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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

The problems of Albanian education system are very broad and need important attention from the policy makers. Despite the efforts that have been noticed to support education, especially regarding aligning the Albanian education to that of the developed countries of the European Union, there are still many shortcomings that prevent high achievements from students as well as from teachers. There is lack or insufficient funding in public schools to meet the needs of an adequate education for children and teachers. Even though many public schools are reconstructed, there are still many schools with no laboratories for conducting experiments in scientific subjects. These subjects are mainly theoretical, making the lesson more difficult for the teachers and very unattractive for the students. This paper examines several problems consisting in teachers' salaries, support that they receive from the school, how the trainings they received from the state entities contributed to their professional experience, teachers' motivation as well as their school environment.

Methodology:

The methodology used in this study is the quantitative research. This research study comprises a questionnaire completed by 100 teachers of elementary and secondary schools working in Tirana. The questionnaire was conducted for the period of time April to May 2024. Out of 100 teachers 92% work in public schools and 8% work in private schools. The purpose of this research is to focus on the problems that teachers encounter nowadays in the Albanian schools. How difficult is for the teachers of elementary school students to support children and what are the methods of support they receive from their schools and how much is invested in their professional career.

Objective:

The objective of this research is to identify the main problems encountered in the Albanian education system from the teachers' perspective. The teachers are requested to provide their own opinions based on the necessities they have, infrastructure, utilization of IT equipment during classes, how motivated and evaluated they feel from their superiors, whether they are happy with their salary and if they have received enough trainings and course which help them in their daily job.

Conclusion:

The questionnaire resulted very positive in providing the teachers' opinions related to different aspects of the teaching process such as teachers' salary which is not adequate in comparison to the huge work that they do daily. More importance must be given to relations between teachers and students and teachers and parents and the teachers suggested that the parents must work more with their children and they must give more support to the teachers. The teachers must receive more evaluation and motivation by the school and the school director.

Key words: *System. Education. Science. Knowledge. School.*

Introduction

Education system in Albania is considered one of the main challenges that Albanian government and the teachers are facing nowadays. With the increasing influence of technology, there is a great need of investments in the field of education especially at schools. The modern didactic is intertwined with technology as it plays an important role in the children's education. Nowadays information technology has a multi-purpose impact in teaching and learning. (Hasmuca, G.; Papa, V., 2018)

“EU4Schools” programme has contributed to the reconstruction of many schools in Tirana but there are still schools which need to improve their internal conditions as well as providing them with labs with high technology and using them for teaching purposes so that the lesson becomes interesting for the teachers as well as for the students.

Government expenditure on education is rather low relative to GDP, and low in comparison with other Balkan countries. Due to the expenditure that the government is investing on the education, OECD report highlights the fact that the Government expenditure on education amounted to 59.1 billion ALL in 2021, representing 3.1% of GDP, which is a rather low level compared with other Balkan countries. This results from a combination of the limited overall size of the government budget and a low share, 9.8%, of the government budget devoted to the education sector. Education expenditure has been increasing over the past decade, but at a lower rate than the total government budget or GDP. (Education Sector Albania, 2024)

It is important to emphasize the fact that the PISA 2022 results published end 2023 show declining results for Albanian students in all areas (mathematics, reading and science). Albania 2024 Report mentions that his findings point to a serious need to address teaching and learning quality and inclusion in the education system ensuring that young people are equipped with the right skillset for the job market. (Albania 2024 Report)

It is noticed that teaching education is at loss due to the fact that the students do not prefer to become teachers. According to the national strategy for the academic year 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018- 2019 the students' average to become future teacher was 6, it was increased to 6.5. For the academic year 2020-2021 for the study program of the first cycle Bachelor, which give access to the second cycle master in teaching is at least the average grade 7.5 and for the academic year 2021-2022 it is applied the average 8 and from 2022 and ongoing it is approved the average 7.5. Despite the government stimulation that the students with excellent grade shall be paid on monthly basis, still not many students apply to become future teachers.

This paper is focused on several aspects of the problems that teachers face every day. A total of 100 teachers participated in this questionnaire. The questionnaire is composed of 7 quantitative questions and one last question was open-ended asking the teachers about the problems they face in their daily work related to teaching in which the teachers raised different issues.

The teachers that participated in this questionnaire are qualified as the majority 68% had a Master degree and 22% had a Bachelor degree. In fact, in order to become a teacher in Albania a person must have a first cycle diploma “Bachelor” and a second cycle diploma “Professional Master” which make secondary education teachers or diploma for high schools in pedagogical higher former institutes and must have attained 120 ECTS. (Education National Strategy 2021-2026)

It is noted a lack of collaboration with different schools which may take place but a few joint activities take place in order to exchange experience. According to this questionnaire 60% received support from the school regarding possibility to have a network with other schools' teachers, 14% participation in national conferences, 17% from courses in their field of study and just 9% mentioned that their school supported them with trips to other schools.

The teacher's salary is considered a huge problem, which is noted in the questionnaire results that 87% of the teachers say that it is required a higher salary and just 13% were happy with their salary. According to

OECD report the remuneration of staff accounted for 75–80 per cent of annual expenditure on education during the past decade. Basic education receives about half (48 per cent in 2021) of the overall budget allocation for the education sector. (Education Sector Albania 2024)

Whereas Albania 2024 report highlights that the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) reported that public spending on education represented 3.33% of GDP in 2023, while the forecast for 2024 and 2025 is 2.41% and 2.68% respectively (considerably lower than the EU average 5%).

Another issue raised in the questionnaire is related to the trainings that the teachers need to participate. According to the National Strategy, the teachers need to have 3 days' trainings a year and in the framework of ASCAP for teachers and directors' development are trained by the state budget about 22000 school employees for each academic year covering 51% of the trainings in the pre-education system during 2020, are distributed 25000 certificates evaluated with credits.

According to the national strategy for education 2020-2026, based on the results of a questionnaire which notes that the main gap in today's school are 48% of participants in the survey see the lack of responsibility and accountability, 37% the fact that the school does not provide the students with the necessary skills for life and 15% the weak infrastructure in schools.

According to this questionnaire 25% of the teachers participating in the questionnaire had an influence in their professional progress from the courses in their field of interest and 17% of them have received support with courses in their field of interest.

Results

With regards to the qualifications that the teachers participating in the survey it results that most of them that is 68% have Master degree, 22% a bachelor degree, 2% have a doctorate degree and 8% other.

If the school buildings are maintained and meet the standards, the responding teachers responded 23% of the participants express the opinion that they agree that their school buildings are maintained and meet the standards, 39% strongly agree, 17% disagree, 18% are neutral and 3% strongly disagree.

Which activities has the school supported them, the answers were 60% of teachers received support from school regarding the possibility to have a network with teachers from other schools, 17% received support on courses in their field of interest, 14% received support for participation in national conferences. Just 9% have received support from school to have trips to other schools.

Regarding which alternatives have had an influence in their professional development teachers responded that 50% of the teachers participating in this questionnaire highlight the opportunity to have a network with teachers from other schools, 25% of the participants had an influence from courses in their field of interest, 12% had an influence from their participation in national conferences and 13% had an influence from research opportunities and 0% trips from other schools.

With regards to how important are the followings for you as a teacher, the results were as follows: 50% mentioned that the salary is the most important, 23% of the participants mention that specialized trainings and seminars for better teaching styles, 10% of the participants mentioned as the most important the logic structure and content of their subject, 7% mentioned as the most important the students' council, 5% of the participants consider important the right to have a say, 3% consider important to have a say in the school administration and management and 2% of the teachers participating in the questionnaire consider important innovative evaluation methods.

In response to the question, if the teachers participating in this questionnaire were happy with their salary, the answers were 87% of the teachers participating in this questionnaire express that fact that they were not happy with the salary they receive and 13% said that they were happy with their salary.

Concerning the question how important do you think are the followings, 43% of the participants in this

survey responded that the most important is that the teacher and student must have a positive relation with one another, 19% of the teachers consider the most important the fact that students' progress is more important, 15% of the participants highlight that teachers must have the right to have a say in establishing the students' curricula, 13% of the teachers think that teachers must give positive feedback to students regularly and 10% think that teachers must pay attention to students with disability.

Discussion

Referring to the open question to the teachers participated in this questionnaire, the answers were diverse and very helpful in identifying the problems and challenges they face in their daily work. Teachers expressed different opinions which were included in different categories. This is why the number of responses all together surpass 100.

Their responses are classified in 10 different categories. The first category is classified according to Technology and Curricula. 30 teachers' responses are classified in this category. Out of 30 teachers, 20 responses mention that all the classrooms must have digital boards so that they can be used in different classrooms and to use technologic equipment to improve teaching and more innovative policies must be used. 10 responses highlight the fact that teaching program must be improved and that the government must pay more attention to education and use methods that give important skills to students for their life as well as the teachers must be the ones to establish the students' curricula, rules must be applied and more emphasis in behavior and moral rather than teaching in elementary and pre-school education.

The second category is the Teacher's evaluation. In this category, 20 teachers commented that they need they figure as teachers to be more evaluated and they need more support from director's office and education entities, to receive more motivation and the disciplinary committee must work adequately as well as the use of didactic teaching tools for each subject are important for teaching. They also highlight that the teachers have lost their value and additional work prevent them to do their work properly.

The third category is Labs in schools. We are all aware that there just a few labs in an elementary school which in fact are quite important for the student to understand the practical aspect of scientific subjects which cannot function properly if there are no labs to be used effectively in schools. 23 teachers mentioned that schools must be equipped with labs.

The fourth category is Teaching and School environment. In this category 14 teachers' responses are included. 8 teachers highlight that teaching must be organized with contemporary methods and that it is more effective if the number of students in less in classrooms so that even the students with difficulty in learning can benefit. 6 teachers emphasize that school environments must be based on required standards for an effective teaching and that there is need for more space.

The fifth category is the Salary. 15 teachers highlight that they need to be evaluated with a higher salary.

The sixth category is the Documents. 14 teachers have expressed the concern that they need to have less paper work and more facilitation of SMIP.

The seventh category is Collaboration with other schools. 10 teachers have highlighted that it is important to have activities and exchanging experiences, collaboration and twining with other schools.

The eighth category is Relation Parent-Teacher. 5 teachers mentioned that it is important the relation with parents and having their support as well as more work from parents.

The ninth category is Training. 4 teachers expressed that more trainings must be provided for teaching methods and communication skills by the Ministry free of Charge.

Tenth category in which 2 teachers mention that the teachers must support students with disabilities and that the school days must be 4 not 5 days.

Recommendations

Following teachers' response to this questionnaire, the recommendations are the followings:

1. Salary increase is the source of recompense to teachers' hard work which are preparing all the possible professions for the future. If there are not enough investments in the salary than the quality of teaching is going to fall and invest their intellectual capacities in private courses.
2. Teaching methods to be updated on yearly bases based on the teachers' recommendations.
3. Evaluation and motivation of teachers by means of various trainings and sharing experiences. Active participation in trainings, sharing opinions not just passive participation. Even the teachers themselves can provide great examples of teaching methods. The trainings must be more than 3 days a year and free of charge as they are not enough for teaching methodologies which are updated every day.
4. More investments in labs as they play an important part concerning the practical part of the scientific subjects which are to be made pleasurable for the children so that they like scientific subjects and enjoy their classes since the early stages.
5. More specialized trainings for each specific subject paying attention to innovative techniques which the teachers can integrate in their daily work.
6. More exchanging trips to other schools in order to stimulate the students and the teachers in exchanging different experiences.
7. Less students in a classroom so that the teacher's work is more effective and better school environments.
8. Experienced teachers must contribute in the students' curricula of their specific subjects.

Conclusion

The questionnaire resulted very positive in providing the teachers opinion related to different aspects of the teaching process such as teachers' salary which is not adequate in comparison to the huge work that they do daily. The teaching methods must be updated regularly and provided to teachers through specialized trainings as well as exchanging of staff even in trips which is very rare as resulted from the questionnaire, no teacher mentioned trips organized by the schools. Even though Tirana has got new schools with up to date technology, there are still old schools which are not equipped with high technology but they lack labs which makes it difficult for science subjects to be organized. More importance must be given to relations between teachers and students and teachers and parents and the teachers suggested that the parents must work more with their children and they must give more support to the teachers. The teachers must receive more evaluation and motivation by the school and the school director. If there is motivation and evaluation their work will be much better.

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