



Programs Prepared by The "Normale" School Part of The History of The National Education

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ABSTRACT *This paper analyses the entirety of the programs of the Normale School, from its establishment to date. The Normale School of Elbasan was the highest Albanian education institution at that time which turned itself into a nationwide source of education. The decision on the establishment of this school also involved the teaching programs. These programs included a good number of science and social classes. However, these teaching programs continually changed to reflect the social changes in Albania. The Normale School became the first lab of the preparation of all the schools programs in Albania. In order to prepare this paper, I have researched a wide historic literature and relevant archived documents. To conclude: the Normale School represented the new pedagogical thought for the time. It contributed to the establishment of the other schools in Albania.*

1. The establishment of the Normale School

The decisions of the Congress of Elbasan gave a big push to the national movement especially with regard to the Albanian education. The national education developed so rapidly and reached its peak during the Renaissance period. Under these circumstances it was necessary to set up a pedagogical school which would prepare teachers that were urgently needed then. Therefore, the Congress of Elbasan decided to open the Normale School or as it was called at that time the "classroom of the teachers".

In fact the establishment of the Normale School in Elbasan was the result of a number of factors such as geographical, economical, historical, psychological, ethical, cultural which all together created a positive tradition. The foreign travelers, missionaries and historians are witnesses of the fact that there was happiness and a desire for development in this city. During this time Elbasan became one of the most developed cities from an economical standpoint. Trade and communication created favorable conditions for a new psychology towards work and welfare. Such development created values in arts and education. It is worth mentioning the contributions from Onufri, David Shpataraku, The Unknown from Elbasan, Dhaskal Todhri, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, etc. The values created during centuries, alongside with the patriotic and national atmosphere that characterized the Renaissance, made it possible for the patriots to establish the Normale School in Elbasan as the most appropriate city.

The Normale School opened its doors amidst joy and indescribable enthusiasm. Luigj Gurakuqi, the first director of the Normale, in his speech on the school opening day, described the high enthusiasms and expectations of the patriots from this school this way: "Today, this beautiful day that dawned in our city, will remain as a great day, unforgettable in the history of our nation. It will be like an annual celebration of holy, honored father after father, son after son for life. Since it was a nation wide school, The Normale School included men from all the Albanian territory.

According to the decisions of the Congress of Elbasan and the School regulation approved by the Congress, this school would have 6 classes, three of which were preparatory and three purely Normale. However, according to the announcement of the "supervisory council" of the Normale, dated October 21, 1909, it was foreseen that during the first year there would be 4 classes, three of which would be preparatory and one Normale. The commission created for the Normale problems and issues, prepared its teaching plan which included over thirty human and natural sciences

classes.

The contents of the programs indicated that the Congress of Elbasan aimed at creating a school of a higher level than that of the Ottoman schools in order to meet the desire of our people for knowledge and culture. In general the school programs were well received but there were suggestions with regard to including some special classes such as the moral education, agriculture, handwriting and hygiene in order to better prepare the teachers. In the discussions of the school programs other citizens participated alongside with the teachers. The Normale was part of their life and they saw it as the materialization of their dreams and wishes. The teaching programs were prepared for the subjects that would be developed in the Normale School.

The subjects were:

- a- Mathematics: abacus, geometry, algebra, trigonometry, astronomy, mechanics.
- b- Chemistry, physics
- c- History of nature, anatomy, physiology, zoology, botanic, geology.
- d- Albanian language, alphabet, syntax, literature, rhetoric, poetry.
- e- Turkish language, French language.
- f- Optional English language and Greek language.
- g- Philosophy, psychology, logics and pedagogy.
- h- Muslim, orthodox and catholic religion.
- i- Geography, general history, History of Albania and Turkey
- j- Drawing
- k- Music
- l- Physical training.

2. The teaching programs of the Normale School and their development during different time periods

From its establishment to date, the Normale School teaching programs have changed reflecting the achievements of science and the advancement of methodology. Most notable changes of the programs were during 1909- 1939; 1939- 1944, by the end of the World War II, from 1945 until 1990, and from 1990 to date. All the changes and reforms during these periods were reflected in the programs by introducing new subjects, new themes, and new textbooks.

The subjects selected for the school clearly demonstrate what the objectives were at that time. The school claimed to give students knowledge on science, prepare them for life and above all teach them the Albanian language and nourish them with the love for the homeland, work and

each other. These subjects were prepared on age basis and on the students' psychological development. The school programs were based on the characteristics and demands of the Albanian society, students' age groups, and not on theoretical and scholastic considerations.

"By way of these programs, -Fan Noli wrote, we will brain wash our men, we will strengthen them, we will teach them the history of their country, will make them write their language, learn the literature and the Greek and Roman history. They will learn French, will study the ancient history, will train the ear for music, and train their body physically. In order to achieve these objectives, the teachers need to be independent when preparing these programs."

The Normale School, as we had wished, became the center of the national education. This school not only gave knowledge and education, but it raised the awareness towards the homeland, the pride for the race, it raised the awareness for the right, love of the folks, fraternity among the Albanians from all the territories with a single aim to preserve the Albanian independence, its unification and its development. The programs included knowledge on the scientific achievements in various fields. These programs indicated that they were prepared by the School teachers, who alongside the national cause contents, paid attention to the advanced scientific and didactic criteria. They also relied on the Congress directives and the French and Italian schools.

The programs were prepared in conformity with the Albanian reality. At that time the foundations for the design of the school programs were laid and until the 30ies. The Normale School of Elbasan was the only national institution responsible for the design and preparation of the programs of the schools in the whole country.

The main programs prepared by this institution were: "The analytical program of the Elementary and Middle School" in 1915, "The synthetical and analytical programs of the elementary school" in 1922, "The teaching program of the Normale School for boys and girls" in 1925, "The teaching program of the Normale School for boys and girls" in 1928.

From the beginning, the teachers of the Normale tried to apply these programs through the most advanced methods. With its nationalism mission, the Normale ran contrary to the scholastic medieval character of the Turkish school. During the first years, until the 30ies, the Normale's teachers relied on the pedagogical theory of Herbart. This theory consisted in the combination of the education concept with the teaching. These two concepts are interconnected. According to Herbart, teaching is the central action of education. As time passed, the Normale's teachers felt that they needed to move alongside with the efforts of the Western Europe "in order to prepare the child for the life and a better member of the national and social community." They realized that the traditional school whose objectives were: reading, writing and calculus (arithmetic), should be replaced by an active school which should consider the child's psychology, needs, and the right to be free and happy, his/her harmonization of physical and spiritual powers in order to make him a capable and useful member of the society. There was a need for a new school which meant vitalization and the protection of the child's personality and freedom.

During the 30ies, a number of students from the Normale School who pursued higher education in Switzerland, Italy, France, etc., received new contemporary pedagogical knowledge. They became part of the Normale staff, reformed the school programs and the teaching method. At the same time they included their own western training in these programs. In 1934 the Normale school program was a reflection of the situation and demands of the time. The programs included these subjects: Sociological moral and

information, history, pedagogy, geography, pedagogical practice, physics and chemistry, mathematics, Albanian language, drawing, history of nature, hygiene, Italian language, writing, agricultural theory and practice, French language, handicraft, music, music instrument, military training. In 1936, according to a document on schools from the Ministry of Education, it was required that the professors who had knowledge from the foreign schools could make their special suggestions.

If we compare the recent program with that at the beginning of the School, we notice that the classes on religion were removed and classes on pedagogical practices and the Italian language were introduced. This was related to the fact that the foreign policy of the Albanian state at that time was focused on the strengthening of the relationship with Italy, which of course was reflected in the school programs. The pedagogical practice became very important. It was done one hour a week during the first semester and two hours a week during the second semester. At the end of the week there was a conference during which the didactic teacher and the school director presented the results of the pedagogical practice.

Russo's pedagogy, as well as Herbart's, played an important role on teaching methods. Education, in its essence, had to be a practical process according to this pedagogy. It was based on the "active methods" in order to help children become professionals of their knowledge. The aim of these methods was the work and experiments, or in other words the combination of the experiment with teacher's attitude and practices. Russo emphasized the education of "heart, head and hand". This methodology and these programs qualified a generation of intellectuals with Western orientation who worked and served all around the country.

During the period of King Zog, 1925-1939, attempts were made to reform the school. The reform focused on the increase of the number of schools, education teachers within and outside of the country, respect of the teachers' personality, general improvement of the school programs and the school textbooks, inclusion of the contemporary western experience, and further nationalizing and secularizing of the school, etc. According to the law on the reform of the middle schools in 1938, the gymnasiums became "Lice", the Normale School kept its name and was only for eight years. The students for the Normale School were recruited since the elementary school and they had to be among the best students. This shows how important it was to prepare the teachers. The school programs at that time aimed at preparing capable professionals who had good scientific and cultural knowledge, and respected the state. These programs also aimed at teaching the students the highest virtues of our nation and preparing them for life.

3.Years 1939-1944

The period of the World War II did not bring any radical reform of the school programs or the education system. Since it was a difficult period, there were no reforms in school. However, it was clear that the school reflected the political changes in the country. On January 24, 1940, a letter was sent to the Normale School director which advised that in the philosophy class in the paragraph called "Elements of justice, political economy and legislation" the following should be added: "Union organization, the main institutions, collective work contracts, ...prejudice against internationalization and the power of autocracy in the national economy. In addition, in the school programs there was the subject on the fascist doctrine on the state which aimed at providing students with the modern concepts of state and its functions. In order to introduce this class in the school the Ministry of Education prepared the program and sent the textbooks to the school. The textbook was called "Elementi di Economia e di Diritto" by Francesco Gera.

In 1940 the Italian language became mandatory. The teachers who taught that were: Azmi Stringa, Nos Ndira and Gasper Ugashi. In 1943-1944, it was decided that the German language would also be taught in schools which also required a final exam at the end. On its 30th anniversary, in 1942, the Normale School took the name "Luigj Gurakuqi"

4. Years 1945- 1968

After the World War II, the Normale School was opened on February 20, 1945. At the beginning it used the previous formations and textbooks which emphasized the scientific formation of the teachers. In 1945 the School was called Normale. In 1947, according to a document dated January 1, 1947, the School was called Pedagogical School. In 1948 it was called "the Pedagogical School, 10 Korriku" (July 10), whereas on December 1, 1959 it was called the "Pedagogical School, Luigj Gurakuqi". During the first years after the liberation (from the foreign occupants) the school underwent a lot of reforms. The reform in 1946 aimed at further strengthening of the ideological contents of the schools in general on the Marxist Leninist science.

Article No. 2 of the Law 282, dated August 18, 1946 on the school reform was revised as: "The vocational schools will be created with the objective of preparing educated cadres on different fields of economy, social and cultural life in the country. The administration and supervision of the vocational schools was done by the relevant departments in cooperation with the Ministry of Education on the basis of a system with middle technical and pedagogical schools. At that time the Soviet Union school assisted our schools with textbooks. The first Congress of the Communist Party issued the guidelines in order to implement the Party's program in creating the socialist school based on the Marxist Leninist science and the socialist pedagogy. This was clearly expressed by Enver Hoxha, the Head of the Party who said: "The school should convey the ideas, the political principles and the objectives of the Party to the working people...the school should reject any foreign ideology in our schools and fight any foreign influence on our children".

Work started on the transformation of the textbooks and programs according to the decisions of the Communist Party of Albania (CPA) later called the Labor Party of Albania (LPA). The programs of the social sciences embraced the Marxist Leninist methodology. However, the nature science programs strengthened their ideological pivot alongside their overall contents and level. Another important measure at that time was the introduction of the Marxist Leninist subject, Russian language replacing the subjects of philosophy and analytics. The application of these subjects required the changes in the textbooks and their methodologies which were translated from Russian. The preparation of programs and textbooks was now centrally done by the Ministry of Education. These programs and textbooks were also now centrally administered. By way of these programs and subjects, the school was completely serving the socialist construction; its Marxist Leninist content was strengthened too.

5. Years. 1968-1990

Year 1968 marked a turning point for the school. The party in power felt it was necessary to have another reform in the

education system. According to the Party although there had been changes to the education system, still there were some inherited idealistic concepts of the philosophy of the bourgeois school. "Such concepts have been rooted in the teachers' minds and prevent them from moving forward and make them conservatives". It is clear that the Party wanted to deprive the school of anything from the past and put it under its complete service. The dictator stated that "our school should represent and materialize our Marxist philosophy. Under the leadership of the party the school should be part of this philosophy."

The textbooks and the programs were revised to include the dialectical materialist concepts in order for the student to create a communist outlook. This was another turning point where the scientific and educative character of the school was distorted. The pedagogical school did not escape from such influence. It joined a new structure which included the harmonization and application of three concepts: learning, productive labor, and military training. The theoretical scientific thought of the LPA, the teachings of Enver Hoxha [the dictator] and the experience of the construction of socialism would be the foundation of this structure. This was the biggest distortion that the Pedagogical school and the schools in general suffered.

6. The Pedagogical school from 1990 and on

December of 1990 opened new opportunities for our life in general and for the school in specific. Schools underwent a number of consecutive reforms. First of all the school programs and textbook removed the political polarization; second, the revolutionary triangle structure of learning, productive labor and physical and military training was removed; third, these subjects were replaced by vocational subjects, and additional teaching practices were introduced. Teachers started to prepare the textbooks for the subjects that were newly introduced.

The reform of 2006 established the 9 year obligatory education system, replacing that of 8 year, but left unchanged the pedagogical school of 4 years. The subjects and the programs were overhauled too. Alongside the basic subjects, new ones were introduced in the schools curriculum such as: preparation for life, citizenship, information technology. The optional subjects of professional formation were mandatory to be selected. The programs of such subjects are merely scientific and free of any politic polarization. However, under this last reform of education, the Normale School is closing since it accomplished its mission.

7. Conclusions

The Normale School of Elbasan was the highest Albanian education institution at that time which became a nationwide source of education. Students from all over Albania attended this school. The school also became the source of knowledge and light for all Albania, a ground of patriotism and nationalism, unity of the Albanian youth and a laboratory where the pedagogical Albanian thought was prepared. During its operating time, the Normale School created values that served as the beginning for its myth creation.

From this stand point the contemporary intellectuals are inclined to capture and delineate the continuity. The new century should be present in the new realities concepts, structure and values of the University of Elbasan as the direct sequential of the Normale.

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