

## ***Schools for not profit which are managed by entities related to Catholic Church***

### ***An informal description of common characteristics***

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Since 1996 until now in Albania have been opened by entities related to the Catholic Church, 51 educational institutions recognized by the Ministry of Education<sup>2</sup>: kindergardens, manor schools, secondary schools, high schools, vocational schools known by the Ministry of Affairs. These institutions include about 7800 students from the north to the south, without faith distinction. Only three of them are recognized by the Council of Ministers.

Being managed by religious people<sup>3</sup>, sometimes these schools are considered by the public opinion as religious schools. In fact these are not religious schools and the programs they practice are dedicated the Ministry of Education. At the same time, these schools are truly distinguished by many other non-profit schools, precisely because they have some elements of a “bedrock” shared values, which characterize them.

In the following you will find an attempt to put in order some characteristic elements, because as I told you even if diversified regarding to the organization and location<sup>4</sup>, these schools actually share the same values.

### **Objectives and values in which they are established**

I am starting with the objective of these schools comparing it to that of educational system of Albania. According to the law respecting to Pre-university education, the article says: *The aim of the pre-university education system is to educate every individual, in order to face the challenges of the future, to be responsible for the family, friends, and nation.*

On other hand the intention of Catholic school is<sup>5</sup>: *The promotion of the human being,*

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1. *Tenta Buka, Coordinator of the National Commission for the Catholic Education in Albania* 2012

2. *Statistics of KKEKSH (National Commission for the Catholic Education in Albania, which depends from Albanian Bishops Conference) 2012-2103.*

3. *who belong to the Catholic Church and have dedicated their lives to serve the Lord helping brothers without creating a family, but living in the community*

4. *The schools are located from Shkoder to Saranda and often, especially kindergartens, are located in rural areas, Statistics of KKEKSH 2012-2013*

5. *Etienne VERHACK, Secretary General CEEC (European Committee for Catholic Education), The identity of the catholic school, Brussels, 2011. In the text several times to make easy the difference, we will call these schools, Catholic schools (although they don't have religious subjects in their curricula)*

*with all human values, in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies*

It is clear that there is no essential distance related to the goals I presented. Briefly, these schools support and transmit the Gospel's values in which it has always been shown not only the European Civilisation but even more. Actually, the Christian vision of reality motivates the educational values that every society sets for itself. This faith, this Christian anthropology<sup>6</sup>, where the person is understood as an individual going ahead the reason of its own existence, the realization as a person and beneficent for the society, hasn't to do with religious belonging of the students but with the way how education is considered and where the vision for the human being is essential:

- It is possible to educate the young people (a vision of hope)
- A human being, cannot be fulfilled if he thinks only of himself<sup>7</sup> (the common good)
- To achieve this they need to discover and live spiritual values (those values that have to do with the depth of their soul).

In this process: the adults are educators in the real meaning of the word. They are servants of the growth of young people and they must accompany them in discovering their mission and their capabilities and not make them their own image (educator's image). Educators help the young people to discover their mission in the society and reach their own happiness.

## **Characterized elements**

The vision of education is the integral formation of the students, so the culture is not the only dimension, but the human and spiritual values occupy an important place.

The teacher is another important link; the teacher should be a witness. So, an educator that lives the values he transmits, is a reliable person. The catholic school creates this relation between the present values and the absolute one of Jesus.

The catholic schools want to transmit more than knowledge. This means that growth and formation that they want for the children go beyond concepts and new knowledge. These schools want to teach the wisdom of life. The wisdom needs many other elements for example: the virtues, intended not as principles, but as an experience that they can reach if the educators accompany them in the everyday concrete life. The real aim is to give the chance to read life's events, urge them to find their own place in family, society and motivate them to be active participants for the good of the whole society.

These schools are a welcome place for everyone. Students of other beliefs are welcome, there is no discrimination or pressure toward them, on the contrary they are free to express their own faith and convictions. It saves the clarity of values. Every school declares these principles, although, through work and educational projects that are done with the parents and the community.

It is not my intent to create the idea that everything goes well in these schools. There are no special students regarding the quality, but everyone can find an atmosphere, where they are respected and welcome, everyone can find a sincere support during one's life, can find a door that will always remain open even when they will be graduated and go to university. (Because that is the place where they have done experience of humanity).

6. *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Vatican Library, 2004, No. 133*

7. *Ibid, No. 06*

Once, somebody asked me what is the key to success of our schools, why they are so required. The answer is so spontaneous: *Believing in God, we believe in human being, in the inner goodness of every person*. The reason why we believe in our students' education is to identify and show the goodness that is in them. There is no other aim beside that of the realization of their integral education. In these schools, the only preoccupation is how to improve methodology, teaching and the environment. It is essential to pay attention to the student; otherwise, they will negate their mission<sup>8</sup>. Perfection is not human, so I think that the difference stands in the dedication of educators and directors, in the clarity of aims, in the absence of secondary purposes and, in the passion of education. This makes the schools available to learn from others' experiences (from public and private schools) and well disposed to share their own educational wealth.

Another element that should not be underestimated is the *inheritance of an educational charisma*. Most of school directors do not come only from their teaching experience, but also from their long-lasting educational experience. To explain; these educators belonging to religious families which for centuries have practiced the art of education in Europe and all over the world<sup>9</sup>. Most of these educational experiences are created from the passion for God and life. Now they are part of contemporary methods changing from catholic school practices into fixed reflections becoming in this way treasure for the improvement of teaching and learning experience. So, we can say that we are in the safe way regarding educational intuition and considered experience.

## **Management. Sources**

These are non-profit schools. However, all students pay a moderated monthly fee which, in many cases it is to make parents and families responsible for the provided service (kindergardens mainly). In other cases, this fee serves to cover basic services and mainly the salaries of helpful and teaching staff. The question that often rises is often raised: where do these institutions get these funds? How do they manage?

As I mentioned above, the untiring job of religious people is one of the sources, not only respecting to didactical work, because if we turn it into monetary value, it is a consistent contribution for their economy.

Being convinced of the values that staff directors of catholic church transmit, urge lots of different charitable, private or other non-profit organisations (NGO) are urged to contribute for the expenses in order to maintain the high quality of the school: teachers' formation, maintenance, etc. Actually, these efforts don't give continuous results because, they are uncertain.

Another source is state subvention. These two last years' a modest amount is given even by the Albanian state to help the teachers' payment of educational institutions as envisaged under the law<sup>10</sup>. It is a desire of all schools directed by entities of Catholic Church to get as many students as possible so even poor people can afford them. The schools are making many efforts to support some of them because it is not always possible to find financial support for these families.

8. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Vatican Library, 2004, No. 04

9. See website: [http://www.siticattolici.it/Ordini\\_e\\_Istituti\\_Religiosi/](http://www.siticattolici.it/Ordini_e_Istituti_Religiosi/)

10. Law no. 10 140 dated 15.05.2009, Article 4: "The state finances religious communities for teachers' salaries preschool education institutions, pre-university and university, which are owned directly or through a non-profit organization created and run by religious communities, and that are approved by the Ministry responsible for education and / or the Council of Ministers ".  
This contribution generally covers about 5% of the costs

## **The right of education and economical support of the State**

In the discussion about the new law for the Pre-university education 2012, it was proposed several times that the state should finance even the private education, because being a qualitative education and having no interest in (the case of non-profit institutions), it provides not only a complete formation, but it also becomes an urge to improve the quality of education and creates the possibility of an opened dialogue. In fact, I think that a democratic state should offer its citizens concrete possibilities to choose the proper education suitable for his child, so the State's help makes possible not to be discriminated by this economical factor. In the article 5 of the Law 69, 2012, about education's right we read:

1. *The right to education in the Republic of Albania shall be guaranteed to the Albanian citizens, foreign citizens and those without citizenship, without discrimination in terms of gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political or religious convictions, economic or social status, age, residing location, disability or other grounds being referred to in the Albanian legislation.*
2. *"In public schools, compulsory education and upper secondary education are free."<sup>11</sup> "*

A State that thinks about its future, takes it in consideration as predicts the first issue of article 5, that all citizens are equal. It creates politics to enlarge the possibilities for a qualitative education for its citizens. Actually, private education, especially non-profitable ones, is available to the citizens, that of knowledge and future, it is not a parallel way of the public education system, but should work out together contributing for the same purpose.

Therefore, we think that the state should guarantee all citizens equal opportunity for education: It could be done in different ways. We propose, for example, for the State to determine how much they are spending for public school students and give this family contribution to the family, which chooses to enrol their children in a private school. This would be a consistent execution of the law, which means equal possibilities and mainly concrete. The government cannot aggravate the families who choose the private school to collect taxes when in reality these students do not cost anything to the State.

As I said, the law of 2009, the government has made some progress on the financial support of educational institutions dependent on the religious community of course, this is a laudable step but it should be realistic. The government appreciate this kind of schools for their contribution in the field of education; it is not a difficult thing. There should be another fact regarding interest. Seen by the government these schools are in its interest and benefits are valuable economically.

There are quite enough considering facts: How many students attend private schools? How many teachers have been employed? How much would this sector cost to the government if it did not exist, just think about the infrastructure, formation, basic materials and teachers' payment.

So we think that our civil society should reflect and understand the essence of this request and the government politics should express concretely and significantly the respect for the right of education. Families have their right to choose the education for their children, not only those families in good economic conditions, but also those in difficulties have the right, to choose the one that is suitable to their own and children's desires.

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11. *In the official translation on website of the Ministry of Education this coma has been omitted.*

This good and concrete volition, of the government should be given unconditionally. According to the Law 69, 2012 for the pre-university education, to the financial support for the pre-university private education, article 39 about financial support for the private pre-university education:

1. *The Ministry shall, depending on its resources, support financially the local private educational institutions, being non-profit making, and having at least five years functioning as private institutions. The financial support for the private schools shall, in accordance with the criteria contained in the decision of the Council of Ministers, be differentiated depending on their ranking in national examinations of initial education or school leaving exams, as well as in international testing or competitions.*
2. *The private schools shall use the financial support only for the excellent students in national and international activities.*

In this way, the answer to the problem is expressed in the law simply as a desire or opportunity of the state to help non-profit private education. On the other hand, considering the conditions under which the contribution is supposed to be done, it could lead to a fruitless competition between schools.

## **Conclusions**

In the end of this short presentation, I want to summarize briefly the characteristic elements of catholic schools:

The pedagogy relied on a Christian anthropology motivates personal relations between directors, teachers, students and parents.

The testimony of educators means that what is offered is asked to children; we even try to live and be present in their life. Educators are in search of values, of better ways to realise education.

Educational deals want educationalists to share these values, but also be helped by their leaders to live the everyday life. This deal creates an educational community<sup>12</sup>, where everyone has his clear and valuable role, where you can find place for collaboration and responsibility (especially for students).

A great atmosphere full of values such: hospitality, happiness, tolerance, forgiveness, work, seriousness, collaboration, where the spirituality is not the last element.

Let's hope that our State and our civil society will be aware of the responsibilities of the future. Only based on values, we can build a future society and far-sightedness stays not only in the understanding that education is the key but also precisely in investing in the right direction and in supporting those subjects that work with no-profits in the education field.

Personally, I think that only dedication and faith in human's real values established according to the gospel are the only guarantee of educational success.

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12. *Congregation for Catholic Education, Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools, Rome, 2012, no. 41*

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