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**Gender Disparity in Albanian
Education System – Teacher's role**

Introduction

- Gender equity is now part of all policies and strategies of all education structures in many countries. Lack of gender equity in the education system is a big obstacle for dynamic development of the society.
- Lack of equity between boys and girls schools is not a special specific of one country, but a global problem. Annual reports show that a considerable number of children, mainly girls, have interrupted their education in various levels of Albanian education system, due to a number of reasons. Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, early marriage and pregnancy, emigration, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women, are among the many obstacles that force youth school drop-out in Albania.
- Somehow, school today is considered an institution that encourages the female teaching styles, leaving male manners in shadow. Expressing feelings and thoughts verbally, doing homework, work in group are some women-like characteristics. These actions do not take into consideration the strength and male interest and as a result, a considerable number of boys abandon school.
- Gender Equality Index in Albania scores 60.4 indicating that still high commitment is needed to achieve full gender equality. The score is lower than EU. This work will focus on inclusiveness education in a broader point of view where schools should try to treat students as individuals and teacher's role in this respect is fundamental.

Methodology

- This work offers a quantitative analysis with data collected from schools of primary, elementary and secondary education in Tirana region. This is the largest region and representative for each country and will help carry out a real analysis. Additional data were provided from Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and Educational Directorate in this region.
- These official statistics include comprehensive information on registration of students in various study cycles and their graduation and the analysis is focused on number of boys and girls attending the selected schools in the urban schools of our capital city during 2020/21 period.
- With the help of a questionnaire addressed to schools directors regarding reasons that force students to leave studies, this work offers more information about the school dropout.
- After the review and interpretation results, this work offers suggestions and recommendations for improvement of school curricula in order to make the school environment favorable for both genders and consolidate teacher's role in this respect.

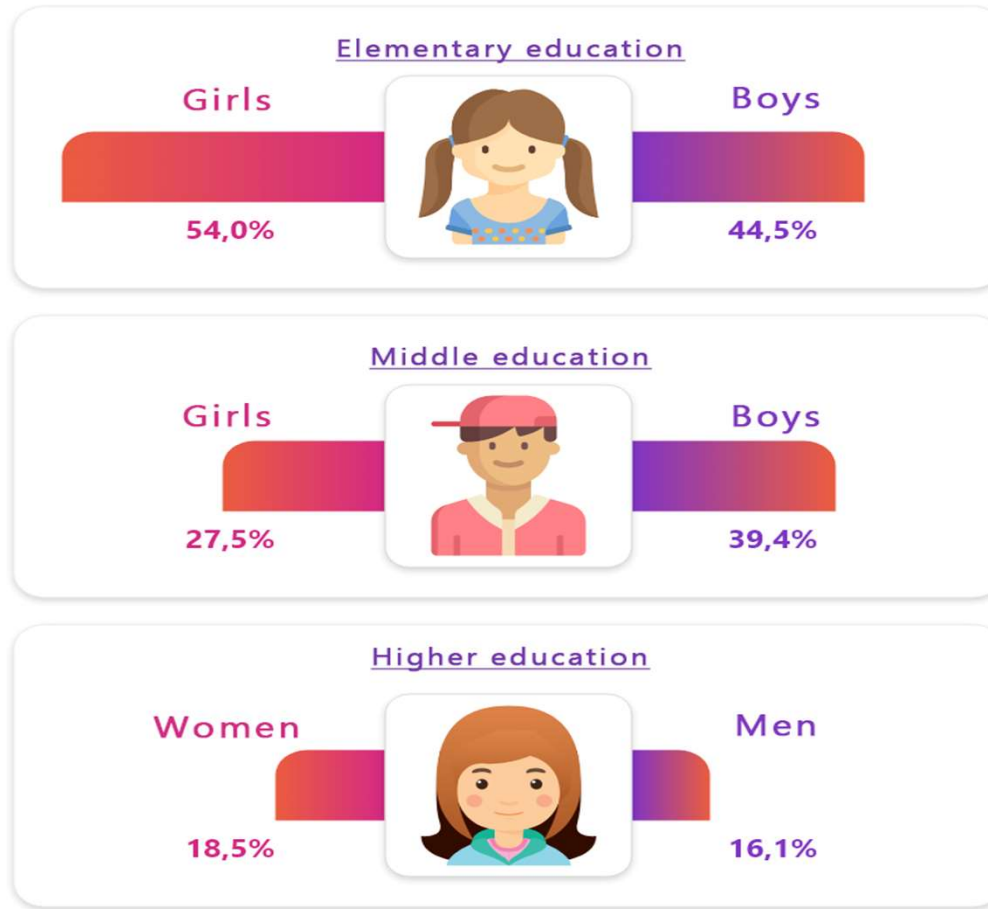
Theoretical framework

- Large gender gaps exist in access, learning achievement and continuation of education in many settings, most often at the expense of girls, although in some regions boys are at a disadvantage. Despite progress, more girls than boys still remain out of school - 16 million girls will never set foot in a classroom ([UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)) - and women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills. In the recent years, policies, strategies and action plans have focused on providing equal opportunities to boys and girls in the family and society.
- Women consist of 51% of Albanian population. Data on poverty in Albania testify to the feminization of poverty and increasing numbers of children afflicted by it. Albania ranked 20th among 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index in 2020, was placed 51st of 162 countries on the Gender Inequality Index in 2019.

School attainment 2020/21

• Cycle	Total	Girls	Boys
• Primary	158.528	75.821	82.707
• Elementary	127.958	60.398	67.560
• Secondary	88.965	47.623	41.342
• Total	375.451	183.842	191.609

Educational level of population over 25 years old



Source: Albanian Institute of Statistics

Reasons that force school drop out in Albania:

- poverty
- geographical isolation
- minority status
- early marriage and pregnancy
- emigration
- gender-based violence
- traditional attitudes about the status and role of women

Data and Reports

- The figures show that number of boys and girls in elementary schools is equal. But there is a difference in elementary and secondary levels. There are problems with Roma community, where female Roma do not attend school, compared to boys, taking into consideration the fact that in some communes in Albania. Another problem is reduction of number of boys attending high school education in rural areas, taking into consideration that majority of population in Albania is rural.

Education attainment in Albania shows a large gap with the EU-28 average for both women and men, while the gender gap favours boys in lower education cycles and then reverses in tertiary education in favour of girls. While enrolment of boys and girls is virtually identical in EU-28, in Albania boys have higher enrolment.

- The Republic of Albania recognises the importance of gender equality. This is reflected in the dynamic policy initiatives and clear strategic commitment to promote gender equality and empower women in all domains reflected by Gender Equality Index. However as results indicate, full gender equality is still to be achieved.
- The national strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality includes activities for the improvement of the education curricula in pre-schools based on gender analysis, as well as involvement of boys and men in the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Discussion of Results

- Albania has undertaken significant education reforms over the last two decades that have improved access to education and raised learning outcomes, including decentralisation of school governance and introduction of a competency based curriculum. Access to compulsory education has expanded and student performance has improved, but learning levels remain among the lowest in Europe. A large scale of Albanian students still leave school without mastering basic competences. This limits the employments and life chances of many individuals and risks holding back national development.
- All these can be improved with the right intervention in curricula and school environment, in order to overcome this misbalance in number of boys attending primary and secondary education. Inclusiveness education in a broader point of view is understood as a process through which schools try to treat students as individuals of their own from local communities.
- Development of inclusive education practices requires efforts and joint initiatives with the participation of all the interested groups. Govt plays an important role in coordination of trainings and other services offered by governmental and non-governmental institutions, international agencies, teachers training institutions, schools and communities. This would help fill all pieces of the puzzle to contribute for the same objective. A leading role can be carried out by the governmental institute or a commission subordinated by Ministry Education may be created to ensure coordination and supervision of its implementation for a long term period.

Discussion of Results

According to the questionnaire some of the reasons that affect the gender misbalance in Albanian schools are:

- **Lack of sanitary knots can be a cause especially for girls to abandon school**
- **Families with a big number of children need the girls at home to take care of the other children. Relatives have prejudices for girls**
- **Among group children who risk abandoning school are girls. Early marriages, Roma girls. Rural areas - obstacle girls education, economic situation**
- **Mentality of parents obstacles girls in rural areas to attend school, stopping them to attend classes after compulsory education. Indicators showing school abandoning tell that parents offer excuses not to allow girls attend school, ask for warranties and protection from school, security during road to school, protection from abuses.**
- **The key reason of non-attendance of school by girls continues to be houseworks, marriage at early age, violence in schools. On the other side, due to increasing number of girls leaving school, causes increase of attendance by boys.**

Teachers Role / Curricula

- **In general, teachers are not well-prepared to work with children of different social-cultural origins. Likewise, studies show that teachers' current education is characterized by theoretical knowledge, whereas practice is almost absent, zeroing opportunities to establish teachers' capacities to deal with external factors regarding all-inclusive education.**
- Initial qualification system of teachers in Albania is mostly based on subjects and program structure, which makes almost impossible the specific teaching of competences and professional expressions for students' inclusiveness and recognition of diversity.
- Continuous qualification of teachers has provided a minimal contribution in learning of inclusiveness competences, due to the fact that qualification programs during working years are not comprehensive or accredited.
- It is necessary to carry out the right interventions in curricula and school environment, in order to overcome this misbalance in number of boys attending primary and secondary education. Noting that gender equity works better in most developed countries, we should fight prejudices about gender stereotypes in curricula and textbooks a special attention must be on curricula and teaching models.

Authorities should contribute in promotion of policies and practices for an all-sided education in context of social and cultural diversity.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- According to recent studies, all-inclusive education in Albania requires a different model to influence in all system's levels.
- **Stakeholders:** Government structures, local government units, human rights and civil society organisations. In this respect, the education laws should reflect national priorities in this field, drafting among others things a Social All-Inclusive Strategy.
- The policy planning and teachers training practices should be focused on all-inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity. The changes in policies and practices are better if they could be made in harmony with teachers' experience.
- A number of measures needs to be taken by decision-taking authorities, teachers' trainers and teachers themselves to accelerate the reform for an inclusive policy, based on data provided during the study.

On the other side, we should look for teaching absorption ways suitable also for males' role:

- More powerful effort is needed to recruit men in the role of lecturer in our schools
- More attention to needs of boys
- Lectures should not only be focused on theory, they should include action
- Schools environment should become friendlier for boys.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- ensure integrity of girls, promoting their socio-economic rights, supporting disadvantaged groups and engaging men and boys in all activities aimed at empowering women and providing equal opportunities
- encourage sensitisation importance of education among girls, combating prejudice of this issue affecting Albanian educational systems, ways how to overcome barriers in the access for girls to and in educational systems of Albania, measures for trainers and teachers themselves at a system level for a social inclusion through education.
- creating a school environment that is friendly to both sexes and ensuring that women are equally represented in teaching, administrative and educational leadership roles.
- measures to be taken by decision-taking authorities, teachers 'trainers and teachers themselves to accelerate the reform for an inclusive policy, based on data provided during the study.
- coordination of trainings and other services offered by governmental and non-governmental institutions, international agencies, teachers training institutions, schools and communities.
- education laws should reflect national priorities in this field, drafting among others things a Social All-Inclusive Strategy.
- policy planning and teachers training practices should be focused on all-inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity. The changes in policies and practices are better if they could be made in harmony with teachers 'experience.

Conclusions

- Development of inclusive education practices requires efforts and joint initiatives with the participation of all the interested groups. The problem of gender inequality is largely a problem arising from the patriarchal social structure. It must be admitted that all the problems that feed and grow the patriarchal social structure are against the social status of women.
- This topic is relevant for European policymaking regarding future projects focused on prevention of school abandoning by girls. Therefore, we should pay special attention to curricula and teaching models. We should look for teaching absorption ways suitable also for males' role.
- School is one of the most important socialization tools of the modern age. Particularly, primary education and access to school are very important for the development of societies.
- In this respect, local government plays a crucial role. Decentralization processes of education systems in Western Balkans mean an increasing autonomy of schools, which can lead to increasing rights for professional decision-making by teachers themselves.
- This topic is relevant for European policymaking regarding future projects focused on prevention of school abandoning by girls. This topic is sensitive in some Western Balkan countries, but as long as aspiration of these countries is joining EU, they must be ready for it.
- Gender equality is not about considering women as an alternative to men. Again, gender equality is not about putting men behind social life. Man and woman together mean "human". The absence of one should be understood as the absence of the other. Men and women should be considered as beings that complement each other. But also gender equity can never be achieved through administrative decisions or legal acts, it can be established only through an efficient education system.

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