

Reforms and legislation in the field of education in Albania, October 1921- February 1924

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Abstract

The article aims to analyse the policies, issues, and priorities of the Ministry of Education in the Albanian state from October 1921 to February 1924. The analysis is based on the documentation of this institution found in the Central Archive of the Albanian State. The method used is primarily content-based text analysis. The documentation found was catalogued based on the topic addressed to create a map of the education priorities. During this period, two important

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laws were introduced to regulate the education system. Statistical summaries were also included to provide an overview of the status of teachers and the number, age, and gender of children attending schools. From the conclusions, it was found that despite short-lived governments and the challenges faced by a troubled and poor society, efforts were made to strengthen and improve the education system throughout the country. There are efforts to improve the quality of education by equalizing the school system in rural areas with that in urban areas, improving the curriculum and quality of instruction, encouraging the pursuit of education at a younger age, as is the initiative to open kindergartens, creating more opportunities, and drafting laws for education. Modernization of the system was also prioritized.

Key words: *history, education, laws, Albania, Ministry of Education, early 20th century*

Introduction

To gain a better understanding of the Ministry of Education's activity in a particular period, it is crucial to have a description of the social, cultural, and historical context in which it functioned. One thing is clear: schools and the school system do not operate in isolation:

What happened in schools reflects society in schools' function. A society's values, beliefs and priorities will permeate the life and work of schools and do not stop at the schools' gate. (Mittler, 2012:1)

The Albanian state declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire on November 28, 1912, in the city of Vlora. However, many aspects of administration across Albanian cities remained under Ottoman influence for some time, with officials continuing to receive salaries from the empire and fulfilling tax obligations. For instance, in Shkodra, a city situated in the northern region of Albania, incorporation into the Albanian State occurred on November 28, 1913, marked by the symbolic raising of the Albanian Flag at the main square of the city. Additionally, between May and August 1913, Luigj Gurakuqi, serving as the Minister of Education in the first Albanian government, undertook a mission in the north. His objective was to assess the political landscape and facilitate an agreement with the northern leaders of Albania to join the government established in Vlora.²

² General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fundi: Head of the Provisional Government of Vlora. File No. 5.

It wasn't until December 19, 1920, that Albania was recognized as a free and sovereign state by the League of Nations. Despite achieving this recognition, the country struggled to extend its authority across its current borders until the early 1920s. This period was characterized by political turbulence. According to Mangerich (1999: 1), foreign armies occupied or travelled across its territories, and Greek and Italian intent to divide Albania through the Secret Treaty of London in 1915, which was thwarted by the Treaty of Versailles.

A significant event in consolidating the Albanian state, particularly in education, was the Congress of Lushnja, held on August 12-13, 1920.³ This congress marked a turning point for the country's educational policies, establishing regulations for educational activities within the independent state. Though the congress mainly focused on technical aspects, it paved the way for more structured educational policies.

In the early 20th century, Albanian society was marked by diverse levels of wealth and religious backgrounds: The Albanian South consisted of urban communities of traders and craftsmen, where lived a considerable number of Orthodox Christians; the Albanian north was inhabited by mountains clans, extremely poor and well-armed, where lived communities of Muslims and Roman Catholics, dwelled side by side; in between there was an area administered by a class of landlords or beys, who were a legacy of the Ottoman rule over Albania (Tasić, 2020: 71-72).

According to a United Nations report, presenting by Austin (2004:16), Albania's economy at the time relied heavily on agriculture, which operated with very backward methods of cultivation, the state's finances were in a continuous debt and taxes constituted only 6% of the income.

The period analysed in this article (October 1921 - February 1924), can be considered the start of a relatively stable era for the Albanian state. During this time, Ahmet Zog emerged as a dominant figure in Albanian politics, serving as Minister of the Interior, Prime Minister, and eventually as King of Albania until Italy's invasion on April 7, 1939. This era saw frequent changes in government, with seven different administrations in power, some lasting only a few days. As a result, it was challenging to track educational developments under specific governments. Instead, the analysis was based on two key laws related to education, one at the end of 1921 and the other in 1922. The 1921 year marks the expansion of Albanian State in the actual territory of country, and we can start to discuss about a significant state role in educational law and policy.

The various governments in power during this period are listed below in chronological order, along with the names of the prime ministers and the ministers of education. Political factors that influenced each government's rise to power are

³ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1919, File No. 9, pp. 7-24.

also detailed, providing a clearer understanding of the events and circumstances of the time.

1. October 16, 1921 – December 6, 1921. This government was headed by Pandeli Evangjel as prime minister and Hil Mosi as the minister of education.
2. December 6, 1921 – December 6, 1921. This was a one-day government, led by Qazim Koculi as prime minister and Haki Tefiku as the minister of education.
3. December 7, 1921 – December 12, 1921. Prime Minister: Hasan Prishtina; Minister of Education: Kristo Dako.

Hasan Prishtina's government was short-lived as he resigned after four days. The appointment of Hasan Prishtina as prime minister was influenced by Aqif Pasha and Monsignor Bumçi. However, the situation in the country was not calm and there were multiple factors at play in the short-lived government of Hasan Prishtina, including political opposition and regional tensions. One of the main opponents of the government of Hasan Prishtina was Ahmet Zog (Pearson, 2004:182). He marched towards Tirana at the head of an army of several thousand people, mainly members of the tribes of his supporters from Mati and Mirdita. According to Zog, the established government was illegal and supported by the Italians. His arguments were complemented by those of other opponents, who claim that Prishtina's status as a member of Parliament from the area of Drini, an area occupied by Serbian troops, made his choice for that area invalid.

Influenced, perhaps, also by the fact that the country was a member of the League of Nations, Hasan Prishtina decides not to oppose Ahmet Zogu with the force of arms. Consequently, he recognizes the impossibility of his stay in the office and resigns, staying for only four days as prime minister.

5. December 12, 1921 – December 24, 1921. Provisional cabinet led by Idhomeno Kosturi. Aleksandër Xhuvani was appointed as deputy Minister of Education during this government's tenure. The appointment decree bears the signature of Aqif Elbasani.⁴

The High Regency Council appoints Idhomeno Kosturi, a merchant from Durrës, as Prime Minister ad interim. The government created by him has as its main goal that, until the meeting of the parliament, the country will not be without government. The members of the government have, mainly, the status of secretaries of departments. Despite Kosturi's efforts to maintain stability in Albania, the political power struggle continues. As Zog approaches Tirana, Kosturi

⁴ General Directorate of Archives, Albania.

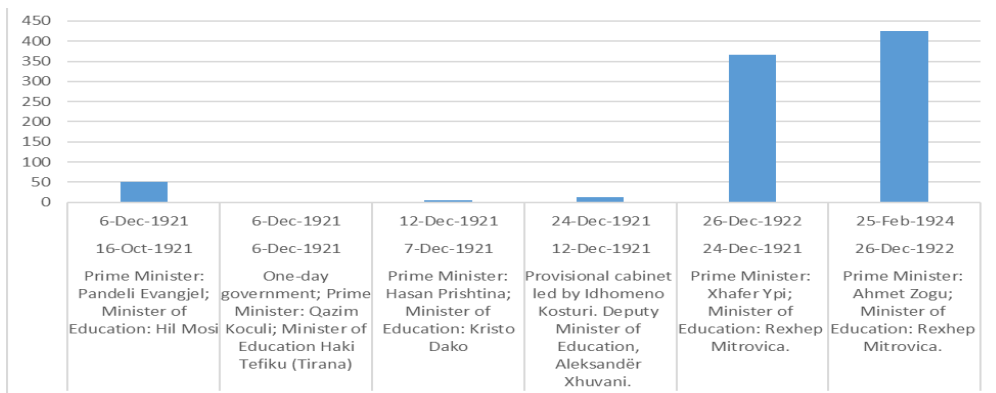
requests that his entry into the city be peaceful, without a fight, and preferably without accompanying troops. However, Zogu refuses and does not recognize the new government. On December 12, Zog enters Tirana with his army (The Centre for Albanian Studies, 2004:183). Although the next parliamentary meeting is scheduled for January of the following year, a mid-December meeting decides to hold new elections in the region of Drini and elect four new members for the Supreme Council. Kosturi's provisional cabinet resigns, and Aqif Pasha and Mihal Turtulli leave Albania.

5. December 24, 1921 – December 26, 1922. Prime Minister: Xhafer Ypi; Minister of Education: Rexhep Mitrovica. Ahmet Zogu had significant influence in this government, serving as the minister of interior affairs. The Prime Minister is just a figurehead (Centre for Albanian Studies, 2004: 183-184).
6. December 26, 1922 – February 25, 1924. Prime Minister: Ahmet Zogu (his first cabinet); Minister of Education: Rexhep Mitrovica. In his speech before the Parliament, now in the role of Prime Minister, Mr. Zogu commits to 9 important reforms. As for education, he promises to “hire a foreign expert to the Ministry of Education to help improve the work, which is made difficult by the cultural differences that exist in different parts of the country.” (Centre for Albanian Studies, 2004: 199).

TABLE 1: Prime Ministers and Ministers of Education of Albanian State, during the period October 1921- February 1924.

No.	Prime Minister and Minister of Education	In the office, from:	Term long- until to:	Incumbency (in days)
1	Prime Minister: Pandeli Evangjel; Minister of Education: Hil Mosi	16-Oct-1921	6-Dec-1921	51
2	One-day government; Prime Minister: Qazim Koculi; Minister of Education Haki Tefiku (Tirana)	6-Dec-1921	6-Dec-1921	0
3	Prime Minister: Hasan Prishtina; Minister of Education: Kristo Dako	7-Dec-1921	12-Dec-1921	5
4	Provisional cabinet led by Idhomeno Kosturi. deputy Minister of Education, Aleksandër Xhuvani.	12-Dec-1921	24-Dec-1921	12
5	Prime Minister: Xhafer Ypi; Minister of Education: Rexhep Mitrovica.	24-Dec-1921	26-Dec-1922	367
6	Prime Minister: Ahmet Zogu; Minister of Education: Rexhep Mitrovica.	26-Dec-1922	25-Feb-1924	426

FIGURE 1: Prime Ministers and Ministers of Education of Albanian State, during the period October 1921- February 1924



During the period from 1921 to 1924, Albania continues to be organized in a feudal order. Population was 889 700, with a density of 31 persons/kilometres square (Stanton, 2004:65). There were significant differences between village and city, men and women, children and adults, girls and boys. While the wealthy classes had the opportunity to send their children to study abroad, most of the population, who were poor, did not consider attending school to be the best option for their children. Even in cases where parents valued the role of school and education, it was often only for boys.

Albania spans an area of 28,700 square kilometres, making it relatively small compared to other countries. In the context of Anglo-Saxon historical education publications, Albania tends to be overlooked in English-language articles. However, there is a critical reason why the period in question deserves analysis: the country was under a communist regime for over 40 years. The regime wielded propaganda as one of its most potent weapons. From 1944 to 1990, the history of Albania was written and taught according to the regime's interests, adhering to the axiom 'History begins with us'. This approach to historical writing, Collingwood (1999:10) has defined as scizors-and-paste history and adds: 'This history is not history at all, because it does not satisfy the necessary conditions of science'. Events and characters from the pre-1944 period, prior to the communist rise to power, were either distorted or omitted entirely from the historical record. The regime reshaped the entire history of Albania up to 1944 to serve its interests, focusing heavily on themes of patriotism. With the fall of the communist system in the early 1990s, Albanian society has undergone a prolonged and turbulent transition. Few Albanian researchers have taken on the task of rewriting history, and even fewer have explored the archives. This has resulted in a significant gap in the understanding and interpretation of Albania's history during and before the communist period.

Methodology

In this paper, the concept of school reform is grounded in the work of Angus (2004:12-13): a planned intervention to improve some aspect of the operation of schools, that imply change on a grand scale that occurs over months, perhaps years, as an entity related closely with another entity, the culture. Angus (Ibid) critiques contemporary educational reforms as being generally top-down initiatives. The analysis in this study cannot answer questions such as what happened at school level, but in our historical context, the efforts to modify established practices seems ambitious ones. Also, this study cannot answer the same questions raised also by Portz (2007: 75), such as: “Are the correct policies chosen?” and “Are they successfully implemented?”. Instead, it justifies the need to frame our investigation based on a theoretical sample, as a way of better understanding the stability and uniformity of school practice, as something that ought to be (Kelsen, 2005:4). Additionally, what is being analysed is the understanding of the educational system with the help of today lens, that is, the ideas, expectations and perceptions of educational system (Hellstrand, 2019). For Richardson (2019: 69), collections and interpretation of evidence are being considered to know and make meaning of a certain period. Thereby this paper offers not simply knowledge as a reflection of reality, but rather that reality created in the process of knowing, the same approach that propose Conrad, too (2011:44). Additionally, it ‘contributes to the historiography of the period and provides a new dimension through which education policy can be understood at this juncture’ (Clarke, 2010).

The main method employed is based on content analysis of the regulatory framework of the Ministry of Education and some of municipalities in the field of education during the period of October 1921- February 1924, obtained from the General Directorate of Archives (Albania).

The analysis focuses on both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the regulatory system to identify the work priorities of the Ministry of Education during this specific period. The concept of regulatory framework involves reforms, policies, and activities of the Ministry of Education. The qualitative analyse is based on all types of communication - handwritten or typed - including circulars, decisions, instructions, laws, regulations, reports, certificates and statistics, issued by the Ministry of Education, inspectors, and heads of education offices at the district level. The study pays attention to direct and indirect messages conveyed in the documents and what was aimed and achieved. The analysis also includes quantitative elements, as the frequency of certain topics is used to distinguish work priorities.

The case study focuses on the Ministry of Education and the aim is to identify the issues the Ministry of Education dealt with, to develop a map of the problems it encountered, and its work priorities in the field of education. Those are identifying as structural changes, and procedural changes.

Research questions

- What are the structural changes in this period in educational system?
- What are the procedural changes in this period in educational system?

Legislations in the field of education

The educational act of 1921 year

On November 26, 1921 “Regulation of the Ministry of Education” was approved and printed by “Elbasani” in 1922. This regulation is one of the most important law in the field of education, consisting on the follow laws: “Law on Central Organisation of Ministry of Education”, “Law on Basic Organisation of Education”, “Compulsory Education Law”, “Law on Teacher Appointments and Transfers”, “Law on Replacement of Teachers due to Illness”, “Law on Construction and Maintenance of School Buildings”, “Law on Acceptance and Use of Primary and Secondary Education Textbooks” and “Law on National Scholarships”.

Law on Basic Organisation of Education of 1921 has 84 Articles and has both structural and procedural forms. Article 1 declares that education in Albania is free and compulsory for both girls and boys, and starting from the age of 6 years old in all those cities and villages where schools exist. The law divides national education schools into two types: primary schools and secondary schools (Article 2). According to Article 4, primary education has two levels: lower level and upper level. The lower level includes first primary schools and full primary schools (or full schools), while the upper level includes city schools. The first primary schools include 1-3 school years, while full primary schools “include the fourth and fifth school years”. The law sets the minimum number of children a village must have to establish a school (Article 12): “In every village where 30-40 school-age students can attend, a first elementary school will be established. But, if necessary, a complete elementary school can be opened among large villages”. The law requires the implementation of the mixed school attendance system in all those districts where separate female schools cannot be established (Article 13): “Among the districts where separate female schools cannot be established, primary schools will

be mixed”. However, there is no such requirement for cities (Article 14): “In cities, primary schools will be separate, male and female”.

The third level in the education system is the city schools. According to Article 41, “the purpose of the city school is not only to complete the lessons of the primary school but also to provide the knowledge necessary for practical life and sufficient to attend a normal school or a special practical school”. Article 46 states that “in the first year of the city school, those students are admitted who, by means of a school certificate, prove that they have passed the fifth grade of primary education with sufficient progress”. City schools include three years, where each year has a class. If another class is added, it will be a parallel class of one of those three classes (Article 42). Even at this level, schools continue to be separate, either for girls or boys (Article 43).

According to Article 59, the subjects of study in city schools are: faith, language (reading, grammar, syntax, and free creation),⁵ French Language, arithmetic, geometry and technical drawing, history, geography, natural science, history of nature, drawing, calligraphy, singing, and gymnastics.

Student assessment is another aspect of the law (Article 16). Students are evaluated on their behaviour, zeal, progress, and written work. The rating scale usually ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best rating. Law define in this way, each of the category. Behaviour: 1 (strongly commendable), 2 (commendable), 3 (good), 4 (somewhat), 5 (poor); Zeal: 1 (very carefully), 2 (carefully), 3 (little carefully), 4 (not carefully), 5 (badly); Progress: 1 (very good), 2 (good), 3 (somewhat), 4 (fair), 5 (poor); Appropriate form of written work: 1 (strongly like), 2 (like), 3 (slightly like), 4 (dislike), 5 (weak).

To monitor students learning’ achievements, teachers (Article 20) must “before the end of each quarter of the school year form a complete judgment on the progress of their students and mark the classification in the class register”.

In the same period, the Ministry of Education drafts a regulation for inspectors. According to this regulation (Item 3), the inspector has the duty to inspect the following educational institutes: lower and upper primary schools; city schools; night schools; religious school; private schools; asylums and kindergartens. Based on this item, we have the possibility to have a clearer view of all the kind of educational institutions that operate in this time.

According to point 4, the inspector must inspect village schools, at least, 3 times a year and, city schools, even more often. During the inspection, it is evaluated (item 13): a) the quality of teaching b) the personality of the teacher (behaviour,

⁵ This activity – free creation - employed by the teacher in the literature subject, has been present in Albanian School until 1990. After this period, it is substituted with essay. Free Creation is a written work in literature hour at school, based on a topic given by the teacher; usually it is required to writing about feelings/reactions.

does it make the lesson lively and pleasant, does the articulation of teacher is clear and correct, etc.) c) the caring and moral value of the teacher d) the general condition of the school (external condition, internal condition) etc.

Compulsory Education Law of 1921 outlines the requirements and procedures for mandatory registration of students in schools, the responsibilities of the School Council of each Prefecture or Sub-prefecture, in collaboration with local municipalities, to ensure the registration of children in schools. The law also states the consequences for parents who fail to send their children to school. Compulsory registration of students in school is provided for by Article 2 of the “Law on Basic Organization of Education”: The School Council of each Prefecture or Sub-prefecture, in cooperation with the Municipalities, shall be responsible for the implementation of compulsory registration of children in school. In the districts, this task is carried out by the district chief in agreement with the village leaders and members.

Law on Acceptance and Use of Primary and Secondary Education Textbooks of 1921 outlines a set of regulations for the use of textbooks in schools. The regulations state that only textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education may be used in both public and private schools, and that these textbooks must be in line with the approved curriculum. The Ministry may also choose foreign language texts and hold competitions for their translation into Albanian. The completed texts will be assessed by a commission, and the Ministry will purchase the approved texts from the author. Texts must be used for four consecutive years, and teachers who use unapproved texts will be penalized. Prices for authors and translators are specified based on the type of text.

Regarding the texts to be used in schools (Article 2): “The Ministry of Education will announce a competition for the drafting of texts for primary and secondary schools every year. Acceptance and publication of the submitted manuscripts will be done according to the law on primary and secondary education textbooks. In order to improve the technical part and to evaluate the pedagogical part of the presented texts, the Ministry of Education will form, during the holidays, a special commission, composed of prominent people in the field of education, and will pay all expenses”.

The educational act of 1922 year

On December 4th, 1922, the Ministry of Education passed a draft law to the Education Commission regarding the central administration bodies of the Ministry. This law went into effect on January 4th, 1923, under the name “The Organic Law on the Central Administration of the Ministry of Education”.⁶

⁶ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1922, File No. 12, pp. 9-13.

The Organic Law on the Central Administration of the Ministry of Education included the following provisions:

1. The central administration of the Ministry of Education will be regulated through two offices: a) the Technical Office, and b) the Inspectorate Office.
2. The Technical Office consists of two separate branches under the direction of a general directorate.
3. The General Director is responsible for all technical, administrative, and financial activities of the ministry. The General Director also serves as an advisor to the Minister.
4. The General Directorate has two separate branches, A and B, each with a chief and a secretary.
5. Branch A is responsible for the reform and improvement of school programs, methods of teaching, teacher appointments, and leaves, and implements all tasks assigned by the Inspectorate Office. Branch B is responsible for the management of teacher and education staff records, financial matters, and educational statistics. There will be a copyist for both branches of the General Directorate.
6. The Inspectorate Office consists of one General Inspector and one secretary. This office reviews technical reports from district inspectors and reports their needs to the General Directorate. The General Inspector, in addition to conducting investigations as ordered by the Ministry, is responsible for inspecting all schools twice a year.
7. The Ministry has a head de bureau, who is responsible for managing the library, protocol, archive, and warehouse. This office has a protocol, an archivist, and a warehouse manager.
8. The duties of each office will be specified in a separate regulation.

Map of the priorities in education

The education system in Albania underwent significant changes in the early 20th century. On December 22, 1923, the Ministry of Education issued an order prohibiting the opening of private schools without its permission and instructing all prefectures to close them immediately if found. In addition, on October 2, 1923, decision No. 456 was passed, which stated that boys who have not completed their primary education are not allowed to study in schools outside the country. These educational policies sought to prioritize learning the mother tongue.⁷

⁷ This document is signed by the Prime Minister, A. Zogu”, dated October 6, 1923, and the document is certified to be the same with the original by Mr. M. Curri.

During this period, the primary school year lasted 10 months and began on a date between September 1 and November 1, but the exact date was set “taking into account the needs and affairs of the people, as well as the opinions that may be presented by the school authority of the area or the conference of the teaching body”.⁸ According to the regulation of the Ministry of Education, dated November, 26, 1921,⁹ Article 76 stated that in schools with classes that last all day (with classes in the morning and afternoon), two afternoons or even a whole day will be left free, for example either the shopping day, or Wednesday and Saturday afternoons for schools with Christian pupils only, Monday and Thursday for schools with Muslim pupils only. In mixed schools (where there are Christian and Muslim students together), Friday and Sunday will be free.

According to the same regulation, high secondary schools were divided into three types: Normale (which prepared teachers for primary and secondary schools and lasted for four years), gymnasium, and lyceum. There were only three of these schools in Albania: a normal school (attended only by men) in Elbasan, a gymnasium in Shkodër, and a lyceum in Korça. The study lasted eight years in the latter two schools.

Early childhood education for children is another priority of Ministry of Education. In 1923, the Ministry of Education requested the establishment of “infant schools in the neighbourhoods of the city for young children”. The help of municipalities and prefectures was requested for the provision of buildings and related furniture. Children who could attend kindergarten were aged 8 and under, and the order was given to: “...notify those interested, in sending children to those schools where they think their wishes and needs would be met”. As understood from the order letter, the kindergartens operated near schools. Part of the correspondence on this issue, along with the Minister of Education, Rexhep Mitrovica, is also Ahmet Zogu, Minister of Internal Affairs (dated February 2, 1923). Regarding the curriculum, the instruction was to adhere to the newly approved curriculum, while “religious education required agreement with the religious leaders of each faith”. Despite these efforts, there is no record or statistical data indicating the successful implementation of this new level of education.

Textbooks and Publishing

One of the objectives of Ministry of Education is to adapt the best practices from European countries in terms of textbooks and programs. Mr. Mehdi Frashëri, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, attends a national conference on moral education to bring new ideas and theories on child behaviour. On August 21,

⁸ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1921, File No. 10, pp. 14-15.

⁹ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1921, File No. 10, pp. 14-15.

1922, the Minister of Education, Mr. Rexhep Mitrovica, after thanking Mr. Frashëri for his participation in the conference, instructed that all conference materials be catalogued at the National Library and informed him about the “low attendance of readers” at the library.

The selection of textbooks is based on commissions set up in each prefecture. In 1923, a committee of 12 members, including,¹⁰ Mehdi Frashëri, Fan Noli, Stavro Vinjau, Jani Minga, Qamil Bala, Luigj Gurakuqi, Xhafer Vila, Teki Selenica, etc., is formed by the Ministry of Education to review and select textbooks for schools of Tirana. The decision to approve a proposed text is made by a two-thirds vote of present members, and the meeting is open with a certain number of members.

In 1926, Aleksandër Xhuvani publishes “Beginnings in Pedagogy”, Part Two: Didactics and Education. This work, a publication of the Ministry of Education, was printed in “Elbasan”. It provided a summary sketch of didactics and education.

Second National Education Congress

At the Second National Education Congress in Tirana (July 22 - August 3, 1922), one of the decisions made was the creation of a secular school in accordance with the expanded statute of Lushnja, which provided for the separation of religion from the state.¹¹ The Catholic Church believed that such a decision was unjust as the right to choose the method of educating children belongs to parents, not the state. This problem becomes complicated, as in some villages in Shkodra, parents refuse to send their children to public schools, claiming that the conditions are very poor. They demand that their children should receive only religious education.

Increasing access to education for all children, regardless of their social class or background

Ministry of Education in Albania was very concerned with ensuring that children attended public school regularly. This conclusion is based on the frequently communication with educational directorates, to ensure that fathers who did not take their sons to public school were identified and fined.

The “Law on Compulsory Attending of School”, dated November 26, 1921 (Article 12, chapter 2), established that parents who did not ensure their children’s attendance were subject to fines ranging from 1 to 100 gold francs, depending on their economic status. The school council was responsible for determining the

¹⁰ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1923, file No. 249.

¹¹ Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, *Histori e Shqipërisë. Rilindja Kombëtare, Periudha e Pavarësisë*, p. 190.

amount of the fine after reviewing the list of parents and considering the reasons presented in their letters.

Schools of minority and schools opened by the foreigners

On March 1, 1922, after the Albanian Parliament ratified the Statute on the Rights of Minorities, the Ministry of Education sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the state of minority schools in various cities throughout the country, along with the expenses incurred by the ministry for their maintenance.¹² The report was presented in summary form.

In Gjirokastra prefecture, which was under Italian occupation until the Congress of Lushnja, Greek schools were maintained with the income from churches and monasteries, but the teachers were paid very poorly and often not on time. After the Congress of Lushnja, the prefecture was merged with the rest of the country, and all the schools and teachers' salaries came under the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the Ministry not only paid all arrears of teachers' salaries, but also opened new Greek-speaking schools. Today, the number of Greek language schools in the whole prefecture is 33, of which: 2 primary schools with 5 classes, 3 primary schools with 2 classes and 28 primary schools with 1 class, with a number of students, in total, 2 190. The Albanian state spends 64,200 gold francs per year for their maintenance.

In the city of Shkodra, there is a small Orthodox community with a few Slavs from Montenegro. Since the time of the Ottoman Empire, Montenegro has had the right to maintain a Slavic school for this community based on capitulations. The Montenegrin government not only maintains the school, but also the clergy chosen by this small community. The liturgies are also held in the Slavic language. During the Austro-Hungarian occupation, the school was closed but was reopened by the French command that came after them. Today, the school is still operating and is maintained by the Yugoslav government. The Albanian Ministry of Education has left the school open because they do not want to give foreigners a chance to speak against it.

In the outskirts of Shkodër, in the village of Vrakë, there is a community of people displaced from Montenegro, consisting of 80 houses. Even in this village, there is a Serbian school maintained, also with the funds of the Yugoslav government.

Separation of school from religion

On March 1, 1922, in the same report mention above, Ministry of Education analyses, too, the religious issue and how it is perceived by the Albanian:¹³

¹² General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1922, File No. 106, pp. 11-13.

¹³ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1922, File No. 106, pp. 11-13.

The Albanian state has religious minorities and they are Orthodox Christians and Catholic Christians, but the change of religion among Albanians does not bring any obstacles in schools, because Albanians attend state schools regularly, regardless of the change of religions.

On June 12, 1922, Minister of Education Rexhep Mitrovica, addressed the separation of education from religion, in a report sent to the Prime Minister. The report was titled: “On the removal of religious education from school”. Mitrovica argued that the Ministry of Education should adopt a stance of impartiality towards different religious beliefs in Albania by excluding religious instruction from schools. Instead,¹⁴ he suggested that the responsibility for religious education could be transferred to the municipalities. By doing so, schools would have the opportunity to allocate more time to other academic subjects, thereby enhancing students’ educational experience:

We believe that the Ministry of Education should maintain impartiality regarding the diverse beliefs of the Albanian people. This can be accomplished by excluding religious instruction from the school curriculum and instead delegating that responsibility to the municipalities, as is the practice in various other countries with differing beliefs. By doing so, we can avoid criticism from various groups, particularly those in the South.

Removing the teaching of religion from schools would free up valuable classroom time, which could be redirected to other subjects. Additionally, it would prevent situations like the one in Durrës, where a primary school had three religious teachers on its staff.

Standard Albanian Language

The use of the literary dialect of the city of Elbasan as the language of administration in the area of Albania occupied by the Austro-Hungarians for two years provided the basis for the prime ministerial decree issued in January 1923. This decree designated the Elbasan dialect as the official dialect of the Albanian state administration. On July 21, 1923, the Prime Minister’s Office issued Order No. 148, which requested that all offices authorize the use of the Elbasan dialect for all official acts. The order stated that the dialect was accepted as a common and official dialect for the country.¹⁵ The issue of the use of this dialect is also discussed in subsequent governments.

¹⁴ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1922, File No.18, p. 3.

¹⁵ Departamenti i Administratës Publike (2012). *100 vjet administratë*, No. 12-14, p. 43.

Foreigner teachers for Albanian Schools

The Ministry of Education prioritized bringing foreign professors to secondary schools as part of its efforts to enhance the quality of education in Albania. The archives of the ministry contain numerous requests from foreign professors who sought to join the Albanian education system. According to the Ministry of Education's budget from June 22, 1923, the employment of foreign faculty members was planned for Elbasan Normal School, for Tirana Normal Schools (Male and Female) and for four professors from France to begin working at Korça High School.

Teacher Professional Ethical Code

In 1923, there was an effort to establish guidelines for ethical conduct in schools by referencing the existing law on civil servants. Although the archives do not contain a specific Teacher Professional Ethical Code, this attempt sought to regulate teachers' behaviour, including their attire. Many teachers attended work in religious clothing, prompting concern from an education inspector in the district. The Ministry of Education responded to this issue by issuing instructions based on "paragraph a) of article no. 1 of the law on civil servants", which prohibited civil servants from wearing religious clothing. This directive aimed to ensure that teachers, as public servants, adhered to secular standards of dress while performing their duties.¹⁶

Statistical summaries of school/teacher's situations

Teacher Qualifications and Experience: reports from cities, Shkodra case

The biography of Hamdi Bushati, an elementary school teacher in Rus, Shkodra, has been drawn from the documents of the time. Bushati's life and career reflect the political developments in Albania during his time, as each school he attended was connected to one of the wars in which Albania, willingly or unwillingly, found itself involved. His biography illustrates the impact of the political landscape on education and personal experiences in Albania during the early 20th century.

Biography, Hamdi Bushati

The son of Mehmed Beg Bushati. Born in 1896.

- 1903-1910, completes primary school

¹⁶ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1923, File No. 14, p. 1.

- 1910-1913, continues high school. During this time, he learns French from a Frenchman, Dr. M. Marsel.
- 1913-1915, due to the Balkan War and the separation of Shkodra from Turkey, he continues his studies at an Italian technical-commercial school, where he also learns Italian.
- 1915-1917, with the beginning of the European war, the above-mentioned school is closed and he continues his studies at the Saverian College¹⁷, where he also learns German.
- March 23, 1917-September 13, 1917, completes the normal course
- September 20, 1917, by decree of the Bezirkskommande, he starts working as a teacher at the elementary school in Rus, Shkodra.
- Publishing: Mr. Bushati has published the book “A Brief History of Islam”; he is in the process of publishing a small book on “History of knowledge”, translated from Italian.

Statistics and data for schools and teachers

School year 1921-1922: Tirana city

For the 1921-1922 school year in Tirana, according to school statistics, religious education continued to be taught. Most schools were exclusively for males, with school attendance decreasing as students aged, particularly among girls.

The School of Dibra Street was an all-female school with six classes. While 136 students enrolled at the beginning of the school year, only 80 completed it. According to statistics compiled by the teacher, Ms. Zejneb Reçi, the ages of the girls attending ranged from 6 to 14 years. Specifically, there were 42 students aged 6-7, 22 students aged 8-9, 6 students aged 10, 5 students aged 11-12, 4 students aged 13, and 1 student aged 14 who successfully completed the school year. In Tirana, another all-male school, the School of Pazar, had 149 students and four classes.

A similar situation existed in the rural schools of Tirana. Regarding gender, only the Farka school reported female attendance, though the numbers were very

¹⁷ a. Saverian College, established in 1877 with the backing of the Catholic clergy, operated under the name Jesuit Saverian College. It stands as a private institution providing education from elementary through high school grades. b. Luigj Gurakuqi, who served as the Minister of Education in the first government of the Albanian state, attended primary and secondary schooling at Saverian College between 1886 and 1896, though he did not complete his secondary education there. More on history of this school see: <https://meshkalla.edu.al/en/about-us/education-in-the-jesuit-tradition/> For an argument for the latter, see e.g. Nathanaili, *The arduous path of Albanian school: issues, policies & activities in the field of education, 1912-1944* (Rruga e mundimshme e shkollës shqipe: Çështje, politika & veprimtari në fushën e arsimit, 1912-1944), p. 10.

modest: only 2 out of 38 students were girls. These schools faced similar attendance issues. Statistics were compiled by a teacher or school principal and included the name and surname of the person responsible for the data.

For each school, the following individuals provided the statistics: H. Rada for the School of Sauk on August 9, 1922; the name of the teacher for the School of Priska could not be identified, as only a signature was provided on August 31, 1922; Etehem Luga for the School of Sharr on July 28, 1922; the teacher's name for the School of Kamza was unclear, though the report was submitted on July 31, 1922; Ismail Shehu for the School of Kashar on July 31, 1922; Sadik Hidi for the School of Linza; H. Keta for the School of Mullet on August 9, 1922; and R. Shkalla for the School of Farka on August 10, 1922. You can find this data in Table 2, "Statistics for Rural Schools of Tirana".

TABLE 2: Statistics for rural schools of Tirana¹⁸

Location	School years	Children in each years			Total, children	School day duration	Male / Female		Age (years old)	Teaching language
		I	II	III			M	F		
Priskë	2	50	3		53	½ day	M		Albanian & Faith	
Sauk	2	I-a: 17 I-b: 8			25	½ day	M	6 y. old - 6 children 7 y. old - 5 children 8 y. old - 8 children 10 y. old - 6 children	Albanian	
Sharrë	2	I-a: 10 I-b: 6				½ day	M	I-a: 6-9 y. old I-b: 10 y. old	Albanian	
Kamëz	2	I-a: 40 I-b: 7			47	½ day	M	7 y. old - 13 children 8 y. old - 14 children 12 y. old - 10 children 14 y. old - 10 children	Albanian	
Kashar	3	13	10	9	32	½ day	M	7 y. old - 5 children 10 y. old - 6 children 12 y. old - 12 children 14 y. old - 9 children	Albanian & Faith	
Linzë	3	I-b: 17	3	7	27	All day	M	7-11 y. old - 17 children 9-10 y. old - 3 children 11-13 y. old - 7 children	Albanian	
Mullet	2	I-a: 24 I-b: 10			34	Twice in a day	M	7-8 y. old - 13 children 9-10 y. old - 7 children 11-15 y. old - 14 children	Albanian & Faith	
Petrel	3	25	5	5	35	½ day	M	6 y. old - 10 children 7 y. old - 8 children 8 y. old - 8 children 10 y. old - 9 children	Albanian	
Farkë	4	I-a: 15 I-b: 12 R.I: 6	5		38	½ dite	36	2 7 y. old - 16 children 9 y. old - 11 children 13 y. old - 7 children 14 y. old - 4 children		

¹⁸ General Directorate of Archives (Albania). Fund No. 295, year 1921, File No. 31, pp. 27-32.

In terms of compensation, school directors receive a supplement of 44 golden francs. Teacher salaries vary depending on their categorization, primarily determined by their level of education and years of experience. Teachers of religious education receive the lowest salaries within the educational system. This differentiation in salary levels highlights the varying valuations of different teaching roles and disciplines within the school system (see Table 3: Teacher's salary, rural schools of Tirana, year 1921).

TABLE 3: Teacher's salary, rural schools of Tirana, year 1921

No.	Name, Last name of the employer	Job	Salary (golden franca)	Notes
Primary school (5 years, attending only by males)				
1	Mr. Xhafer Zelka	Head Teacher	200+44	Award as a leader (44 golden franca)
2	Mr. Jorgj Pana	Teacher	200+30	Award as orthodox religious teacher (30 golden franca)
3	Mr. Avni Fortuzi	Teacher	200	
4	Mr. Ramazan Jerani	Teacher	180	
5	Mr. Bedri Llagami	Teacher	150	
6	Mr. Etehem Tabaku	Teacher	150	
7	Mr. Hasan Vogli	Religious teacher	100	
8	Mr. Ismail Zorka	Religious teacher	100	
9	Mr. Filip Lleshi	Cleaner	60	
10	Mr. Kol Çurcija	Teacher of song, sports and calligraphy	200	
Primary school (3 years, attending only by males)				
11	Mr. Beqir Tafoni	Head teacher	200	
12	Mr. Vlash Dhora	Teacher	150+30	Award as orthodox religious teacher (30 golden franca)
13	Mr. Zyber Preza	Teacher	180	
14	Mr. Xhemal Keçi	Teacher	150	
15	Mr. Shaban Keçi	Religious teacher	100	
16	Mr. Ramazan Fitezi	Cleaner	60	
Primary school (3 years, attending only by females)				
17	Mrs. Zejneb Reçi	Teacher	200	
18	Mrs. Sojljija	Teacher	180	
19	Mrs. Alije Kulliçi	Teacher Assistant	80	
20	Mrs. Hafsa Hasani	Religious teacher	100	
21	Mrs. Fatime Kaiku	Cleaner	60	

Conclusions

Albanian government in the early 1920s were struggling and their work was set against the backdrop of a turbulent and very poor society. The power struggle between different political factions and leaders, including Hasan Prishtina and

Ahmet Zogu, the appointment and resignation of different cabinets and prime ministers, influence their policies and promises for reform.

But education is one the main concerns in Albania. Boers (2007: 2-3) stresses five elements that influence education: philosophy, religion, social aspects and politics, and which spiral in and out of time. For the first time in History of Albanian Education, there is an attempt to have national politics, established by a national administration and implemented by a national administration. It is early to talk about an Albanian Philosophy of Education, but it is time to talk about State Politics, based on country social aspects. Efforts were being made to strengthen and improve the education system throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas (as evidenced by statistics on rural areas and the city of Tirana).

There are efforts to improve the quality of education by equalizing the school system in rural areas with that in urban areas, improving the curriculum and quality of instruction, encouraging the pursuit of education at a younger age, as is the initiative to open kindergartens, creating more opportunities, and drafting laws for education. For McCulloch (2011: 23), there is a tendency to apply the principle of inclusion in legislation, as part of a process and content of cultural transformation. A major proof of progress is the increasing of access to schooling for young people (Tyack et al, 1995: 21). This trend is observed in the Ministry of Education's requests to local authorities to support and encourage families to send their children to school - a good start - but teaching is mostly conducted in gender-segregated schools; even in mixed schools, the number of girls is always smaller than that of boys; children mostly attend primary education - their numbers in higher grades decrease drastically (in these grades, girls are almost absent).

The modernisation of the education system was another key priority during the period covered in the article. During this period, we have two important laws that regulate the education system, the 1921 and 1922 laws. Meanwhile, in addition to the legal framework, work is being done to modernize the system, not only by bringing in foreign professors but also by encouraging the intellectuals of the time to write contemporary texts to have better quality texts. However, the use of a standardized language is required, which at this time is the dialect of Elbasan, the separation of school from religion, the regulation of conditions for the opening of a private school - all of which require the appropriate permission from the institution - and local authorities are encouraged to support families to send their children to school, especially girls.

The Ministry of Education prioritized bringing foreign professors to secondary schools as part of its efforts to enhance the quality of education in Albania. This initiative reflects the Ministry of Education's commitment to modernizing the Albanian education system by incorporating international perspectives and expertise, and to elevate educational standards.

I would classify the policies of this period as aimed at inspiring and creating networks of trust, transforming conflicts into public resources and values, so they are a form of soft power born from the pressure of an unstable political system. Despite the challenges, there is a strong commitment to education and a recognition of its importance for the future of the country, based on the belief that 'education will improve the conditions of the poor' (Cohen, 2007). One of the main features of the educational reforms of 1920s is a historical consciousness – the same with that of McCulloch (2019: 56) - related closely to a sense of social goal of education.

The History of Education, as a specialized field of study, remains significantly overlooked within Albanian Faculties of Education or Departments of Education. Introduction to the politics of education before the 1940s within history of education syllabi dates back merely two decades, with limited attempts to shed light on the relationship between the school system and the social context of that era.

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