



The Impact of the Pandemic on the Quality of Education in our Country

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Abstract

The outbreak of the pandemic, in the framework of isolation measures, and in the context of preserving health and life, had its negative impact on the field of education in our country. The pace of pandemic spread led the experts to decide on making education at all levels shift to the application of online methods. The application of teaching in the online format according to the studies of analysts and professionals of the field, has left the system 10 years behind, and there are many reasons why. Faced with such a situation, the Albanian government, like all governments of other countries, took measures, relying on the practices and recommendations of the Department of Education in the EC in order to support the right for education during the pandemic. In this context, in Albania the project "Strengthening Education for Democratic Citizenship in Albania", implemented by the Council of Europe and funded by the Swedish Government, has supported the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in preparing the "Handbook for Teachers - Competencies of Teaching in the Field of Democratic Culture Online". The Council of Europe joined the efforts of the Albanian authorities by preparing the Albanian version of the Teacher Handbook "Teaching competencies for democratic culture" and the "Handbook for Education for Democratic Citizenship", as part of a project funded by the Swedish International Cooperation and Development Agency (Sida) "Strengthening Education for Democratic Citizenship in Albania".

Keywords: pandemic, online teaching, educational institutions, efforts of the authorities

1. Introduction

1.1 The impact of the pandemic on the quality of education in our country

The crisis caused by the emergence of Covid 19, a virus ,as a previously unknown health phenomenon not only from Albania, the region and around the world, appeared very aggressive, finding unprepared medical protocols ,and not only , but in all areas, like education too for example.

The outbreak of the pandemic in our country, among other things, brought serious consequences, evident mainly in the education of the country, which has been identified and analyzed by the institutions dealing with educational analysis in our country, the government, the Ministry of Education and its educational institutions. all levels, WHO.

The outbreak of the pandemic led the government to take isolation measures by discontinuing work in the university and pre-university education system, and its development through online platforms, which in my point of view as a lecturer are ineffective for many reasons, including:

1. The inability of the WHO to identify in time the occurrence of this pandemic, the rate of spread and treatment protocols, which are currently being treated in different ways in different countries .By researchers around the world there is no certified drug produced that is promising for the return to normalcy and healing of the population, perhaps in the history of mankind referring to pandemics, crises, various epidemics it is the first

- time that so many human lives are lost and science has yet to be competent in the effectiveness of treatment, all the above-mentioned phenomena created a chain of problems faced by the education system and which normally show a direct negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning from the beginning to the end, protection of Degrees and academic titles.
2. Poor management of the Ministry of Education and its subordinate institutions which, although they had the necessary information and full knowledge about the lack of access to the online system due to the lack of electronic equipment, but also due to the fact that it is now known that in many countries there is no signal propagation to enable internet connection, for the sake of not missing the school and academic year the Ministry of Education created some artificial facilities which directly affected the quality of and teaching, regardless of the efforts through television shows, in the interest of acquiring the approved educational program for 2019-2020.
 3. The lack of return to the auditorium for a long time of all actors in education at all levels has led to a deviation in the acquisition of knowledge and significant shortcomings in the field of scientific research, which in my point of view acquires physical monitoring in the auditorium due to the use of didactic base, laboratories and other research aids, such as libraries, archives, etc.
 4. Limited possibilities of teaching facilities, classrooms, halls, etc. which really limited the practical possibility of normal development of the learning process at all levels. Under these conditions, decision-makers applied online learning as a practice and process to the vast majority of students.
 5. The pandemic in our country was unfortunately preceded by the earthquake of November 26, which caused extensive damage to many educational facilities, some of which resulted in extensive damage, and some other facilities were taken out of function, some of them were educational institutions. This consequently necessitated the development of shift learning, an element to which the pandemic measures were attached, aggravating the development of the learning process for both teachers and pupils and students.
 6. The non-return of students to the auditorium is another blow to the education process and especially the preparation of young intellectuals. The lack of cooperation for the drafting of a joint strategy for the return of students to the auditorium by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health is another blow given to university education in particular and the whole country, as there was enough time for the drafting of a joint strategy plan by the two respective ministries.

This lack of vision is an expression of the inability to take the necessary measures not only by the relevant ministries but also by the government to support education in the conditions of its impact like any other sector of life by the pandemic, as well as the lack of cooperation with the The lack of cooperation with universities, both state and private, resulted in the decision being made two days before the beginning of the new academic year, despite the problems related not only to the teaching process and the lack of necessary infrastructure but also socio-economic issues caused by this decision.

The Ministry of Education has not issued or made public any analysis or study regarding the reasoning of this decision except for the "Recommendation of the Committee of Experts" which I do not prejudice, but should have been developed by the Ministry of Education at the end of the previous academic year, the analysis and drafting of the strategy for the opening of the next academic year, taking measures for the inclusion of students in the auditoriums and dormitories and not making the decision public two days before the beginning of the academic year.

Making such important decisions at the last moment, despite the situation in which not only our country is today but the whole world does not justify the incompetence or irresponsibility of the relevant structures to the detriment of the development of education, as the development of reduced teaching and shifts in the pre-university system presents its problems in terms of its quality, and the difficulties it creates in the teaching staff.

In the school year 2020-21, 584,616 pupils and students were enrolled in official education, with a decrease of 4.6%, compared to the school year 2019-20.

According to educational levels, the structure of participation in formal education is almost the same, during the last three school / academic years. Structure of pupils and students enrolled in education according to educational levels, 2020-221.

Higher education in the academic year 2020-21, 123,797 students continue their studies in all higher education programs, marking a decrease of 5.0%, compared to 2019-20. Students participating in public higher education make up 78.7% of the total number of students. In all higher education programs, in the academic year 2020-21, 74,821 female students participate, or 60.4% of the total number of students in higher education. In the bachelor programs, for the same period, 74,382 students participated, marking a decrease of 10.0%, compared to 2019-20. In the academic year 2020-21,

students seem to prefer the field of study "Business, Administration and Law", where a quarter of the total number of students is concentrated. While the least preferred field is "Agriculture, forestry, fishing and veterinary" where only 2.8% of the total number of students are enrolled. On the other hand, the data show an increase in the number of students in the field of "Health and Welfare" by 4.9%.

1.2 Efforts to meet new challenges from educational institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is challenging our educational systems and institutions by increasing the risk of exclusion and deepening inequalities in education, so today the need to find new ways in which we learn, educate and value knowledge, it is essential.

To discuss education solutions and responses during the current crisis, the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe organized an online conference on 29 October with the education ministers of the member states focusing the discussion on two main topics:

1. Education response to the COVID-19 crisis, the right to quality education in pandemic times and its challenges;
2. The Conference adopted a Policy Statement on the response of education to COVID-19, accompanied by the Council of Europe Guide to Action on Responding to COVID-19 in Education. The Roadmap lists the concrete actions that the Council of Europe will take to assist its member states in fulfilling their right to education under COVID-19.

In this context, in Albania the project "Strengthening Education for Democratic Citizenship in Albania", implemented by the Council of Europe and funded by the Swedish Government, has supported the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in preparing the "Handbook for Teachers - Competencies of Teaching in the Field of Democratic Culture Online." The handbook will serve as a key resource in the field of learning democratic culture and provides important guidance on competencies for democratic culture through distance learning and various internet platforms.

Isolation measures as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic brought, among other things, new and previously unexplored challenges in the teaching process. Teachers, students and parents faced the need to align learning needs with technological innovations.

The Council of Europe's Department of Education has developed a special section with valuable information on how the CoE is responding to the crisis, good practices from member states, including new and existing learning resources that address current challenges and can be used by teachers, other education professionals and the general public. Albanian schools joined this initiative and shared their valuable experiences with European colleagues.

Adapting to online teaching tools, the Council of Europe joined the efforts of the Albanian authorities by preparing the Albanian version of the Teacher Handbook "Teaching competencies for a democratic culture" and the "Education for Democratic Citizenship Handbook", as part of a project funded by Swedish International Cooperation and Development Agency (Sida) "Strengthening Education for Democratic Citizenship in Albania".

Conclusions

Seeing and appreciating the social trauma that the whole world went through from the presence of a deadly and unknown virus, one of the effects that brought significant social damage was education, at all its levels. In the context of world evaluations, WHO, various health institutions, academics, scientists, epidemiologists, in their predictive opinions show positive dynamism in terms of the development of teaching in the auditorium, so in my opinion I would recommend that:

- a. The Ministry of Education this academic year to make transparent to students and pupils part of the teaching and academic program which have not been developed for various reasons which should be administered in a time frame together with the new programming provided for this academic year, in order to fill in the gaps created by the situation.
- b. Positive motivation for pupils and students, teachers and pedagogues but not only, and sustainable financial motivation for teachers and pedagogues by curbing the migratory flow that is observed in pupils, students, pedagogical teachers.
- c. The government through the Ministry of Education must draft long-term strategies in investments, qualifications, salaries, giving a new dimension to the advanced world philosophy of education.
- d. According to studies by INSATAT and the World Bank, we are experiencing two dramatic phenomena in education, the first is the contraction due to migration in recent years, but also the very worrying phenomenon

- of increasing the number of students dropping out of school or studies from the need.
- e. Lack of coordination of the Ministry of Education and universities in relation to the labor market, can not be claimed for a quality education when at the end of studies the vast majority of students are not employed due to the total lack of coordination of studies with the labor market, was wrongly invested in the beginning of studies, random ways and not with national strategic plans and genuine scientific studies.

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