasy, various activities in accordance with the problem.”

Regarding the assessment of the level of knowledge of the legal framework by Homeroom Teachers, the school principal states: “Every homeroom teacher has in his file at the beginning of each year, the legal framework that relates to his duties and responsibilities. The surveys completed this year, helped the teachers of our school to face their knowledge, the impact they have had as a homeroom teacher and to reflect on the future.”

### **Summary of the Interview given by the School’s Psychologist**

Legal support:

- Article 102 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania
- Article 26 of Law No. 69/2012, dated 21.06.2012, “On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania” Law 69/2012;
- School Psychological Service Manual.
- Order No.31, MASR, dated 28.01.2020 on the Approval of the Regulation on the Functioning of Pre-University Educational Institutions in the Republic of Albania.

Regarding the responsibilities of HT in relation to the school psychologist and vice versa, school’s psychology states that: “The Regulation on the Functioning of Pre-University Educational Institutions, in Article 30, point 5 states: The psycho-social service collects and processes data on:

- a) changes in student behavior;
- b) social and economic level of students;
- c) relations with friends;
- d) relations with teachers;

- e) communication and relations with persons exercising parental responsibility of students;
- f) the phenomenon of bullying in IA;
- g) the way students spend their free time;
- h) students’ dependence on the Internet;
- i) Addiction to smoking, alcohol and drugs, etc.

Article 30, point 6: The psycho-social worker has the duty to inform the Homeroom Teacher of the student and the leaders of the AI about the data they collect about the student.

According to her at NYHS the HT collaborates with the psychologist/social worker on specific student problems. She would describe her working relations with HTs of the schools as correct and cooperative. Some of the strengths of these relationships are: prompt and immediate contact regarding any changes observed in students. Some of the aspects in which these relationships can be improved is to develop even more and more.

Regarding the evaluation of the aspects of the work of HT, the school psychology says: “In my opinion the cooperation with the Homeroom Teachers of the school where I am employed, is focused on the implementation of the tasks set out in the Normative Provisions (Dispozita Normative), as well as on the School Strategies and the annual work plan of the Psycho-social service in the school.

Regarding the question on the evaluation of the work of Homeroom Teachers towards the students of their homerooms, the school psychology states: “I appreciate the communication and sharing of information for the students, according to the respective behavior and issues, and the continuous discussion about each of them. Some of the aspects in which this work can be improved, I would mention group discussions, also with other teachers who can contribute to a better and more successful approach, depending on the situation and the issue or issue.”

### **A summary of the interview with the school student Senator**

A Homeroom Teacher, above all, turns into a second parent. It is precisely his duty to take care of the student, not only in terms of teaching, but also in terms of caring and ensuring that all the difficulties of a student are overcome. Beyond the articles that define the duties of a HT, I want to talk about the real importance of a teacher, especially the one of the HT.

Einstein says: “*Each of us is a genius. “But if we judge a fish by its ability to climb trees, it will spend its entire life thinking it is incapable.”*

The duty of a HT extends beyond the walls of the classroom. He/She must enter into the hearts of every student and help them find their talents and inclinations. Above all, it is the Homeroom Teacher who, more than others, helps you to create as a human being, with moral, human and professional values. A HT gives his/her contribution in all aspects of the formation of an individual of the future, sharing advice or even personal experiences. I came to this school two years ago. I was a shy girl, who was still living inside her world. It was my HTs who, with their care, managed to create a space where I could feel confident in myself. Our relationship probably broke the typical barrier student-teacher barrier, but their support gave me the impetus to pursue my dreams. I now feel incredibly grateful to have encountered such teachers in my life, who have become an inspiration to me. Whenever I was busy, they made sure to lighten this burden for me. They advised me about my future, being completely honest and truthful. They were there for any concern, whether school or personal. A true Homeroom Teacher is much more than a mere educator. Because a good Homeroom Teacher creates a relationship based on mutual trust and love for knowledge and life.

I wholeheartedly thank you, my dear Homeroom Teachers!

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## Public or private corruption? \_\_\_\_\_

*(The ideological dimension of anti-corruption discourses in Colombia, Ecuador and Albania)*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Dr. Blendi KAJSIU** \_\_\_\_\_

### Abstract

*This is a summary of some of the main arguments and findings of the book ¿Corrupción pública o privada? La dimensión ideológica de los discursos anti-corrupción en Colombia, Ecuador y Albania (Bogotá: Tirant lo Blanch, 2020). The book compares the official anti-corruption discourses of president, Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) in Colombia, president, Rafael Correa (2007-2017) in Ecuador, and prime minister Edi Rama (2013-present) in Albania. It shows that although these three countries face very similar levels and perceptions of corruption their governments articulate this phenomenon differently due to their distinct ideological positions. While the neoliberal governments of Santos and Rama define corruption primarily as abuse of public office and locate it mainly in the public sector, or in its interaction with the private one, the government of Rafael Correa, which embraced the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism, defines corruption primarily as a problem of the private sector that captures and distorts the public sector.*

**Key words:** Corruption; Anti-corruption discourses; Perceptions of corruption; Albania; Latin America; Ideology; Politics

### Introduction: The illusion of corruption

In many developing countries, such as Colombia, Ecuador and Albania, the topic of corruption is so ubiquitous that it is easy to imagine that we are dealing with an objective phenomenon that can be as easily identified as poverty, inequality or