

## Impact of "Normale" Educational Centre A Significant Factor in the Development of Education in Albania

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**Abstract:** *The history of education has valued preciously all people involved in it and has flourished into an educational function, teaching and learning of our thorough knowledge in its institutions - such as "Normale" Educational center that played an historic role in the Albanian language. Albanian normal schools have a record of long, difficult, but also glorious path. They were the main homes for generations of teachers and also the place where it was necessary to prepare the framework for education and awareness of the nation. Albanian teachers, in different periods of history had run the greatest risk of extinction of national culture and education. They planted the sound seeds by which had brought the essence of national awareness, which in a century struggle of unparalleled trials tried to revive education, science, culture and Albania. In the history of Albania teachers and veterans of teaching, wherever they worked and acted, played the leading role, contributed as they could with their valuable works, which undoubtedly served to their students, future teachers, in raising subsequently the national level of conscience for their learning and teaching.*

**Key words:** *Normal school, education, culture, teacher-students, pedagogic thinking, Albanian territory.*

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### Introduction

Albanian Normal School has a record of long, difficult, but glorious path. Its purpose was to prepare the necessary framework for education and awareness of the nation. Albanian teachers, in different periods of heavy and full of vicissitudes, did valuable work in the moments and the most crucial turning points and run the greatest risks of extinction of our national culture and education. They planted the sound seeds of education by which time brought the essence of national awareness, which in a century struggle of unparalleled trials tried to revive education, science, culture and Albania. In the history of Albanian teaching, teachers and veterans of teaching, wherever they worked and acted, played a key role, contributing as they could with their valuable works, which undoubtedly served to students and future teachers in the subsequent establishment of national consciousness, in the level curriculum and their teaching.

Historical autumns, every November, in the national school education remain permanently listed dates. In November of 1665, 347 years before, Peter Janjevë Mazreku in the house of Andrea Bogdani, Archbishop of Skopje, opened the first school in Albanian language in Kosovo, ethnic Albanian territories respectively. Since that time, with many vicissitudes, it was kept alive by Albanian hard working school teachers – who loved education and confronting the storms of time. In November it is commemorated the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Zara Normal school, which later followed the teachings of few Arberesh (Albanian community in Italy); 122<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Normal School of Bucharest, 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the alphabet in Manastir (Bitola) Congress; 102<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of founding of first Pedagogical School in Elbasan, 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of Gjakova Normal School, 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congress of Orthography in Tirana etc. November dates, events that were and remain fundamental, show works and traces of many distinguished Albanian personalities on education, culture, science and national art.

The history education has precious Albanian people who enlightened the pedagogical and educational function, teaching our fundamentals of knowledge – "Normale" educational center historic role in the Albanian language. They were homes key preparatory education where other all generations framework of the nation's most precious - the teachers of the people, their primary aim of eradicating illiteracy former - the heaviest darkness eklipsoi us for centuries. They were the product of the ceaseless efforts of humanists, writers, Albanian revival and brought undeniable results Voskopoja Academy and the League of Prizren in the direction of opening of the Albanian national schools and in the development, design and complete technical preparation - illustrative the textbook.

Historical path of establishing Albanian educational center is long, as well as the list of names of patriots and supporters for opening such centers and their fruitful work. In this we distinguish between successful work done in education in quality of life within the Vlleh "Normale" Educational Center of Bucharest, with director Nicholas Naço (1892-1899); Zadar Normal School in Croatia, where later learned was a lecturer and director of several Arbëresh among whose were: Josip V. Relja, Shima Deshpali, Budimir Petrovic known by the pseudonym of Miru, the Kikica maker etc ; *Normal School of Elbasan* whose director was the reascent from Shkodra, Luigj Gurakuqi; *Normal School of Beratit* the first

Director was Sali Gjuka; *Normal Turkish language educational center* in Skopje, Bitola and Debar; *Normal School of Shkodra* with the first director Gasper Beltoja; *Female Normal School*, whose director of Tirana was the Albanian from Kosovo, Qamil Bala and Ahmet Gashi of Pristina; *Normal School "Sami Frashëri"* whose local director was from Pristina: Rexhep Krasniqi and Ahmet Gashi; *Normal School "Gjon Nikola Kazazi"* whose first director was from Gjakova, Zekerija Joshi and after World War II among the first schools in the secondary vocational teaching, begins work in Gjakova *Normal School* with the first director the Albanian, Bekir Kastrati from Peja. This school after seven years of activity was guided under the direction of different personalities like: Kemal Deva and then Sali Nushi from Mitrovica, and Jashar Rexhepagici from Plava, Ditar Qamili from Pollog etc., while their activity was replaced by pedagogical academies

Considering the importance and role of school and education, in the early '90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emigrants from America, expressed a wish to establish a normal school in Switzerland, but circumstances prevented this.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892, in Bucharest, *the first Normal School Albanian-Vlach* began its life. This school was founded after some efforts of Society "Drita" (Light) of Bucharest. The first Director of the Normal School of Bucharest was Nikolla Naço, who also performed the task of President of Society "Drita" of Bucharest. In the first section of the rules of the school it stated: *"The first Albanian-language classroom was launched in Bucharest today, on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892, under the direction of N.N. Naço, President of "Drita" society in Bucharest"*. From the content of the regulation, which was published in booklet form in Albanian, Romanian and French, it could understand the physiognomy of the school and the national educational goals of its founders. This is clearly seen in sections 22 and 23 of this regulation. Thus, Article 22, "students who graduate from this school will be sent at the expense of "Drita" Society as teachers in Albania and in the Diaspora, wherever they had Albanians such as in *"Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Russia, Italy, and Austria"*, to open Albanian schools. They would have a good salary according to the *"country to be"*, and would be protected by society *"as the most precious assets of the nation from evil, charged with the sacred power and order which their society has trusted"*.

In Article 23 it stipulated that the teachers graduated from this school had a certain way, *"how to strengthen spirit, mind through lectures, are in debt, according to this regulation, who is the first contract with the nation, to be in every corner of the world where the society sends them"*. Those who would not abide by *"the holy intention"* would be considered as *"traitors to the nation and as Judah and those who violate the Yameenah (oath) would lose any help they got and support for their family"*. Also, they will be *"pursued and finally judged by the old canons of the Albanian nation"*

Referring to archival documents and sources of historiography, especially monographic sources, it shows that the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest, Suzza, who followed closely the activities of society "Drita", in his report submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Goluhovski in Vienna, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1893 made interesting estimates for the Normal School, quote: *"Society "Drita" went a step further with the opening of Albanian schools (normal) in Bucharest. According to the statute that is sent with an accompanying letter, the purpose of this school is the formation of young people with educational standpoint that would return to Albania as apostles of national ideas and as rivals to the different goals"*

The first students enrolled were housed in the premises of the boarding school, known as the Square "Amza" of Bucharest. Its small capacity of 15 beds in total forced students coming from Albania and Macedonia to be accommodated in premises of the residence hall.

Opening of the Normal School in Bucharest had a positive echo and was welcomed and greeted by the Albanian patriotic circles, inside and outside the country. For this success, Philip Shiroka, wrote from Beirut on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1892, to Nikolla Naco that, *"I'm excited seeing that your gentry and the honorable "Drita" society, have thought to illuminate our people of Albania, giving to them the direction and inspiration to be known one day and to be informed about, like the rest of the people because school opens eyes and enlightens mind of man"*<sup>2</sup>.

In support of numerous archival documents, the *mesonietore Scolli* (the name of the school at that time) was financed by the Romanian state budget. School had great importance and it was considered in the status of an *Albanian University*. For many reasons Bucharest normal school was closed in 1911. Funding for work and life in boarding school was covered by "Drita" society. Students learn 11 subjects: Religious Education, Ottoman language, Albanian and Romanian, Pedagogy, History, Geography, Mathematics, Natural sciences, the Statutes of the Ottoman Empire,

<sup>1</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Albania (hereinafter: AQSH), F. "Albanian Cultural Society" Light "in Bucharest, V. 1892, D. 25, fl. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, D. 18, fl. 1.

Calligraphy and Art education, Music (singing instrument), Physical Education and a world language

From this school, came very prepared cadres, patriotic nationalist writers, publicists and various creative people. Among them very distinguished Albanian figures like: Aleksander Stavre Drenova (Asdreni), Dervish Hima, Mihal Grameno Jashar Erebara, Dhimiter Ilo, Ibrahim Temo, Joan Lehova, Shahin Kolonja, Thoma Avrami, etc. One of these creative Romanian composer Ciprian Porumbescu (1853-1883) conducted the music of "*Albanian National Anthem*", which was first promoted and heard from the choir of the Albanian Society in Bucharest, brought to Albania by Hil Mosi<sup>3</sup>.

It is to be emphasized that early involvement of the Albanian colony in Romania was very fruitful. It got engaged in the publication of textbooks and teaching, Albanian schools in exile colonies, especially in Albania and abroad. These goals did not cease until later or in other spaces, as it can be read through the Albanian press from time, where for example, mentioning the opening of an Albanian school in Bucharest, under the guidance of Sokrat Kallogjeri from Fier, or signaling the opening of Albanian school in Thessaloniki for the Albanian children living there under the direction of Evdal Bilishti

"Drita" Society of Bucharest to the needs of first Albanian school in Korca published textbooks edited by Naim and Sami Frasheris, Jani Vreto, Gasper Benushi, Jovan Lazer Tërova etc. Normal School of Bucharest has defended the foundation's mission and its work towards emancipation and preservation efforts of denationalization. The roots of this war of national right is to be searched in early 1844, when it started a real renaissance in the culture with the publishment of "*Evëitari*" from Naum Veqilharxhi, published in 1844, and a year later republished under the title: "*Brand new Evëtar for youthful promoters and for young boys with a selected aspects of the fruitful good things*"<sup>4</sup>. Behind him are numerous text-setter revivals whose goal was to raise awareness for patriotic and national independence. Their prime importance was linguistic awareness of the Albanian language, school traditions, the glorious past, love for homeland, freedom and our ancient nation. "Drita" Society and other companies did their best to supply the schools and students with necessary school literature.

Thirteen years later (1905), under the influence of the Normal School, it opened in Constanta, Bucharest, *The Evening School for Adults*. President of the School Council was Ibrahim Temo from Struga, and as a teacher served the poet Asdreni. A student in the Normal School of Bucharest was the writer and poet, Lasgush Poradeci.

Precisely 292 years ago, from the mountainous Kraja, the Arbëresh, Brisku Shestani, in Liare and other villages, in Arberesh near Zadar were placed many Albanian families. For a long time there was no school in Albanian language, which resulted in its decline. For the Arberesh of Zadar there are many publications, articles and monographs by scientists or publicists, various journalists, especially Arbëresh and Croats. For the history of this settlement, of the largest Albanian Croatian community in Adriatic coast wrote the researcher from Zadar, dr. Aleksandar Stipčević Among other things, he notes the historical movement, the arrival in Zadar arrival and settlement of the Upper Highlands Albanians in light of numerous scientific works written here many decades ago.

Croatian Normal School, whose monographic study was written by a distinguished Arbëresh, began its work before the middle of last century, namely in the locality in the Borgo Erico - Arberesh today, part of the city of Zadar since 1944. Efforts to open a school and the teaching of Albanian language in Zadar have deep historical facts. The Austro-Hungarian government had a strategic goal to support the Albanian language teaching and appointing the first teacher for this important mission. Of many activists, prominent teachers and poets among whom were Gjergj Fishta, Ndre Mjeda, then Mati Logoreci etc., the first teacher to be appointed was Pashk Bardhi.

In September 1901, Bardhi began working as a teacher of Albanian in schools that attended Arbëresh children. He began teaching at the Normal School and professional schools near. Albanian language in primary schools was intended to develop men and women. The second teacher of Albanian of Zadar after Bardhi was Shtjefën Gjeçi. He in some reports mentioned that during the short time he served as a teacher of Albanian in this area, there were two schools for boys and one normal school for practical classes. In Zadar, after the Pedagogical school there was also a gymnasium. According to researcher Mark Milan<sup>\*</sup>, whose attitude towards Albanians has always been friendly, he cites that "*Besides*

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Edition of the Albanian Academy of Sciences, Vol. II, Tirana: "Kristalina-KH", 2008, p. 929

<sup>4</sup> Tomor Osmani, *Udha e shkronjave shqipe*, Tirana: "Kristalina-KH", f. 206-207

\* Mark Milan. Born in Medun, Arpil 25th 1833 and in Kuç of Montenegro spent the most part of his life. His positions towards the Albanians has always been positive. He has been a freedom and equal rights fighter for the Montenegrins and the Albanians. He is the author of studies entitled "Kuçi clan in storytelling and folk songs", "Manhood and bravery examples" (1901), "Albanian life and customs" (1905) etc.

*courage there is necessity for knowledge*<sup>5</sup>.

In general the Arbëresh gave Zadar creativity in general and science in particular and prominent names known in all areas of Croatia and beyond. They worked with dignity and dedication and proved determinant in contribution of intellectuals, teachers, professors and scientists in light of the autochthony of the Albanians, descendants of the Illyrians in the Balkans, in material and spiritual culture, language of ancient customs. Depository of the creators of arbëresh is varied by gender culture. Among famous scholars, that their works are serious and dignified, we mention Aleksandar Stipčević\*.

Unquestionable contribution to the education of Albanian pedagogical framework provided schools in Turkish language (Dar ыл mualimin) which were established for some time in Skopje and Bitola and in some parallel classes in the "Fridrik Frabel" Grammar School where there were spotted two sisters, especially Mikelangjela Qoba. A strong support for the profession of teacher education program was the teaching of Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy, Ethics, History, Oriental languages, and the compulsory European language - French, Drawing, Singing, Gymnastics, Penmanship, and of course Religious Education

In Skopje's Normal School lessons were attended by many Albanians, who later exercised the office of teaching and were on the front of the progressive and national movement. Among them we can mention Ibrahim Kolçi, Qazim Bakalli, Nieman Ferizi, Ahmet Gashi, Mon Shaqiri, Latif Shaqiri, and many others, and their Albanian language teacher in this school was Salih Gjuka<sup>6</sup>. These and other Albanian students helped Albanian patriots Hasan Prishtina and Bajram Curri to be have deeper qualifications in the Normals of Elbasan and Berat, where the head of education was Salih Gjuka.

The first decade of the 1900s, brought major events and turns in the Albanian education history. These were the times of the Young Turk Revolution, which betrayed the Albanian national interests. In different areas of Albania there were held genuine political, educational and cultural activities like the establishments of schools, clubs and societies. The first Congress for Albanian language was held in Manastir (Bitola), then a second one in Elbasan. Fruit of the work of those Congresses was the establishment of Normal School in Elbasan, As "an expression of willingness to sacrifice ...", so they looked at it as "One of the highest national strongholds ...."<sup>7</sup>. In this school many Albanians from Kosovo followed the teachings through the help of generous initiative of Hasan Prishtina. He sold all his property to the issue of schooling for young Kosovars. The program of this school was quite broad. Students learned about 30 subjects: Albanian language, Language Letters, Syntax, Literature, Rhetoric, Poetry, Scientific subjects - Chemistry, Physics, Geometry, Mathematics, Calculus, Natural history, Physiology, Zoology, Botany, Geology, Mineralogy, Foreign languages - Turkish, French, English, Greek, Teaching subject - Pedagogy, Psychology, Logic, Philosophy, some religious subjects and learning skills etc. There was lack of textbooks. Within time texts were drawn. Among those singled out there were texts in the field of creating textbook for elementary schools, middle and high schools were the editions of Alexander Xhuvani.

School teachers and lecturers were prepared in hundreds of students who came from different ethnic Albanian areas of Kosovo and Macedonia. Their contribution was fundamental in opening new schools in Albanian, for the dissemination of books and other literature in the teaching of literacy and the development of patriotic feelings. Together with other graduates from Berat, Korca, Shkodra etc., these people founded Albanian national education, compiled textbooks, were didactic principals, inspectors, instructors and scholars.

At the time of the Normal school of Elbasan and Korca's French Lice in Tirana in 1921 it was established the Albanian American Technical School, founded by the American Red Cross. In the period 1921-1933, there were qualified cadres in different professions. Its work was also supported by the education minister of the time, Hile Mosi. By that time large areas of land were given for the farm in Lapraka (Tirana), to this institution operated by two American professors: Harry T. Fultz, director, and Charles A. Hollingshed, vice director. Teaching in these premises were Ali Tsungu, Ymer Sharra and John Koliaka. Besides professional branches, there was an Education department where they developed educational material through *practical exercises*. Teachers' branch graduated a significant number of teachers who served in various national schools of Albania and liberated territories. Regaeding the outcome of this school, monographs were written by researcher Iliaz Goga from Tirana and Mehmet Gjevori from Pristina

Another school with pedagogical character in that period was the Female Normal School. It should be treated more in

<sup>5</sup> Mark Milan, *Manhood and bravery examples*, Belgrade, 1905, p. 11.

\* Aleksandar Stipčević Ph.D. Was born on October 10, 1930, in the Arberesh town of Arbanas near Zadar in today's Croatia. He was a professor at the University of Zagreb, since 1987 until his retirement in 1997. Some of the titles of the books he wrote are: Illyrians, Illyrian Art, Illyrian cult and symbols etc. His books are also translated into Italian and Albanian.

<sup>6</sup> AQSH, F. "Albanian collection of clubs and societies", D. 204, fl. 2. Thesaloniki club pamphlet

<sup>7</sup> Mit'hat Frashëri, "Albanian schools congress", in: *Lirija*, nr. 33, Thesaloniki, March 14th 1909, p. 3.



terms of its contribution to the education and emancipation of women in Albanian. During the historical establishment of its existence several names were added to this school. First was the *Women's School "Naim Frasheri"*, and later, in support of its school-pedagogical documentation (certificates were issued), according to the statements of its leaders had other names like "Mother Skanderbeg" and "Female Normal School" Queen Mother"- Tirana.

At the beginning of the learning process, the number of girls who attended school and followed teaching was small. Over the years, the interest increased. It is almost symbolic the number of Kosovo Albanian girls and other ethnic areas. In support of the publications, archival materials, press chronicles and published literature states that such schools began operation in 1930s, while some years later became the Women Institute. Among the first directors of the *Institute for Women "Naim Frasheri"* we can mention eminent activists and professors from Kosovo. The first director was a patriot called Qamil Bala. In making his career as head in the field of education he had served in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey and Iraq, continued tirelessly as acting director of the Pedagogical school and then director of the Dormitory "Naim Frasheri" in Tirana, later called "Queen Mother".

Another Kosovar director of this institution, after the death of Qamil Bala, was the well-known professor, Ahmet Gashi from Pristina. Previously he was Director of the Normal School in Elbasan, and later director of Normal School "Sami Frashëri" in Pristina, as a geography professor. This bright figure was also an insurgent in the anti-ottoman fight and part of the declaration of Independence, when Ismail Qemali raised the national flag in Vloara on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912. It was also participant in the educational congresses of Lushnja, Elbasan and Tirana.

Among the first students from Kosovo there were girls as Myzafare Gjinali, Nexhmije Begolli etc., who after completion of the pedagogical studies at the Institute for Women "Mother Skanderbeg" Pedagogical branch in Tirana, worked as a teacher with dedication and professionalism in some schools in Albania. On returning to Kosovo they gave their contribution to primary education in Prizren and Pec, Gjakova, part-time teacher at the Normal School of this later city and later in several elementary schools in Pristina.

Pedagogical knowledge of the Institute of Tirana were also reflected in primary schools in Ulcinj in Montenegro. Carrier of this activity was Qothere Lljunji, teacher, founder of the first educational instruction in Albanian in Ulcinj. With the work laid the foundation of educational work in elementary school in Ulcinj, and led to the emancipation of the Albanian women and awareness of measures that lead to educate children in Albanian.

During the Second World War in Kosovo functioned two Albanian normals. In November of 1944, began work the *Normal School "Sami Frashëri" Pristina*, which functioned until 1944. It was the work of our teachers and other patriots and intellectuals, strongly supported by strong educational measures. Regarding this school, the personnel, students, campus, activity and its significance were written many scientific studies by a group of authors like Mehmet Gjevori, Ali Lljunji, Abdulla Vokri, Sultana Kojçini etc. from Kosovo, and Murat Gecaj, Veda Islami, Iliaz Goga, etc.

Director or commissioner, as it was known then, was appointed dr. Recep Krasniqi, deputy director and responsible Reuf Zajmi and Ahmet Gashi. That year, "The school had 21 teachers: Ahmet Gashi, Director, Reuf Zajmi, deputy director Enver Sudia, secretary, while teaching body constituted: Ymer Berisha Zeqir Bajrami Ibrahim Kelmendi, Xhavit Saraçi, Idriz Ajeti, Fet'hi Dizdari, Efthimi Deri, Vasil Toli, Resit Kashari, Ferudin Beli, Luigj Franjo, Zef Shpani Kole Parubi, Xhevdet Harbuli, Liko Todh

e, Adam Selim, Zef Kakariqi, Luan Gashi". Interest for this school was enormous. Thus, in the first year it began teaching 350 students in 13 classes, of which 160 from different provinces of Kosovo and Macedonia."

The people of Gjakova were persistent and in constant demand that not only primary and secondary technical institute should be opened but also a pedagogy institute. The Education Ministry in Tirana, issued the decree "*to establish a Normal school in Gjakova*". This school was named after the creator and inventor of the Missal of Buzuku, *Normal School "Gjon Nikoll Kazazi."* The teaching process at this school started in November 1942. The school had two classes: one class and first preparatory class with two parallel audiences, at about 100 students in total, of whom 20 were girls. First director of this school was Zekerije Rexha, while teaching body constituted of Rifat Spahiu Qamil Hoxha, Borut Haziri, Haki Tasha. It should be emphasized that this frame was not enough, further more impoverished after leaving office for political reasons of teachers like Zekerije Rexha, Rifat Spahiu and Shyqyri Haziri. The second director was Salih Kolgeci, while Deputy Sadi Pejani. This school did not live long because of political and military situation and was forced to suspend work.

Two years later, after World War II, a Normal School was established in Gjakova in Albanian, and Bekir Kastrati was the on first director. Educational contribution of Albanian Normals is undisputed. Its staff planted the seed of knowledge, raised national morale, always creating in the new generation the love for Albanian language, Albanian nation and its ancient traditions. They fought and made possible for the knowledge to be a necessary tool for the future.

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