Albania

Education Policy Review:
Issues and Recommendations

April 2017
The Albania Education Policy Review was conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in close cooperation with the Institute of Educational Development (IED) of Albania.

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### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCE</td>
<td>Albanian Coalition for Child Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANE</td>
<td>Agency of National Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBR</td>
<td>Country Background Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>RED/DAR</td>
<td>Regional Education Directorate/Drejtoria Arsimore Rajonale</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EPNSL</td>
<td>European Policy Network on School Leadership</td>
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<td>EPR</td>
<td>Education Policy Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
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<td>GPI</td>
<td>Gender Parity Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IED/IZHA</td>
<td>Institute of Educational Development/Instituti i Zhvillimit te Arsimit</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sport</td>
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<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoSWY</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSHIAP</td>
<td>Ministry of State for Innovation and Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NREN</td>
<td>National Research and Education Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUE</td>
<td>Pre-University Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUED</td>
<td>Pre-University Education Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>Regional Education Directorate/Drejtoria Arsimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIE</td>
<td>State Inspectorate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

This Education Policy Review (EPR) report is the result of cooperation between UNESCO, the Institute of Educational Development, the Ministry of Education and Sport, UNESCO specialists, and a number of independent international experts. Initiated by Francesc Pedro, Chief of the Section of Education Policy (UNESCO HQ), the EPR was led by Keith Holmes, Tuuli Kurki and Francesc Masdeu who supervised and coordinated the work of the expert team. Meg Gardinier was the lead international consultant.

UNESCO would like to express its deep appreciation to the following team members who were instrumental in the development of the EPR report: Ruth Baumann, Meg Gardinier, Kirsty Henderson, Keith Holmes, Igor Kitaev, Tuuli Kurki, Massimo Loi, Francesc Masdeu, Arsen Mkrtchyan, and Morten Søby.

The UNESCO review team wishes to thank the Hon. Minister Lindita Nikolla, Minister of Education and Sport, the Chief of Cabinet, the Permanent Delegate of Albania to UNESCO and the Secretary-General of the Albanian National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Office in Venice, for their engagement with the review process.

The review team especially recognizes the contribution of Gerti Janaqi, Director of the Institute of Educational Development (IED), and his staff, especially Astrit Dautaj, Irida Sina, Dorina Rapti Ludmilla Stefani, Erida Koleci. The Country Background Report prepared by IED was a valuable resource and comments on the text were much appreciated.

Finally, the review team wishes to thank all students, teachers, principals, parents, and other stakeholders in Albania who participated in interviews and discussions in Tirana and Korçë and the participants in the technical workshop on 1st March 2017 in Tirana.

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April 2017
Introduction

The Education Policy Review was initiated in 2015 by the Republic of Albania (Republika e Shqipërisë), hereinafter ‘Albania’, with the purpose of supporting the country’s vision for educational reform in the context of its national, regional, and international aspirations. Albania’s longstanding relationship with UNESCO as a key international development partner provided an ideal opportunity for technical cooperation on the EPR. Drawing on UNESCO’s expertise, the Education Policy Review (EPR) report provides an evidence-base and analysis for the harmonization of ongoing national reform efforts with Albania’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the area of education. By pursuing inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, Albania is paving the way for long-term system reform towards EU integration and alignment with SDG4-Education 2030.

Key Policy Domains and Cross-Cutting Issues

The EPR provides a sector-wide perspective with in-depth analysis of three key policy domains: (1) curriculum development and reform; (2) information and communication technology (ICT) in education; and (3) teacher and school leadership policies. These three domains were identified by the Government of Albania and UNESCO as areas in which strategic reforms could deliver maximum impact towards the achievement of policy goals including harmonization with European competency-based curriculum standards and the international education agenda. In common with other EPRs, this review seeks to identify relevant policy issues, to conduct in-depth analysis, and to formulate evidence-based recommendations within each policy domain. These recommendations are intended as a contribution to education policy dialogue and to support the country towards its wider goals, including and beyond the 2014-2020 Pre-University Education Development Strategy (PUEDS).

Drawing on the evidence and analysis elaborated in the three key policy domains, the EPR identifies four cross-cutting issues of strategic importance for the mid to long-term development of Albania’s education system. These cross-cutting issues, which are relevant both within and across the three domains of curriculum reform, ICT in education, and teacher and school leadership policies, include: (A) communication
and transparency; (B) equity and inclusion; (C) institutions and infrastructure; and (D) monitoring and evaluation. In addition to strengthening the reform agendas in the three key policy domains, addressing these cross-cutting issues will create greater alignment with Albania’s policy targets related to EU integration and SDG4-Education 2030. The policy recommendations made in the EPR thus provide a basis upon which to identify possible areas for future collaboration between the Government of Albania, and national, regional and international stakeholders and development partners, including UNESCO, active in the field of education.

**Albania and the SDGs**

Albania is focused on developing and aligning its education policies and practices with European and international agendas, in particular the *European Union’s Education Benchmarks for 2020*¹ and *SDG4-Education 2030*².

Whilst progress against most EU benchmarks is consistent with progress on the SDGs, especially SDG4-Education 2030, there are some distinctive features of the new international sustainable development agenda that merit greater attention from education policy makers and planners.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that universally apply to all countries who need to mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and injustices, and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The global education agenda (SDG4-Education 2030) is one of the 17 SDGs. The 2030 Agenda was developed through a broad consultative process driven and owned by Member States, including Albania. The success of SDG4-Education 2030 will depend on collective efforts. Table 1 presents the 7 global targets (4.1 to 4.7) and 3 means of implementation (4a to 4c) of SDG4-Education 2030 and indicates the share of responsibility between the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) in Albania.³

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² [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656e.pdf)
³ Information on the Ministries responsible for each SDG4-Education 2030 target was drawn from the SDG National Action Plan and Baseline Report Assignment Briefing, presented by Dirk Blink and Ilir Ciko on 9 February, 2017.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SDG4-Education 2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MoSWY</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoSWY</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.a</td>
<td>Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.b</td>
<td>By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MES</td>
<td>4.c</td>
<td>By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In light of Albania's commitment to EU integration and SDG4-Education 2030, this Education Policy Review (EPR) is intended to support reflections in the country about how to align education policies and plans with SDG4-Education 2030 in the long term. Due to its focus on the three key policy domains of curriculum reform, ICT in education, and teacher and school leadership policies, the EPR is most relevant to the SDG4 targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.7 and means of implementation 4.a and 4.c.
As the Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Niko Peleshi remarked in 2015:

*The Sustainable Development Goals Agenda is already part of the vision for the development of our country for the next 15 years. I am convinced our path towards EU integration and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is the right direction to ensure prosperity for our country and to contribute to a more developed region and a better planet*.4

The Education 2030 Framework for Action outlines how to translate into practice the commitments made at the World Education Forum held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in May 2015 at country, regional and global levels, and provides guidance for implementing SDG4-Education 2030, to *’ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’.*

The Government of Albania, along with education stakeholders, is now facing the challenge of further institutionalizing some of the early achievements and reforms in the education sector in Albania. In particular, according to the *2014- 2020 National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) and the 2014-2020 Pre-University Education Development Strategy (PUEDS)*, educational reforms including curriculum modernization, promotion of European principles, social inclusion, expanding ICT in education, standards for teachers, and improving student achievement are among Albania’s top priorities. The Education Policy Review (EPR) report is intended as strategic tool that can assist the Government of Albania in realizing these policy priorities.

**Review Methodology**

The EPR was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) of Albania and the Institute of Educational Development (IED) of Albania. As requested by the national authorities, the review was conducted from a sector-wide perspective, and thus, includes overarching aspects related to the planning and management of the education sector in Albania. It was agreed that UNESCO would review and assess the three key education policy domains in the context of national sector priorities and provide a set of evidence-based policy recommendations to contribute to educational development in the country.

In conducting the EPR, the review team adopted an international and comparative perspective to identify relative achievements, strengths, weaknesses and policy bottlenecks in the education system of Albania, whilst taking into account the views and experiences of a wide range of education stakeholders. The review team used a variety of data sources, quantitative and qualitative, on multiple constituting

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elements (country context, including demography, economy and society) and on the education system itself. The review involved analysis of policy documents, national background papers and comparative data on the education system of Albania with education systems in the Western Balkans and beyond. The analysis was then verified through interviews and discussions with officials from various divisions of the MES as well as other education stakeholders at central, state, regional and local levels, including school principals, teachers, student teachers, and students at primary, secondary, upper secondary and higher education levels.

Specifically, the EPR process included data from the following sources:

- **The Country Background Report (CBR)** prepared by the national team (appointed by the national authorities) in 2015 in accordance with UNESCO education policy analysis guidelines (e.g. based on the UNESCO National Education Support Strategy, UNESS). The CBR provides baseline factual and descriptive information.

- **UNESCO Benchmarking Factsheet** provided basic information about how Albania’s education system is performing in comparison to other countries.

- **UNESCO Literature Review** conducted during 2015-2016 explores recent works on education policy in Albania. The purpose of the literature review was to provide background information and to inform and stimulate further discussion with national stakeholders during missions.

- **Series of missions** including (1) a scoping mission; (2) two fact-finding missions (September and October 2015); (3) a high level technical coordination mission (December 2016); (4) a technical workshop with key stakeholders (1 March 2017); and (5) a launch and dissemination event (12 April 2017). These missions involved cooperation between the national team based at the IED and the UNESCO review team. The review team was composed of UNESCO HQ staff and international experts in the education policy domains.

This report provides an overview of education in Albania including the structure of the education system, relevant legislation and information on equity and quality. The three priority domains are then presented (1) curriculum development and reform; (2) ICT in education; and (3) teacher and school leadership policies. In each domain, the main policy issues are identified in light of the data analysed and series of recommendations for action are elaborated. The next section of the report presents cross-cutting issues and recommendations. The report concludes with a discussion of opportunities and challenges and possible future areas for international cooperation in the context of SDG4-Education 2030. Two annexes are included as tools for policy-makers and other stakeholders to consider the priorities for implementation of the
recommendations, and their likely impacts. Annex 1 presents the level of priority as discussed with stakeholders and the perceived level of difficulty and costs. It also gives an indicative timeline for the recommendations, with level of difficulty and feasibility. Together these tools provide the authorities with a means to prioritize various recommendations for the development of an implementation plan.

**Education in Albania**

Since the end of communist rule in Albania, the education system has undergone numerous changes designed to modernize the curriculum, develop wider system capacities, expand access to compulsory education, and align national policy objectives with European and international frameworks.

**Education System Structure**

**Preschool (or pre-primary) education** in Albania includes kindergardens and preparatory classes, and is intended for children aged 3-6, but is not compulsory. According to national statistics, the enrolment rate in preschool education for the academic year 2014-2015 was 81%.

Children above the age of 6 are entitled to **basic education**, comprising the schooling at both the primary/elementary and lower secondary levels. The structure is currently “5+4” with basic education encompassing 9 years of mandatory schooling intended for students up to 16 years old. All those who have not completed basic education and are above the age of 16 may complete it in part-time schools (ibid.).

Upon completing compulsory basic education, students face two main options with regard to continuing their studies in **upper secondary education**; the options are either academically oriented gymnasiuims or vocational education and training (VET) programmes. Since the academic year of 2009-2010, VET has been offered through three different levels of schooling. The two-year programmes, comprising the first level, aim at equipping students with basic skills of semi-skilled workers and culminate in awarding a basic vocational training certificate. The one-year programmes at the next level are meant to train technicians with an award of a certificate of professional training. VET programmes following at the third level last for one extra year and pave a way to higher education (MoSWY, 2014, p. 11).

The **higher education system** of Albania, which is beyond the focus of this EPR, has been aligned with the principles of Bologna Declaration, and assumes four-year bachelor degree programmes followed by one-to-two years of master’s degree studies and three years of doctoral studies (MoSWY, 2014).
There are three levels of educational governance in Albania. The central level comprises the Parliament with its Committee of Education and Culture, Council of Ministers, and MES (which also has its affiliate institutions). The regional/local level refers to the districts and municipalities and includes administrative bodies, such as Regional Education Directorates (REDs), Municipalities, District Councils and their Departments for Education and Health. Finally, at the school level governance comprises the school principals along with their deputies, school boards, as well as the teachers’ councils and parents’ councils.

Since the collapse of the communist regime in Albania, the country has been struggling to maintain the near-universal enrolment rates in basic education. As of 2014, Albania’s education system, including pre-school was serving approximately 585,945 students. This represents a decline in the student body from nearly 700,000 students in 2007. Relevant data on education are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Pupils, Institutions and Teachers by Level of Education (Public and Private)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Preschool education (PSE)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Primary education (PE)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Secondary education (SE)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>585945</td>
<td>82494</td>
<td>14.08%</td>
<td>363408</td>
<td>62.02%</td>
<td>140043</td>
<td>23.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>3569</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>48.88%</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>39.30%</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>13.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>37943</td>
<td>4495</td>
<td>11.85%</td>
<td>24777</td>
<td>65.30%</td>
<td>8671</td>
<td>22.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* MES, 2014a, p. 16.

According to UN estimates, the young population in the age group of 19 and below has been projected to decrease from 32% (in 2010) to 24% of the total population in 2025 (World Bank Group, 2014, p. 10).

In January 2015, the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) unveiled the 2014-2020 Pre-University Education Development Strategy, designed to capitalize on the pillars of the previous national plan and take the sector reform further, linking it more intimately with the country’s overall development and EU integration strategies. According to this document (MES, 2014a, p. 11), the strategic policy objectives guiding the PUE education system are the following:

a. Enhance leadership, governance and resource management capacities
b. Inclusive quality learning
c. Ensure quality performance according to standards of EU countries
d. Contemporary professional training and development of teachers and administrators

The focus of the EPR was therefore in line with the strategic policy objectives of the PUEDS.
**Education Laws**

Education policy in Albania draws upon some of the major principles of the pan-European social and economic recommendations, including those from the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as several bilateral and multi-lateral organizations. In additional – although Albania is not a member of the OECD – the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Albania has participated since 2000, has become a key point of reference for education policy-makers.

Albania has become a signatory to a number of international and European covenants, conventions and recommendations directly or indirectly impacting the country’s education sector. Major conventions and agreements including the Bologna Declaration (signed in 2003); EU candidate status (granted in 2014); and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified in 2013) for example, provide a supra-national normative framework for Albania’s educational reforms.

Domestically, the government of Albania adopted a number of key legislative instruments directly or indirectly affecting the education sector. Some of the more recent laws include (in chronological order):

- Law #78 [on State Matura examination as a mandatory test signifying the completion of secondary schooling and a pre-requisite for entering higher education] (adopted in 2006);
- Law #9741 on Higher Education (adopted in 2007, later amended);
- Law #9970 on Gender Equality in Society (adopted in 2008);
- Law #69/2012 on Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania adopted in 2012);

The overarching legal instrument among the key pieces of legislation mentioned above remains the Law #69/2012. Several other legal acts that merit further mention are the Laws #7952, #8872, #9741, and #9970. The first introduces a few key regulations relating to the areas of assessment of students, enrolments, standards, and teacher training provisions; as such, it precipitates the more recent Law #69/2012. The second, Law #8872, defines the overall composition, organization, and management principles of VET. The third, Law #9741, re-frames the mission, as well as the objectives of higher education. In 2014, Law #9741 served as the legal basis to revoke the licenses of select higher education institutions deemed as being in disagreement with the respective, legally binding provisions. Finally, Law #9970 is a cross-cutting piece of legislation that aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination in education.

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5 Compiled based on Gardinier, 2016, p. 130; Vadahi and Bilali, 2015, pp. 336-7.
Equity
While Albania has made significant progress over the past decade in the education sector, there are still many gaps to be bridged. Concerning access, it is crucial to sustain nearly universal enrolment rates in primary education and to urgently increase enrolments in pre-primary education. In achieving gender equity in primary education, Albania has been quite successful, as the Gender Parity Index (GPI) equals 1.0. Considerations of equity are central to the advancement and continuous betterment of any education system. In Albania, of strategic concern in terms of equity, equality, vulnerability, and non-discrimination, remain the issues related to income and social class inequality, the urban-rural divide, gender disparities, and discrimination against minorities (such as Roma and Balkan Egyptians), and children with disabilities.

While Albania has made progress in each of these areas, particularly in addressing many of the Roma related issues, there are still significant barriers to Roma educational equity and inclusion. According to the Albanian Coalition for Child Education (2013, p. 24), more than 50% of Roma children in the age group of 6-16 have never been enrolled in school, and more than 40% of Roma youth aged 15-16 may be considered as illiterate.

The Law on Inclusive Education, adopted in 2012, guarantees the right of children with disabilities to education, and furthermore, access to special teaching personnel trained in catering to the special needs students may have. At the same time, there is significant evidence suggesting the highly constrained capacity of individual schools for the intake of children with disabilities (ADRA Albania, 2015). The supply of schools for children with disabilities is rather limited in Albania with virtually non-existent access to education in rural areas (De Soto et al., 2005, p. 58). The Government of Albania has committed to increase the enrolments of children with disabilities and children from impoverished families by 2% in PUE (Republic of Albania, 2013, p. 89). It is anticipated that considerable infrastructure improvements and improved access to services for children with disabilities will result from adoption of the most recent framework law on inclusion of and accessibility for people with disabilities (European Commission, 2014, p. 37).

Quality
Whilst schools in Albania have made tremendous progress in recent years, Albania remains a low-ranked country as far as PISA results are concerned. In Table 3 below, Albania’s mean scores in reading mathematics and science from PISA in 2000, 2009, 2012, and 2015 are listed; in Table 4, Albania’s mean scores are compared with the
benchmark of the OECD average and the 2015 top performer, Singapore. As evident in the tables, Albania is gradually improving its educational performance on PISA, and this represents one indication of improvement in students’ learning outcomes. An interesting fact concerning PISA that is discussed in the EPR is that girls in Albania consistently perform better than boys in all disciplines.

Table 3. Albania’s PISA performance by discipline and year*6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Average 3 year trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>385 (+36*)</td>
<td>394 (+9)</td>
<td>405 (+11*)</td>
<td>+10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>377 (-4)</td>
<td>394 (+17*)</td>
<td>413 (+19*)</td>
<td>+18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>391 (+15*)</td>
<td>397 (+6)</td>
<td>427 (+30*)</td>
<td>+18*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4. Albania’s 2015 PISA performance compared to other mean scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PISA 2015 results</th>
<th>Singapore’s mean scores</th>
<th>OECD mean scores</th>
<th>Albania’s mean scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD, 2016.

6 Note: change in score from previous round is in parentheses, with * indicating that the change is statistically significant (WB, 2014; OECD, 2016).
Policy Domain 1: Curriculum Development and Reform

At the time of the EPR process (2015-2017), Albania was in the middle of a curriculum reform for the pre-university education (PUE) system. The curriculum reform was designed to make the curriculum for basic education more modular and comparable to competency-based curricula in EU Member States, as well as to introduce a modern ICT curriculum in basic and secondary schools.

Education policy in Albania draws upon some of the major principles of the pan-European social and economic recommendations, including those from the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as several bilateral and multi-lateral organizations. In addition – although Albania is not a member of the OECD – the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Albania has participated since 2000, has become a key point of reference for education policy-makers.

The analysis on curriculum development and reform highlights the following: curriculum reform must be incremental; widespread communication of reforms must reach a range of stakeholders; there must be support for local implementers as well as ongoing monitoring, formative evaluation and feedback mechanisms to make adjustments where needed. Furthermore, the EPR supports the further development of policies and practices that promote full inclusion for vulnerable students; teachers’ professional development that enables them to create inclusive learning environments and flexible instruction to reach all learners; local contextualization of the curriculum materials and texts; and improvement to the overall alignment of the education system over the medium and long term of implementation.

Four specific policy issues and evidence-based recommendations in the domain of curriculum development and reform are summarized below7.

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7 Policy issues are denoted with the Domain number, followed by the Policy Issue number. For example for the first domain on Curriculum Development and Reform, Policy Issue 1 is denoted as 1.1. Recommendations are denoted with the Domain number, followed by the Policy Issue number, followed by the Recommendation number.
POLICY ISSUE 1.1
The curriculum documents should reflect the intentions of the reform, be appropriate to students and useful to teachers.

Evidence and Discussion
Education policy in Albania draws upon some of the major principles of the pan-European social and economic recommendations, including those from the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as several bilateral and multilateral organizations. In additional – although Albania is not a member of the OECD – the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Albania has participated since 2000, has become a key point of reference for education policy-makers.

In the UNESCO review teams’ interviews with the staff from IED, concern was expressed about the extent of the pedagogical shift required to engage students in a constructivist, collaborative learning approach and about the teachers’ comfort with the new competency-based assessment model. The teachers of Albania presently are varied in their qualifications and in their experience of more interactive, student-centred pedagogies. There are teachers who were trained prior to Albania becoming democratic, and teachers trained more recently who may be quite comfortable with a constructivist approach, but who have been using the previous, more teacher-centred curriculum that preceded this reform. The review team found that the present set of documents for lower secondary teachers in Albania is overwhelming in its scope and detail and thus needs to be streamlined in a way that classroom teachers can use it in their daily preparation and delivery of learning. While there are some materials provided to guide teachers in curriculum implementation, a too finely grained prescription of time and sequence is a potential barrier to the stated objectives of enabling all pupils to learn mathematics, for example. The effective differentiation of instruction at the classroom and individual pupil level requires that teachers have the opportunity, time, and support to develop and use their professional judgment for instructional purposes.

POLICY ISSUE 1.1 RECOMMENDATIONS
Clarify and Streamline Curriculum Documents

1.1.1 Continue reviewing all curriculum documents (curriculum framework, core curriculum, programs, assessment documents, etc.) with a view to maintaining their inner coherence, so they all clearly state the intentions, commitments and goals of the curriculum reform, and how it will work for both compulsory and upper secondary education.

1.1.2 Provide teachers with the necessary documents and guides, with concrete examples of what successful performances might be as illustrations, but not as rigid prescriptions. Emphasis should be placed on communication and critical thinking skills and on the possibility that there may be more than one appropriate or successful approach to a problem or task.
POLICY ISSUE 1.2
The implementation process for a major curriculum reform is critical to the success of the reform and includes (a) engagement and communication with teachers, parents, employers and tertiary education institutions about the curriculum reform and its intentions; (b) the preparation of teachers to use the new curriculum; and (c) the provision of appropriate learning resources including textbooks to support the reform.

Evidence and Discussion
According to officials of MES and IED, the new curriculum requires a significant shift in pedagogical and assessment practice for Albania’s teachers. The shift in practice that teachers are being asked to make will require different and more extensive preparation for lessons and a closer examination of what each student is able to demonstrate for assessment purposes. It requires the teacher to determine whether the student has partially demonstrated competency and to adjust teaching and learning strategies to improve that student’s performance, as well as the performance of all the other students. For the curriculum to succeed in achieving its stated goals, the implementation process must be focussed on the achievement of these shifts in teachers’ practice, not simply on a bureaucratic implementation of the new curriculum.

Parents and employers need to be informed of the goals, objectives, and purposes of the curriculum reform. A guide has already been produced for parents, for example. According to UNICEF, teachers are grasping the ‘big picture’ of the reform, but they may experience challenges with classroom implementation of the new pedagogy. UNESCO review team’s interviews with teachers and principals involved in the implementation who had participated in the training revealed that they are struggling to understand more fully how to change classroom practices. According to those interviewed, there are few, if any, opportunities to observe colleagues’ classrooms, to plan lessons collaboratively with colleagues, or to reflect with colleagues on the progress of the professional learning.

When significant changes are being made in the ways in which student learning is being assessed, and when teachers are being asked to build continuous assessment and feedback into their practice, it is desirable to provide some structured learning for teachers in how to assess student learning. Teachers can use informal diagnostic assessments and classroom work to provide information about how well students are learning, and in what ways they might alter instruction to improve individual student learning. This is assessing for learning. Teachers may also need assistance in learning
how to assess demonstrated learning (e.g. student presentations or other non-text, non-test examples of learning) and in how to provide helpful feedback to students on an almost daily basis. This complex process of continuous assessment (formative and summative) at both the individual and class level is an essential part of successful teaching in the new environment.

The education reform includes the development of digital competences. One of the main challenges regarding the implementation of the reform related to school textbooks and teaching materials is the lack of proper infrastructure, particularly in the area of ICT. For this reason, the curriculum reform in Albania includes an initiative focusing on the use of ICT in education, which is further discussed in the next section. To support the development of students’ digital competences and to help teachers and students in the learning process, MES and IED are working to provide other learning resources, especially digital resources, for schools.

Throughout the reform process, the collaborative learning process in schools is key. MES reports that there are departments in schools in which teachers collaborate in order to discuss and design syllabi and organize their classes. There is also an active process of peer observation and reflection sessions.

The process for new textbook selection has also changed with the implementation of the reform. According to MES, new textbooks are new designed according to the curriculum programmes and they are competitively assessed according to the textbook standards by four evaluators. The winning textbooks are then piloted for one year before being certified by the publishers after reflecting on comments and feedback from the teachers who piloted the texts. This process should aid in increasing the relevance and alignment of new textbooks with the reformed curriculum in Albania.

**POLICY ISSUE 1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Coordinate and Communicate Implementation Plans*

1.2.1 Continue to implement a comprehensive public communications programme to explain to all teachers, principals, parents, employers, teacher training institutions, tertiary education institutions and the general public the nature of and reasons for the curriculum reform, in order to facilitate the implementation process.

1.2.2 Through collaboration between MES and IED, develop a structure for sustainable dialogue about the curriculum reform at two levels: with representatives of the State Inspectorate of Education (SIE), REDs, principals, teachers (including teacher unions) and administrators regarding its ongoing implementation and professional learning activities; and with the education representatives and representatives of parents, faculties of education, tertiary education and employers to review the progress and success of the reform, and the success of students under the new curriculum as well.
In the short term, incorporate into the implementation an additional professional learning component for teachers that includes opportunities for teachers to engage in: collaborative lesson planning, observation of others’ classrooms, reflection on the lessons and observations with colleagues, and extended work on assessment for as well as of learning.

Integrate student assessment components in the teacher training programmes, considering performance standards as well. Specifically, include in professional learning activities instruction on the use of data from formal and informal assessment for and of learning for purposes of instructional planning.

Through collaboration between MES and IED, conduct ongoing reviews of whether new textbooks are adequate for the purposes intended and provide additional information to schools regarding technology requirements related to the new curriculum. Discuss with publishers the importance and possibility of increasing contextualization to Albania in textbooks, especially in science and mathematics texts.

Through collaboration between MES, IED, and teachers, prepare a guide to help educators identify what factors to consider in the selection of textbooks; for example, factors such as the previous experience of students, availability of other resources (including ICT), and students’ language levels could be considered.

Through collaboration between MES and IED, explore the possibility of building digital resource repositories for teachers of all grades and subjects, taking account of successful examples from other jurisdictions.

**POLICY ISSUE 1.3**

Inclusion is a key function of the curriculum in which the curriculum design helps to ensure that appropriate learning experiences are available to all students including those who have different abilities and challenges (physical, behavioral, and cognitive), those from linguistic and ethnic minorities and those who may not previously have attended school.

**Evidence and Discussion**

Due to persistent challenges with social and economic conditions, pre-university education in Albania has thus far been unable to provide the same quality of education services to all students. Differences between urban and rural areas regarding the quality of schools and teachers and variation in resources related to transportation infrastructure and ICT use have led to differences in education quality and provision. To address these issues, the most recent strategy on pre-university education in Albania (MES, 2014a) has prioritized quality and equality in education.

Education policy in Albania draws upon some of the major principles of the pan-European social and economic recommendations, including those from the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as several bilateral and multi-lateral organizations. In additional – although Albania is not a member of the
OECD – the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Albania has participated since 2000, has become a key point of reference for education policy-makers.

The need for greater inclusion also reflects deep socio-economic and urban-rural divisions; for example, the inclusion and quality of learning for Roma students is predominantly an issue for urban schools, while in rural communities, children with disabilities confront barriers of old buildings without adequate universal access, multi-grade classrooms, and parental attitudes that are not disposed to school attendance. There are also transportation issues for children with disabilities in the rural communities. According to UNICEF, school attendance is a major issue with both of these marginalised groups, yet the numbers of students not attending school is under-reported. The only hard data available for the UNESCO review team on children with disabilities was the number of students actually enrolled in schools. However, interviewees highlighted that there are significant numbers of children who are not in school at all, and not acknowledged as being in need of education. Additionally, many Roma girls drop out school at the 5th year of education (age 10).

Education policy in Albania draws upon some of the major principles of the pan-European social and economic recommendations, including those from the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as several bilateral and multi-lateral organizations. In additional – although Albania is not a member of the OECD – the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in which Albania has participated since 2000, has become a key point of reference for education policy-makers.

**POLICY ISSUE 1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Improve Inclusion Practices in Schools and Classrooms*

1.3.1 In the short to medium term, expand teacher training and professional development to support the implementation of the new curriculum, adapting it to inclusiveness while teaching (differentiated instruction) as well as to classroom management (strategies for managing those with behavioural challenges or students who have difficulty participating).

1.3.2 As part of, or in addition to, the training underway for the new curriculum, engage in a process of collaborative inquiry at the school level that assists teachers and principals in developing a repertoire of high level pedagogical and assessment skills required for the implementation of both the curriculum and effective inclusion practices.

1.3.3 Invite international experts from countries with well-established inclusion practices to assist Albania in the design process for such collaborative inquiry, to help educators and policy-makers in developing new practices and to aid in identifying systemic obstacles to effective inclusion.
POLICY ISSUE 1.4
The implementation of the curriculum, and the collection of student achievement data, should be guided by effective monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Evidence and Discussion
The development of clear and measurable targets and indicators is a crucial step in ensuring the success of Albania’s education reforms. Enacting effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of reforms is also key to ensuring success. Monitoring and formative evaluation during implementation provides useful feedback to education authorities, and can help teachers and principals in the schools see their progress. With reliable information, governments can more effectively target investments in training and resources, and make changes to implementation plans and guidelines if these are needed.

Other than the number of students continuing from year to year, there is no clear reference to student achievement indicators for the curriculum reform in PUEDS (MES, 2014a). The only output referring to actual learning in the section ‘Ensure Quality Performance According to Standards’ is the reference to PISA results for 2015 (the first year of system wide implementation of the new curriculum in Grade 1 and Grade 6) and the PISA results for 2018. Depending on the exact timing of the 2018 PISA, it may test the last cohort of students who have experienced the old curriculum.

An effective student information management system should include yearly achievement, national assessment results, and other information relevant to the individual student. An effective system should be able to accumulate the relevant information on a student as he/she moves through the system, and perhaps from school to school or region to region. Feedback surveys should be developed centrally in consultation with the representative local participants.

To be able to monitor student achievement effectively, in a world where students may move from school to school, or may leave school, requires a robust national system for managing student information, from enrolment to achievement. There are jurisdictions that have implemented effective systems, which may be willing to share their expertise and advice – this could help to speed and streamline Albania’s work. In the intervening period, provision should be made for each school to improve the data it collects on a daily basis in a less technologically sophisticated way that might have sufficient consistency to be used as indicators.
POLICY ISSUE 1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts

1.4.1 Through collaboration between the IED and ANE, ensure that the Matura examinations and any other nationally mandated assessments reflect the reformed curriculum.

1.4.2 Broaden the set of indicators used by MES, IED, and REDs to assess progress to include qualitative and outcome-based measures.

1.4.3 Systematically develop short surveys for teachers, principals, and regional education directors to be administered annually with the intention of identifying successful practices, unexpected issues, obstacles and successes with implementation.

1.4.4 Collect annual feedback from students in the lower and upper secondary grades who are using the new curriculum.

1.4.5 Determine key milestones for the development and implementation of a robust student information management system, to be used as indicators of progress.
Policy Domain 2: ICT in Education

Increasing the availability and effectiveness of ICT in education is a clear priority for the Government of Albania. In the 2014-2020 Pre-University Education Development Strategy (MES, 2014a), the Government has set out to increase the funding for enhancing and improving digitization of the learning process. Albania further aims to “transcend the digital gap and to empower the youth” through increased investment and capacitation for the use of ICT in education (Cross-cutting Strategy on ‘Digital Agenda of Albania’ 2015-2012, p. 6). Digital literacy is also one of the key competencies that is integral to the new Curriculum Framework in Albania. Thus, recent policies have clearly indicated the Government’s priorities in the area of ICT in education. In the area of increasing the number of youth and adults, including teachers, with information and skills using ICTs, Albania’s recent policies are well aligned with SDG4.

Yet despite the significant policy strategies to improve the use of ICT in education, many challenges remain. Policy and actions should find the right balance between implementing central educational goals and adapting to the particular needs of regions and schools. It is important to build consensus among all stakeholders, including school leaders, as they are more likely to accept change if they understand the rationale and usefulness of reforms.

The provision of ICT and Internet connectivity to all primary and secondary schools in Albania remains a challenge; yet increasing access to ICT in education is recognized as a priority in order to increase the quality and relevance of education, the effectiveness of education delivery, and facilitate greater access to information and services particularly by marginalized groups and communities.

According to the CBR (IED, 2015, p. 38) the priorities in the area of ICT in education in the PUEDS are:

- The provision of the infrastructure of schools for the use of information (computer, laptop, smart table, tablets);
- Internet with high-speed and online access opportunities in other environments within schools, not only in laboratories;
- Technical support that ensures efficient use of infrastructure.
Access to ICT equipment and to broadband internet connection is restricted to dedicated computer labs (IED, 2015). At the time of publishing the EPR, Ministry officials who participated in the March technical mission indicated that there were 1,496 computer labs throughout schools in Albania. Depending on school size, computer labs are equipped with 5 to 15 computers for pupils plus one for the teacher. Yet according to the data reported in the Digital Agenda 2015-2020, and more recent updates from stakeholders, many of the 15,731 computers and 1,631 laptops in Albania’s schools are not functional. Furthermore, computers in computer labs, despite being connected to the Internet, do not have programme management or subject content applications (MSHIAP, nd, p. 17). This may change incrementally with the implementation of the new curriculum; for example, some new textbooks for upper secondary school have digital content developed by educational publishers.

According to stakeholders, the Tablet Pilot Project, implemented in 2015, increased the modernization and digitalization of the education system through the creation of 120 new interactive classrooms, some with smartboards, in 60 secondary schools throughout Albania. The interactive classrooms are managed at the central level.

In interviews with the UNESCO review team it was pointed out that Internet connection services in schools are not part of the national public services but are instead run by private companies. Furthermore, the quality of network services and infrastructures are not guaranteed by national guidelines nor measured. Finally, interviews revealed that in Albania there is no explicit and definite period for the renewal of schools’ ICT infrastructure. According to the principals, teachers and students interviewed, the major obstacle to ICT use is the insufficient ICT equipment.

In light of the evidence presented in the domain of ICT in education, four policy issues and corresponding recommendations are identified.

**POLICY ISSUE 2.1**

The lack of a stable, responsive, and widely available infrastructure and digital learning resources hinders the use of ICT in schools.

**Evidence and Discussion**

A certain level of technological infrastructure is a prerequisite for using technologies effectively for teaching and learning. For a sustainable solution, ICT infrastructure must include pedagogical aspects such as the development of digital competence among teachers and greater access to digital content for teaching and learning. Furthermore, drawing up a sustainability plan from the very start of a policy is a
good starting point for more effective development of ICT in education. This will necessarily involve the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of State for Innovation and Public Administration.

**POLICY ISSUE 2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Increase Investment in Services and Materials that Support Effective ICT Use in Schools*

2.1.1 Address the need for a stable, responsive and widely available ICT infrastructure by setting clear, medium-long term goals to expand devices and Internet access; these should be backed by the funds that are necessary to cover devices, connectivity and maintenance.

2.1.2 Increase the investment in ICT infrastructure and connectivity to remote areas.

2.1.3 Increase the investment in digital learning resources.

2.1.4 Ameliorate and maintain the pre-university information management system and the Electronic Higher Education Database.

2.1.5 Increase the investment in the human resources necessary to utilize these tools and systems, and capitalize on the training provided to teachers by the ICT academy.

**POLICY ISSUE 2.2**

*Teachers need stronger basic pedagogical ICT skills.*

**Evidence and Discussion**

Teachers play a significant role in the effective use of ICT for educational purposes. According to recent research in Albania, teachers who have been successfully trained use ICT more frequently (Abdurrahmani, et. al., 2012, p. 131). Initial teacher education, in-service and pre-service teacher training, and continuing professional development (CPD) all contribute to building teachers’ digital competencies. These can include developing ICT skills for coding and the web, the skills to teach ICT as a subject, and the skills to use ICTs to support teaching and learning in other subjects.

Computer and/or tablet access is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ICT-use in learning and teaching. The availability of both pedagogical and technical support at the school level is important to ensure that teachers actually use ICT in their teaching. School-level leadership must therefore make provision of such support a high priority within its goals for learning and teaching in the school. According to the CBR (IED, 2015, p. 46) and interviews by the UNESCO team, teachers in Albania are not prepared for the use of technology in teaching. The skills that teachers have to develop during their initial teacher training to use technology in the classroom for pedagogical purposes include basic knowledge of the computer; internet navigation; use of electronic billboards; creating digital teaching materials; communicating through electronic mail; and knowledge of the basics for creating and editing web pages.
According to the UNESCO review team’s interviews with school principals, teachers and students, despite recognizing the need for more skilled teachers, national plans for improving teachers’ ICT skills and digital competencies should be improved. Enhancing teacher professional development is also crucial to help teachers transform their positive opinion about ICT use into competencies and effective practice in the classroom. Professional development for teachers should give priority to developing pedagogical rather than merely technical ICT skills.

To improve teachers’ ICT skills, the on-going Higher Education Reform in Albania states that teachers have to acquire basic ICT skills during their initial training (MES, 2014). Teachers currently have limited possibilities to acquire ICT skills as part of their continuing professional development (CPD) because educational institutions in general, and schools in particular, do not have the resources to finance such initiatives. Collaborations could promote EU initiatives like the eTwinning project and encourage projects at the local level. The development of collaboration initiatives among teachers and schools should be supported as a strategy to create high quality digital resources in the Albanian language.

POLICY ISSUE 2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS
Invest in Teachers to Build Capacity for Effective ICT Use in Schools

2.2.1 Implement the Higher Education Reform, with a particular focus on the education of candidate teachers, and develop a national system to monitor the ongoing development of pre- and in-service teachers’ ICT skills.

2.2.2 Collaborate with international donors in order to design and implement continuing professional development initiatives aimed at training in-service teachers, and ICT teachers in particular, in the use of ICT for educational purposes.

2.2.3 Encourage collaboration among teachers and school leaders with different levels of expertise in the use of ICT for teaching and learning purposes.

POLICY ISSUE 2.3
Improving online safety for children and youth should be a greater priority.

Evidence and Discussion
In today’s online environment, safety is a fundamental concern. With greater access to the internet, children, young adults, and other vulnerable populations can encounter significant threats such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and unlawful solicitation. Providing education about online risks, protective measures, and safe online practices should be a greater priority in Albania.
A recent survey conducted by World Vision International (2016) on a sample of 821 respondents aged 13-18 demonstrated that improving online safety should be a priority also for Albania. About 44% of the respondents reported using Internet to watch pornographic material daily while 62% affirmed having friends that visit similar websites.

Albania has already taken significant actions to prevent children and young adults from being exposed to potential online risks. Law no. 10,347 (date 4.11.2010) “For Protection of Children Rights” created the National Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights and specified an action plan for child protection. This plan was supervised and implemented by the Ministry of Innovation and Information Communication and the National Authority for Electronic Certification. More recently the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, Ministry of Education and Sport, with the support of UNICEF, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at increasing the efficiency of institutional interaction in children online safety. This agreement has the scope to enhance and promote child online safety against inappropriate content (e.g. pornographic material) and protect them from violence, exploitation, abuse, dangers and threats (e.g. cyberbullying) posed by the use of the Internet. In addition, Albania has adopted an action plan for the protection of children’s rights (DCM No. 182/2012). The cross-cutting strategy Digital Agenda 2015-2020, also foresees a few activities for the online protection of children (MSHIAP, nd, 19).

There is a common understanding that an online child protection policy rests on the commitment and shared responsibilities of all stakeholders. To act effectively, governments and educators must raise parents’ awareness on possible online risks and provide them with tools to increase the online safety of their children. Thus educators have the responsibility to foster both children’s and parents’ Internet literacy. In order to cope with the challenge of Internet use, teachers, ICT coordinators and school principals should receive a regular training on the issue of children Internet safety. Albania should promote whole-school e-safety policies ensuring that children and young people use ICTs appropriately and safely. To be effective, these policies should apply to all members of the school community, including staff, students/pupils, and other community members who have access to and are users of school ICTs, both in and out of school.

**POLICY ISSUE 2.3 RECOMMENDATION**

*Protect Youth and Vulnerable Populations from Dangerous Online Activity*

2.3.1 Through collaboration across education institutions, raise awareness of problematic online situations among children, adolescents, young adults, and their families.

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8 See the platform www.isigurt.al
**POLICY ISSUE 2.4**  
Albania would benefit from a central evaluation system and national guidelines on the use of ICT in education.

**Evidence and Discussion**  
As of 2017, stakeholders who were interviewed by the UNESCO team reported that Albania does not have either a central monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system or national guidelines concerning the use of ICT for assessment purposes and a clear research agenda on ICT. However, the *Digital Agenda of Albania 2015-2020* states that an efficient monitoring and evaluating system is one of the pre-conditions for its successful implementation (MSHIAP, nd, p. 42).

Data about the availability and the quality of the ICT resources as well as ICT teacher training are rather scarce in Albania. It is difficult to have correct information regarding many issues of ICT usage; for example, stakeholders did not know with certainty the bandwidth in schools, if the hardware and the software are obsolete or up to date, the number of personnel receiving ICT training, the level of teachers’ ICT skills, the presence of pedagogical and technical support in schools, and how technologies are used for educational and administrative purposes. To inform policy-makers about the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, input data should be compared to output and outcome data. For example, output data may include the number of hours per week a student in a given grade and subject uses ICT at school; the number of hours per week spent by a teacher to prepare ICT materials to be presented in his/her classes; or a list of typical tasks students are able to perform using ICT. Outcome data could be, for example, indicators assessing students’/teachers’ confidence in using ICT; students’/teachers’ ICT skills; and students’ learning outcomes (i.e. PISA test scores, students’ grades at national exams, etc.).

The successful implementation of education reform in Albania requires coherent and sustained interventions. According to the UNESCO review team’s analysis, the current policy and institutional architecture concerning ICT in education is too fragmented to meet evolving national aspirations and global demands. Furthermore, the review team recommends that administration needs to be streamlined and rationalized; data collection should be enhanced and better use made of data in policy making; and more attention needs to be given to strengthening capacity at the school level to address emerging needs. Additionally, equity must be put at the centre of all these reforms. National ICT policies in education will have the greatest impact if they are aligned with other strategic and operational policies, particularly those designed to enhance educational quality, equity, and inclusion.
POLICY ISSUE 2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

*Develop Tools and Systems that Will Expand ICT Access and Functionality in Education*

2.4.1 Develop a central system for the periodic (annual or biannual) collection and publication of statistics that comprise data on infrastructure, equipment, training, teaching resources, assessment resources, and the use of ICT.

2.4.2 Develop a platform for implementing ICT in education and national guidelines on the use of ICT in education.

2.4.3 Build on the important efforts made thus far to improve access, equity, and quality in education by addressing the remaining ICT challenges that must be overcome in order for students to develop the digital competencies necessary to succeed in a digital world.

2.4.4 Develop and include in the future Digital Agenda of Albania clear milestones stated for every year with regard to the development of digital learning materials, competence development, and infrastructure improvement so that progress can be measured annually or biannually.
Policy Domain 3
Teacher and School Leadership Policies

In Albania, efforts to create a more student-centred curriculum, expand the use of ICT, and increase equity have placed new expectations on teachers to create more inclusive classrooms where students develop transversal skills and prepare for participation in a democratic knowledge society. As Albania continues to decentralize its education system, school leaders are also expected to take on new responsibilities, reach out to parents, and build strong links with their communities. The main teacher and school leadership policy issues identified in this EPR include the status of the teaching profession, teachers’ and principals’ employment and working conditions, initial teacher preparation, the state examination and internship programme that lead to teacher certification, hiring and deployment procedures, continuing professional development, teacher performance appraisal, and the school leadership role. In highlighting these key policy issues, the UNESCO review team views the pathway of teachers’ initial training through to their certification and continuous professional development as an ongoing process of lifelong learning. The recommendations in this domain thus follow a sequential progression from teachers’ initial induction into the profession, through various aspects of certification and career advancement, and, for some, promotion to the school leadership role. These are key areas of reform where Albania can continue to improve the link between policy and practice, particularly where national goals have already been set.

Furthermore, to ensure the success of these reforms, the Government should encourage regular consultation, collaboration, and information sharing among teachers, principals, and other stakeholders. The nine policy issues and associated recommendations identified below, as well as the cross-cutting issues discussed in the concluding section, are integral to the success of these reforms.

POLICY ISSUE 3.1
There is a need to raise the status and increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, while making strategic financial investments to improve the education system as a whole.

Evidence and Discussion
According to stakeholders, in the past, initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Albania generally accepted only high-performing students. However, in the early-to
mid-2000s, the doors of the country’s universities were opened wider and the size of ITE programmes expanded. Now, applicants to ITE programmes have lower Grade Point Averages (GPAs) than applicants to other university programmes (European Commission, 2013; ACCE, 2015). This is a problem for both the primary (bachelor’s, initially) and secondary (master’s) level programmes (MES, 2014a).

A related problem is that ITE programmes are admitting and producing more teachers than the education system needs, while gaps remain for certain shortage subject areas (Smith and Hamilton, 2011; European Commission, 2013). Labour market data on the demand for teachers at different levels and for different curriculum subjects does not inform admission quotas. This has created a high unemployment rate among teachers, which could be making the profession less attractive to potential high-quality applicants.

Attracting highly qualified applicants to the teaching profession is thus a key area of policy concern in Albania. One possible approach to increasing the attractiveness of teaching would be an across-the-board increase to teachers’ salaries. However, if teachers’ salaries in Albania are already high compared to comparable public professions, a salary increase would need to be substantial in order to have an impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession as a whole. The government will need to weigh the relative costs and benefits of teacher salary increases and determine whether the increased salaries would have an overall positive effect on the attractiveness of the profession.

Related to this issue, research has shown that in countries with a GDP per capita of less than US $20,000, students’ overall academic performance on PISA is not related to teachers’ salaries (OECD, 2014). Alternatively, these countries may benefit from first devoting more finances towards material resources, like school infrastructure, instructional materials, and transportation, before increasing teachers’ salaries. Albania has made infrastructure investments in the recent past, but the country still faces significant challenges in this area, which are reportedly affecting teaching and learning. In sum, a more strategic approach towards financial investments in the education system, including a strategy for the financing of education system personnel, would be advantageous.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Invest in Efforts to Raise the Status of the Teaching Profession*

3.1.1 In the short to medium term, invest in efforts to raise the status of the teaching profession by attracting high-quality applicants to ITE programmes and raising the bar for entry into these programmes.
3.1.2 In the short term, conduct a review to determine whether alternative financial investments would be a more efficient and effective use of resources than an across-the-board salary increase for teachers.

POLICY ISSUE 3.2
Working and employment conditions may be having a negative effect on teaching and learning.

Evidence and Discussion
In Albania, a number of working and employment conditions may affect the attractiveness of the teaching profession and hamper teachers’ efforts to teach effectively. These include urban and suburban classrooms that are overcrowded, staff shortages in rural areas, and widespread physical infrastructure problems. During the visits of the UNESCO review team in September and October 2015, teachers were not informed of the workload provisions in the new contract of December 2015.

The current mandated maximum class size in Albania is 26 to 30 students for the first grade, and 30 to 35 students for grades two to five and the lower and upper secondary level (MES, 2014e). However, stakeholders in two cities the UNESCO review team visited stated that their classrooms had over 40 students, and described the difficulty this posed for teachers trying to conduct student evaluations and use interactive, student-centred teaching methods. According to MES, in the academic year 2015-2016, 12% of students attended school in two shifts, and 27% of classes had more than 30 students, which is a reduction from 30% the previous year.

In 2014, Albania introduced Administrative Instruction 44, which reduced most teachers’ mandated teaching hours by several hours per week. Now, teachers’ teaching hours in Albania are comparable to the weekly teaching hours in many European countries (European Commission, 2015c). In Albania, they differ depending on the level and curriculum subject taught, ranging from 20–23 hours for primary teachers, 20–22 hours for lower secondary teachers, and 18–22 hours for upper secondary teachers (MES, 2015e).

Despite the reduction in mandated classes and teaching hours, teachers with whom the UNESCO review team spoke expressed concern about a lack of acknowledgement of the actual amount of work that they do such as lesson planning and preparation, marking of student work and communicating with parents. These activities add to teachers’ total overall work time per week, yet they do not appear to be contracted or regulated.
Regarding infrastructure, although investments have been made in ICT equipment, science laboratories and Internet connectivity, stakeholders reported that schools still lack equipment, labs, photocopiers, and basic furniture like tables and chairs. Though MES (2014) has proposed financial investments to address these problems, stakeholders called for greater coordination between the central and regional levels of government in order to support schools with their infrastructure challenges.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Improve Education Quality by Addressing Structural Issues in Schools*

3.2.1 In the short term and on a continuous basis, Albania would benefit from a strong consultative partnership between the government, teachers, and teacher unions, one in which all parties work together to address challenges associated with teachers’ working and employment conditions, and develop a comprehensive description of teaching and non-teaching tasks.

3.2.2 In the short to medium term, Albania’s education system would benefit from investments in infrastructure, including investments to reduce overcrowding in public schools in urban areas and attention to the issue of collective (multi-grade) classes.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.3**

*Initial teacher preparation should support Albania’s education reform efforts and prepare teachers for the realities of classrooms and schools.*

**Evidence and Discussion**

Some stakeholders expressed concern that the country lacks alternative or flexible ITE programmes that could quickly prepare new teachers to fill shortage areas, and programmes do not seem to exist to prepare ICT teachers. Currently, it is reportedly not uncommon for ICT to be taught by math or science teachers. Given the importance of subject matter knowledge to effective teaching, it is a concern if the Government is not providing or developing other means to prepare teachers for all subjects of the curriculum.

Stakeholders in Albania expressed concern that ITE programmes are not adequately supporting the country’s education reform efforts. Recent research found that programmes do not provide sufficient pedagogical preparation in the pre-university curriculum and that course delivery is still characterized by teacher-centred methodology (e.g. lectures), rather than the student-centred techniques that teachers are now expected to use in the classroom (Abdurrahmani, 2013; European Commission, 2013). Studies also suggest that Albania’s ITE programmes do not sufficiently prepare student teachers in student assessment, lesson planning, classroom management, and teaching students with special education needs and students from diverse backgrounds (Vula et al., 2012; European Commission, 2013).
In 2013 the European Commission called practice teaching ‘the least developed component of the teacher education curriculum’ in Albania (2013a, p.25). Research has shown that well-designed practice teaching experiences reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, improve performance among beginning teachers, and increase the likelihood that teachers will use innovative teaching methods and be effective problem-solvers (Musset, 2010). In addition, flexible routes into teaching allow individuals who have developed skills or knowledge in particular fields to become teachers, and can be particularly helpful in addressing shortage areas (OECD, 2005; Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

In order to improve Initial Teacher Education (ITE), the 2015 law on higher education in Albania (Republic of Albania, 2015a) states that 80% of curricula for teacher preparation in each subject will be the same in all higher education institutions. This reflects the fact that, according to MES, university professors and school teachers consider practice teaching as a very important component of the ITE programme. In addition, 25% of all the curricula will be focused on the pedagogical development of the teachers (ibid). These new legal provisions may help to increase the alignment of the ITE programmes with the new curriculum and improve teachers’ physco-pedagogical preparation as well.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Strengthen Teacher Education and Provide Flexible Routes into the Profession*

3.3.1 In the short term, strengthen teacher preparation by enhancing the practicum and elements key to Albania’s education reform.

3.3.2 In the medium to long term, consider introducing more flexible routes into the teaching profession to address teacher shortages.

3.3.3 In the medium term, improve coordination of teacher preparation in universities, practical training, professional development and performance evaluation, including through the harmonization of legislation.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.4**

The teaching internship programme needs to better support both interns and mentors.

*Evidence and Discussion*

In 2014 MES identified mentors’ increased workload, in addition to a lack of mentors, as challenges with the internship programme (MES, 2014a). Mentors are required to devote one quarter of their workload towards the internship, with two-thirds of that time devoted to observing their intern and one third devoted to counselling them (MoES, 2011b). Mentors are generally selected on the basis of their experience.
and level of achievement in their profession. Their selection as a mentor is reflected in a reduction of their workload in order to be effective in monitoring the interns. One quarter of the mentors’ workload should be covered by the interns. In 2010 the European Commission recommended that mentors be well-trained for their role (European Commission, 2010) and according to UNESCO mentors receive formal training in a number of European countries (UNESCO, 2014).

Interns represent a large unpaid workforce in Albania’s schools, possibly 8% of the teaching population in the 2014-2015 school year by the UNESCO review team’s calculations. They receive social and health benefits, and the internship year counts towards their pension, but they are not remunerated; recent researchers and stakeholders in Albania have identified this as a weakness of the programme (European Commission, 2013a). MES recently proposed paying interns half a teacher’s salary, but this change had not been implemented at the time of writing. The prospect of an unpaid year of internship, after five years of higher education, could be a strong disincentive to potential high-quality ITE applicants. However professional practice is part of the initial training of future teachers and interns are considered as candidates for the teaching profession. There is a scheme for monitoring the interns on the basis of their classroom management, planning, and other facets of their work. The indicators used are measurable and are utilized for the final evaluation of the intern’s performance.

In the ITE system, in the institutions of higher education, during the practicum, student teachers are supervised and evaluated by a university professor and a mentor teacher in the school. Some ITE providers have their own assessment and mentor selection practices. For example, one university the UNESCO review team visited assessed student teachers using a standard evaluation form and required that mentors have at least five years of teaching experience. However, research indicates these are not established practices across all ITE programmes in Albania, and mentor teachers are generally not trained for their role (Vula et al, 2012; European Commission, 2013). The Government has proposed the development of a new regulation to standardize the practicum, so this may change in the future (MES, 2014a).

POLICY ISSUE 3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Improve Effectiveness of ITE Practicum, Mentoring, and Internship Programmes**

3.4.1 In the short term, further address mentors’ workload challenges and consider how they could be better prepared, supported, and recognized for their role.

3.4.2 In the short to medium term, conduct an evaluation of the internship programme to determine its effectiveness and identify necessary improvements.

3.4.3 In the medium to long term, ITE programmes at the Bachelors level should include a well-designed practicum component, and the conditions of service applicable to interns could be reviewed.
POLICY ISSUE 3.5
The state exam for teacher certification should provide a reliable assessment of readiness to enter the profession.

Evidence and Discussion
Albania’s Agency for National Examinations (ANE) administers the state exam for teacher certification. The faculty of one of Albania’s ITE providers is responsible for developing and maintaining a collection of 3,000 multiple-choice questions and selecting the 50 items that appear on the exam. The state exam is conducted by computer at the ANE headquarters in Tirana twice per year, in July (first session) and November - December (second session).

Education Institutions in the field of education. For each teaching profile for the state exam there is a commission responsible for the test which analyses the questions. Before the exam, the specific questions are then randomly assigned by the computer. Reports that the questions have not been piloted (ACCE, 2015), that participants’ complaints have led to the removal of questions (although the removal has been before the test), and other issues, are indications of potential problems with the exam's content.

A study by the Council of Europe questioned the necessity of the exam when it was first announced given that Albania already planned to require higher academic qualifications (i.e. a master’s degree) and the completion of an internship programme for teacher certification (Smith and Hamilton, 2011). Although ITE faculty have been involved in the development of the exam, the UNESCO review team heard concerns that neither the exam nor the country’s ITE programmes reflect the revised pre-university curriculum. This raises concerns about the alignment of teacher preparation with the broader education system.

It is crucially important that the exam developers pilot and psychometrically assess the test instrument according to internationally recognized standards to ensure that it is a valid, robust, reliable and fair measure of teachers’ competencies. The cut-off mark should be determined based on the results of a piloting phase and the professional judgement of experts with a deep understanding of teaching as new teachers practice it. This recommendation also applies to Albania’s other high-stakes teacher tests, including the Teachers for Albania competitive employment exam, and the tests that are conducted as part of the qualifications scheme. Research points to the importance of rigorously screening candidates before initial teacher education as opposed to solely afterwards, and evidence supports the use of performance-based assessments of teaching practice as one among several possible authentic measures of teachers’ competence. Thus, the UNESCO team recommends a combination of
changes to strengthen its initial teacher preparation system, including raising the bar for entry into ITE programmes and modifying the internship programme, as well as improving Albania’s teacher and certification processes.

POLICY ISSUE 3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS
Enhance the Relevance and Reliability of Teacher Qualification and Certification Processes

3.5.1 It will be important for Albania to ensure that the state exam for teacher certification is properly piloted and that the test instrument is psychometrically assessed.

3.5.2 Albania could improve ITE and the state exam to better reflect the revised pre-university curriculum.

POLICY ISSUE 3.6
Changes are needed to make teacher hiring and deployment procedures more efficient, effective, and equitable.

Evidence and Discussion
MES has made significant efforts to address the problem of political interference and corruption in the hiring decisions of the education sector. In 2012, the Law on the Pre-University Education System created new assessment commissions, composed of local representatives, to make decisions about teacher appointments. In 2014, MES established the Teachers for Albania initiative with the intent of making the initial appointment of newly certified or unemployed teachers more meritocratic.

The hiring of teachers in Albania is conducted primarily at the regional level. When seeking employment, teachers submit an application to the RED where they wish to work (MES, 2015e). A regional assessment commission conducts the assessment for initial appointment according to the criteria and multi-stage process set out in Administrative Instruction 38, which includes ranking of applicants’ documentation; a ranking of the applicants’ Teachers for Albania test results; and a general ranking of applicants based on the two previous rankings (ibid). The applicants with the highest overall rankings are invited to select positions from among the job vacancies in the region, beginning with the highest-ranked candidate.

Stakeholders expressed concern about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Teachers for Albania test, stating that new teachers now have to sit for two tests, often in quick succession. One test is for certification to have the right to practice as a teacher, and the other test, Teachers for Albania, is for employment in one of the vacancies in the regional education directorates. Some stakeholders called for measures besides the
test to carry more weight in hiring decisions. For example, interviews, which were once a part of the assessment process, could be used again in the future.

In addition, the UNESCO review team asks whether a more efficient recruitment method could be found that does not involve the duplication of effort resulting from the use of two examinations, one for certification and one for employment. Some stakeholders also called for principals to play more of a role in the appointment process. According to Administrative Instruction 38, (date 06/10/2015) (MES, 2015e), the school principal, after the approval of the commissions at the school level (parents’ council, psycho-social commission and subject department), makes the final decision for teacher hiring.

The participation of parents on the assessment commission even at the level of regional education directorate is supported by the Ministry of Education and Sport and stakeholders, but in practice, stakeholders was reported to the review team that parents did not feel qualified to evaluate candidates and that their voices outweighed those of educators on the commission. With Administrative Instruction 38, the composition of the commission now includes more teachers (MES, 2015e). This commission is created at the level of the RED and is composed by 8 members from different structures, four of whom are teachers.

In 2013, the average student-teacher ratio in Albania was significantly higher than the OECD average at the primary level (19:1 compared to 15:1) and upper secondary level (19:1 compared to 14:1) and roughly equivalent at the lower secondary level (13:1 and 13:1) (World Bank, 2014). At all levels, the ratios were higher in the cities: 25:1 at the primary level, 17:1 at the lower secondary level, and 23:1 at the upper secondary level (ibid). Overcrowding is a problem in urban and suburban classrooms. Outside of the cities, Albania has over 1,000 micro-schools with small student populations (MES, 2014a).

MES already collects regional data on subject-specific teacher vacancies. The government could use this and other demographic and labour market data to conduct forward planning exercises in order to prepare for regional fluctuations in the demand for teachers. To ensure schools in remote or harder-to-staff regions reach a wider pool of potential applicants, all REDs should post job vacancies online, if they do not do so already. In this case, the government may need to provide support to REDs with poor ICT infrastructure.
POLICY ISSUE 3.6 RECOMMENDATIONS
Improve Education Quality through Strategic Staffing Decisions

3.6.1 In the short term, ensure that the Teachers for Albania test is methodologically robust, and in the future, consider augmenting it with other assessment methods.

3.6.2 In the short to medium term, provide more support and information to parents who are involved in hiring and decision-making processes.

3.6.3 In the medium term, schools should exercise a greater role in decision-making to ensure a good fit between the RED, schools and the teacher. Principals should also exercise their role in staffing decisions, consistent with their role in school leadership.

3.6.4 Albania’s education system would benefit from efforts to recruit qualified teachers to harderto-staff schools and regions.

POLICY ISSUE 3.7
A coherent strategy for continuing professional development aligned with the country’s education reform priorities is needed.

Evidence and Discussion
MES and IED are responsible for overseeing Albania’s continuing professional development (CPD) system. IED conducts nation-wide questionnaires of teachers to determine their learning needs, and a Commission for the Accreditation of Training Programmes accredits CPD programmes for four-year terms to meet those needs (European Commission, 2013a). 739 training programmes were accredited for 2011-2013, and 40 private agencies applied for accreditation in response to the 2014-2016 list of needs (IED, 2015).

Stakeholders reported to the UNESCO review team that, while they found some CPD to be beneficial, they wanted it to be more relevant (e.g. targeted to their school or region or the different needs of beginning and experienced teachers). CPD was previously offered locally for free by the REDs. A few universities, notably the University of Korçë, continue to provide accredited CPD to teachers in the local area. However, it was reported that CPD workshops used to be delivered by agencies accredited by the Training Accrediting Committee to groups of 10 to 50 teachers from all regions of the country. Those who develop and deliver the training do not necessarily have recent experience in schools throughout the regions. As a result, the CPD tends to be general and not connected to the reality of the region, school or classroom.

There are indications that CPD participation rates among teachers have not been high (Dhimitri et al, 2014; WB, 2014). This could be due to the cost to teachers. The Law on the Pre-University Education System (2012) states that funding for CPD is derived from teachers, the state budget and other legal sources, but stakeholders
reported to the UNESCO review team that teachers bear the cost of the three days of training themselves. In some cases the cost of training is covered by different projects as part of agreements between the MES and different funding agencies. The cost for a credit range from 1,500 LEK (~ €11) to 25,000 LEK (~ €185).

Since 2014, IED has delivered and covered the cost of several trainings for ITE alongside the implementation of the new curriculum. However, teachers who travel from remote regions to the capital for their CPD likely incur additional costs. Budgetary constraints are also impacting the government’s CPD quality assurance practices. Based on Order 421, (date 04.11.2015) (MES, 2015f), it was reported that new CPD programmes are no longer being accredited because of concerns over their efficiency, the process of needs identification, and monitoring.

In 2016 MES and IED conducted an online assessment of 1,500 teachers and principals in Tirana as well as 17613 teachers and principals across the country to identify their professional learning needs. MES has also proposed future improvements to the CPD system to: address local needs (e.g. by providing more funding to REDs and schools to develop training); ensure providers are of high quality (e.g. by strengthening CPD-providing excellence centres at faculties of education and periodically certifying trainers); and finance teachers’ participation in mandatory training by 2020.

A significant issue with Albania’s CPD system that may not be addressed by these proposed changes is a lack of alignment with school, regional or system-wide education development goals. MES (2014a) has proposed that individual CPD plans be used to inform school development plans in the future. However, there does not seem to be a coherent strategy to help teachers work towards the overarching goals of the education reform (e.g. student-centred teaching, equity and inclusion).

The UNESCO review team met with teachers who described some of the professional networks they have formed and the other collaborative work that they do. Each school in Albania is required to have a Teachers Council, composed of the teaching staff and principal, to steer the school’s activity (Republic of Albania, 2012). With funding support from the government, Teachers Councils could take the lead role in organizing more school-based, job-embedded learning (e.g. classroom observations, joint planning sessions, problem-solving groups).

Albania has set out ambitious plans to improve its CPD system in the draft *Strategy for Pre-University Education Development, 2014-2020* (MES, 2014a). Aligning initial teacher education, internship and continuing professional development, and national, regional and local efforts, will also be important to ensure that teachers participate in CPD connected to the goals of the education reform.
POLICY ISSUE 3.7 RECOMMENDATIONS
Create Resources for Teachers’ Professional Development and School-Based Learning

3.7.1 In the short term, proceed with plans to provide more support for school-based learning and professional networks to support teachers’ CPD.

3.7.2 In the medium to long term, Albania could establish a well-resourced national structure for teacher education and professional learning to develop and implement a CPD strategy to support Albania’s education reform.

POLICY ISSUE 3.8
Albania needs an effective process to assess teachers’ performance, promote improvement, and recognize good teaching.

Evidence and Discussion
Teacher performance appraisal in Albania is neither used to systematically recognize good teaching nor improve poor teaching. Stakeholders interviewed by the UNESCO review team reported that the General Teacher Standards are not used to assess teachers’ performance. Other criteria do not seem to be used on a consistent basis. They expressed concern that appraisals are based on the principal’s opinion rather than a more objective assessment of performance. Recent research has found that appraisals are rarely conducted, and when they are, they do not result in useful feedback (ACCE, 2015). Principals generally do not provide effective professional assistance or counselling to teachers (MES, 2014a), and they do not receive training for this task (see Policy Issue 3.9).

Research recommends the use of standards that describe what teachers should know and be able to do as a way to align all of the elements of the teaching profession that relate to teachers’ knowledge and skills: pre-service education, certification, continuing professional development, performance appraisal and career progression (OECD, 2005, 2013b; Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012).

Research advises that they be accompanied by mechanisms to assess teachers’ performance in relation to the standards (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2007; OECD, 2013b). Albania’s General Teacher Standards seem to cover all important areas listed above, but its teacher performance assessment mechanisms are not effective. The most effective performance appraisal systems reward excellent teaching and are growth-oriented, providing opportunities for continuing professional development to encourage improvement and learn from challenges (Santiago and Benavides, 2009, in OECD, 2010).
Like teacher performance appraisal, the re-certification of teachers can provide a means to ensure teachers update their knowledge and develop their competencies. However, it can be costly if it involves the on-going delivery of mandatory CPD to all teachers within an education system. Indications are that Albania is considering this option. Albania would benefit from the development of a well-designed teacher performance appraisal process in consultation with teachers, principals and relevant stakeholders.

Key elements of a standardized, growth-oriented teacher performance appraisal process would include: a common appraisal instrument based on standards; multiple sources of information for appraisals, including classroom observations; feedback sessions; a learning plan; professional development support; and a process for improving and sanctioning poor performance. The appraisal process could vary for beginning and experienced teachers, and would presumably result in changes to the performance appraisal of interns. Principals, as appraisers and pedagogical leaders responsible for improving teaching and learning in their schools, would need to be trained to support on-going communication with teachers about their performance. Once an effective teacher performance appraisal process is developed and implemented, appraisal results could be used among the factors that inform decisions about career progression as part of the qualifications scheme.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Reward Good Teaching Through Effective Performance Appraisal Systems*

3.8.1 In the short term, the development of a system-wide, growth-oriented performance appraisal system based on teacher standards would support improvements to teaching quality.

3.8.2 In the medium to long term, Albania could use the teacher performance appraisal process as one factor to reward good teaching with career progression and diverse career opportunities including leadership.

**POLICY ISSUE 3.9**

The school principal's leadership role needs to be strengthened and supported.

**Evidence and Discussion**

After teaching, school leadership is the most important factor open to policy influence that affects student learning. As of the 2013-2014 school year, there were 2,548 principals working in Albania’s schools (MES, 2014a). The UNESCO review team heard conflicting reports about their present and future supply. Some stakeholders
stated that teachers continue to want to be principals. Others said that this was not the case because there is no financial incentive to take on the added responsibilities of the role. The country’s teacher and principal salary scheme indicates that starting salaries for principals are not considerably higher than the current average teacher salary (Republic of Albania, 2013).

Historically, the position of principal has been akin to a political appointment (Council of Europe, 2011; EPNSL, 2012). Those who were hired were not necessarily qualified or experienced enough to take on the school leadership role. MES has made significant efforts to eliminate political interference in the hiring decisions of the education sector. The Law on the Pre-University Education System (Republic of Albania, 2012) established open competitions for the role, as well as an assessment commission to evaluate applications. Some research has found that a lack of succession planning, as well as principals’ starting salaries, are weaknesses of Albania’s system (EPNSL, 2012).

Albania’s education system has traditionally experienced high principal turnover (Council of Europe, 2011; EPNSL, 2012; Naithanali, 2015). As one stakeholder said, principals were previously ‘blown about by the political winds.’ There were reports that the position has been more stable in the past three years. However, one study and a recent news article about the contentious firing of principals in three cities indicate that issues with turnover and dismissal may continue (BIRN, 2014; Nathanaili, 2014).

The country would benefit from establishing a department or central body dedicated exclusively to the development of policies to support school leaders. Part of the mandate of this department would be to develop a school leadership framework in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and principals. School leadership standards would serve as the basis for the leadership framework, and would be used to inform the development of new procedures, like succession planning and performance appraisal, as well as CPD and supports (e.g. induction, principal networks). The framework would encompass the qualifications programme, which Albania should start to deliver as a priority.

Some of this training has already begun with support from international donors and the state budget. Based on Order 418 (date 11.08.2016) ‘For the professional development and qualifications of education institutions in pre-university education system’ (MES, 2016), training for 213 school principals from Tirana, Elbasan, and Durrës was delivered according to a professional training programme in the period September to December 2016.
POLICY ISSUE 3.9 RECOMMENDATIONS
Invest in Capacity-Building for School Leadership

3.9.1 In the short to medium term, create a well-resourced structure or central body dedicated to school leadership across Albania that could create and implement programmes to develop the professional capacities of school leaders.

In general, throughout the three key policy domains, recommendations for action to address these policy issues are labelled as short-term if they are of higher priority. In some cases, such as the work to strengthen teacher preparation following the passage of a new higher education law, the recommendations are short-term because work is already well underway. The recommendations with the potential to have the greatest system-wide impact relate to teacher preparation, CPD, the deployment of teachers to schools in disadvantaged areas, and support for the school leadership role. Investments in infrastructure have significant financial implications, but will go a long way towards improving teaching and learning. An important action that is not reflected in PUEDS (MES, 2014a) is a review of the development and use of the exams for teacher certification and employment. Any high-stakes assessment that determines whether individuals will become teachers and work in Albania’s schools must be methodologically sound in order for the results to be fair and reliable.

Albania’s education system is currently undergoing significant change. Many of the programmes and policies relating to teachers and school leaders are relatively new and their effectiveness will need to be evaluated. As mentioned throughout the EPR, consultation, collaboration and information sharing with teachers, principals and major stakeholders will be crucial to the success of this work.
Cross-cutting Issues and Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented in the three priority domains and in the light of the international SDG4-Education agenda, the following four cross-cutting policy issues emerge as requiring further elaboration and policy attention:

A. Improving information-sharing, communication, and transparency;

B. Building a more equitable society through inclusive education;

C. Promoting strong institutions and school infrastructure; and

D. Strengthening capacities for monitoring and evaluation of educational reforms.

Cross-cutting policy issues refer here to important education policy themes which are to be covered across specific policy domains, rather than being a subject of only one particular domain of education. The above-mentioned policy issues should be taken into account in all education reforms as a whole and when working on each of the policy domains. The recognition of these cross-cutting issues and the implementation of the corresponding recommendations will enhance the impact of the domain-specific recommendations. Thus, while recognizing the rapid and profound changes taking place in Albania, the cross-cutting policy recommendations should, as far as possible, build on the capacities that exist and strengthen the impact of reforms already underway.

A. Improving information-sharing, communication, and transparency

This EPR identified a need to develop and promote practices of information-sharing, communication, and transparency between the national, regional and local levels of education across the country. Greater communication and transparency would help to enhance levels of trust, integrity, system coherence, and effective governance in terms of policy design as well as implementation. Shortcomings in communication and coordination are currently evident in education planning and management, where the absence of consultation and the simultaneous work of multiple agencies have resulted in confusion or gaps in implementation.
The need for greater communication and transparency was evident in each of the three key policy domains. For example, in the domain of curriculum development and reform, stakeholders identified the need to effectively implement a comprehensive public communication programme to inform various educational actors and the public of the specific nature and purposes of the curriculum reform (Recommendation 1.2.1). In the domain of ICT in education, the EPR highlighted the importance of developing a central system for the collection and publication of statistics that comprise data on the use of ICT throughout the country (Recommendation 2.4.1). In the third domain of teacher and school leadership policies, the EPR emphasized the need for the development of a strong consultative partnership between the government, teachers, and teacher unions in order to more fully address challenges arising from the teachers’ workload (Recommendation 3.2.1).

The EPR report recommends that the Government of Albania should expand its efforts of transparency by providing relevant stakeholders with adequate information on priorities, programmes, and activities. This could help to ensure the legitimacy of policies and contribute towards democratic political participation and social cohesion in the country. The Government would benefit from developing and maintaining effective communication capacities with all stakeholders, to better take stock of their needs and preferences, and to foster a more deliberative public space for multi-stakeholder participation, including through the media. Through greater transparency and coordination with education stakeholders, the Government can foster local and regional democracy, strengthen the local and regional government structures, and reinforce cooperation of local elected representatives in order to ensure effective decentralisation and local self-government.

### B. Building a more equitable society through inclusive education

If the right to education for all is to become a reality, all learners must have access to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and other international human rights treaties prohibit any exclusion from or limitation to educational opportunities on the basis of socially ascribed or perceived differences, such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, language, religion, nationality, economic condition and/or dis/ability. Education should not be simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. Instead, it is about being proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access equal opportunities for quality education, as well as in removing those barriers and obstacles that lead
to marginalisation and exclusion. Education systems should be made inclusive and equitable; that is, every child and young person should have access to education that is welcoming and responsive to his or her characteristics and needs (UNESCO, 2012). 

Analysis across the three policy domains clearly demonstrates that social and educational inclusion is a systemic issue worthy of greater attention in Albania. The analysis showed that Albania has made progress towards achieving universal primary school enrolment and increased access to all levels of education. However, the Government should pay particular attention when it comes to the enrolment rates of national minorities as well as children with disabilities. Despite previous efforts to integrate children with disabilities and special needs into mainstream education in Albania, the development of inclusive education as described in this EPR is still only partially realized. Several of the policy issues and recommendations elaborated in each of the domains have illuminated areas where greater steps towards equity and inclusion can be taken. These include Policy Issue 1.3, on inclusion as a key function of the curriculum; Recommendation 2.4.3 on digital competences; and Recommendation 3.2.2 on overcrowding and collective (multi-grade) classes.

The needs of marginalized and excluded groups, including national minorities and people living in rural areas, should be an integral part of, and mainstreamed in, all education reforms. Currently, there are significant gaps in the available data regarding school enrolment and school leaving. The lack of disaggregated data on students, as highlighted by Policy Issue 1.4, becomes a particular challenge for the effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of education reforms, especially in the area of equity and inclusion. A holistic approach to education from early childhood onwards can incorporate the needs of marginalized and excluded groups in all education activities. This will, however, mean developing capacities for policy-making and system management to support strategies towards inclusive quality education, commissioning research on inclusive policies and pedagogies (see Recommendation 1.3.3), supporting quality learning enhancement, and highlighting groups that are currently marginalized and excluded from quality education (UNESCO, 2009).

To achieve such targets, the EPR recommends that the Government of Albania provide leadership and investment, to emphasize in the curriculum that social inclusion and social cohesion are major aims for the society. The Government should also ensure the universal nature of public education that extends equally to all regions, localities and social classes. In order to ensure full inclusion, there is a need for a more rigorous and complete compilation of data on student enrolment and/or achievement. In addition, there is a need for education and training in inclusive pedagogies to be added to the initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, as well

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9 See also http://www.unesco.org/new/en/inclusive-education/
as to pre-service and in-service training of all teachers. ICT can also be used as a vehicle to make learning more inclusive. The EPR found that targeted services may stigmatize certain vulnerable groups, thus, it is recommended that Albania provides education for all children within the mainstream education system, and that the mainstream education system changes to accommodate social and cultural diversity (see UNESCO, 2012). Thus, inclusive education represents more than ensuring that marginalized and diverse students complete their schooling; it also indicates a qualitative change to their experience of learning as inclusive within the classroom. This is done through an inclusive curriculum and inclusive instructional strategies as highlighted throughout the three policy domains.

Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and the Government of Albania should commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. As stated in the Incheon Declaration of the 2015 World Education Forum, ‘No education target should be considered met unless met by all’ (UNESCO, 2015a).

C. Promoting strong institutions and school infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure and innovation are crucial drivers of economic growth and development. School infrastructure includes suitable spaces to learn for all students. This is one of the most basic elements necessary to ensure access to education. Facilities may be inadequate in many ways, including being over-crowded or dangerous or lacking in adequate learning facilities. In addition, access to the Internet has become crucial to ensure equal access to information and knowledge, as well as to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

In addition to the development of Albania’s physical infrastructure, the need to strengthen educational institutions through the development of the capacities of teachers and school leaders represents another crosscutting dimension that was evident throughout the EPR. In each of the three policy domains, stakeholders highlighted the ways in which educational reforms and improvements hinged upon the development of improved infrastructure alongside new teaching and leadership competencies. For example, Policy Issue 1.2 and Recommendations 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 2.1.5, 2.2.3, 3.3.3 and 3.5.2 all highlight the need to prepare teachers to effectively teach the new curriculum.

ICT plays a critical role in enabling inclusive education and sustainable development by providing people not only with access to information and services but also with
opportunities to participate and contribute to the knowledge society. The Government of Albania should capitalize on ICT’s transformative potentials in education by strategically and effectively using ICT to improve governance, access to resources, capacity building, teachers’ professional development, and quality of learning.

The Government of Albania should strengthen the educational institutions and invest in better infrastructure as well as improve the coverage of education services in all geographical areas to help address the education needs of the rural populations and disadvantaged groups. Targeted support to higher education institutions would help to address critical needs in human resource development and strengthen institutional governance across the education system, including higher education particularly as it pertains to the education of future teachers and education professionals.

D. Strengthening capacities for monitoring and evaluation of educational reforms

One of the main purposes of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in education is to ensure that equitable and quality education is being provided to all of the population and at all levels. Quality education is a multi-dimensional concept that takes into account the quality aspects on input (human, material, and financial), process (teaching-learning and effective management practices), and outputs and outcomes (the learning outcomes and quality of results) (UNESCO-IIEP, 2007).

The implementation of educational reforms may encounter certain difficulties related to, for instance, the weakness of institutional structures, the need for stronger capacities, the insufficiency of financial resources, or unexpected crisis situations (UNESCO-IIEP, 2016\(^{10}\)). There are some major challenges to the establishment of a good and useful M&E system. These relate mainly to aspects of coordination and synergy between sub-systems. Many countries typically have provisions for the M&E components as mentioned above, but often these are not well-coordinated, and there is no strategy or systematic mechanism to ensure that these different systems mutually reinforce each other to create synergy and support for the performance of the education system in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Furthermore, due to the interrelationship among education sub-sectors (pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary), coordinated effort among M&E systems should be established not only within the sub-sectors of education, but also across all other concerned sectors (UNESCO, 2016\(^{11}\)).

\(^{10}\) http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/our-expertise/monitoring-and-evaluation

\(^{11}\) http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/me-report.pdf
There are several Recommendations for improving monitoring and evaluation, and data use, across the three priority domains. Recommendation 1.4.2 is to broaden the set of indicators used to assess progress to include qualitative and outcome based measures; Recommendation 1.4.5 is to develop and implement a student information management system; Recommendation 2.4.1 is to collect and publish statistics on the use of ICT in education; Recommendation 3.4.2 calls for an evaluation of the internship programme; and Recommendation 3.8.1 is to develop a system-wide performance appraisal system for teachers based on teacher standards.

To address these key policy issues, the Government of Albania will need to pay significant attention to strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of educational reforms. This demands that key indicators be defined, that a monitoring and evaluation framework be developed, that responsibilities are clearly assigned, and most importantly, that action is taken on the findings of monitoring and evaluation exercises. An effective M&E system can help not only governments, development partners and donors, but all those concerned with education and its quality and coverage. Therefore, it would be helpful to involve all the stakeholders in the process of M&E system development as well so that its ownership by all the stakeholders is enhanced (UNESCO, 2016).

In sum, taking a sector-wide perspective that builds on the key policy issues and recommendations identified within each of the three policy domains of the EPR, along with these four cross-cutting issues, will be of strategic importance for the success of educational reforms in Albania. Addressing these issues holistically should help Albania to fulfil its national strategies and further align educational development in the country with the international SDG4-Education 2030 agenda and targets.
Looking Forward: Opportunities and Challenges

The UNESCO Education Policy Review (EPR) report presents evidence and analysis to support and inform national policy-making processes to help Albania to reach its vision for education in the context of SDG4-Education 2030. The report investigates major issues in specific policy domains and formulates evidence-based recommendations for the pre-university education system.

The EPR report does not, however, provide a comprehensive analysis of Albania’s entire education sector. Rather this EPR is indicative of the kind of research and analysis that could also be done in other sub-sectors or domains such as early childhood care and education, technical and vocational education and training, higher education, and global citizenship education, all of which are within the scope and targets of SDG4-Education 2030.

In a 2016 report to ECOSOC\(^\text{12}\), the Republic of Albania stated that the UN-System in Albania could provide the following forms of support: know-how with respect to the methodological aspects of monitoring and evaluation; support in identifying gaps in terms of capacities; aid in the consolidation of capacities regarding the establishment of a monitoring system for the SDGs; and support with national processes to reach consensus on the targets. The Government of Albania also called for support in reaching ‘a common understanding of linkages between the SDG outcome document and national strategic documents’ as well as in aiding a ‘dialogue on data requirements and statistical capacity needed for proposed SDG indicators.’

The EPR process has successfully created linkages between SDG4-Education 2030, the 2014-2020 PUEDS and other strategies that can help Albania to make progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNESCO is ready to support the Government of Albania in following up, in partnership, on the recommendations made in the EPR report, for example by advising on implementation and on related issues, including the mobilization of financial resources.

Possible future areas for UNESCO support could be the development of national resource centres for teachers and school leaders. This could involve, for example, tailored support to various dimensions of teacher policy, such as continuing professional development and teacher standards, with reference to UNESCO’s Teacher Policy Development Guide (UNESCO, 2015c). UNESCO could also contribute international expertise and experience in support of a centre for school leadership offering relevant training programmes to develop the capacities of school leaders. UNESCO could also provide technical advice for the development of monitoring and evaluation in relation to the SDG4-Education 2030 targets and indicators. Indeed, UNESCO could continue to support the strategic alignment of Albania’s education sector with SDG4-Education 2030 in the years to come.

With a window open to significant reform, it is hoped that the EPR process and report will provide an impetus for national actors to address important policy issues within and across the three domains of curriculum development and reform; ICT in education; and teacher and school leadership policies. The dissemination of the EPR report provides an important opportunity for strategic policy dialogue and meaningful transformations in the field of education. Accession to the EU is a long-standing goal of Albania and continues to serve as a key driver for public sector reforms, including in education. The EPR report aims to support this process and Albania’s closer integration into the international community.

Albania is committed to the global goals of sustainable development, gender equality, and education as a human right and a public good for all. However, social transformation is not a short-term endeavour; it will require sustained effort in the medium and long-term towards 2030 and beyond. Through effective engagement with local stakeholders and strategic development partnerships Albania will be well prepared to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning, with wider benefits for society as a whole.
# Annex 1

Policy recommendations by estimated level of priority, difficulty, costs and timeframe

## CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM

### POLICY ISSUE 1.1

The curriculum documents should reflect the intentions of the reform, be appropriate to students and useful to teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Continue reviewing all curriculum documents (curriculum framework, core curriculum, programs, assessment documents, etc.) with a view to maintaining their inner coherence, so they all clearly state the intentions, commitments and goals of the curriculum reform, and how it will work for both compulsory and upper secondary education.</td>
<td>H M L</td>
<td>Short Medium Long</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Provide teachers with documents that serve as guides, with concrete examples of what successful performances might be as illustrations, but not as rigid prescriptions. Emphasis should be placed on communication and thinking skills and on the possibility that there may be more than one appropriate or successful approach to a problem or task.</td>
<td>H M M</td>
<td>Short Medium Long</td>
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</table>
POLICY ISSUE 1.2
The implementation process for a major curriculum reform is critical to the success of the reform and includes:

a) Engagement and communication with teachers, parents, employers and tertiary education institutions about the curriculum reform and its intentions;

b) The preparation of teachers to use the new curriculum; and

c) The provision of appropriate learning resources including textbooks to support the reform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Continue to implement a comprehensive public communications programme to explain to all teachers, principals, parents, employers, teacher training institutions, tertiary education institutions and the general public the nature of and reasons for the curriculum reform, in order to facilitate the implementation process.</td>
<td>H  H  M</td>
<td>Short  Medium  Long</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Through collaboration between MES and IED, develop a structure for sustainable dialogue about the curriculum reform at two levels: with representatives of the SIE, REDs, principals, teachers (including teacher unions) and administrators regarding the on-going implementation and professional learning activities; and with the education representatives and representatives of parents, faculties of education, tertiary education and employers to review the progress and success of the reform, and the success of students under the new curriculum as well.</td>
<td>H  M  M</td>
<td>Short  Medium  Long</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.3 In the short term, incorporate into the implementation an additional professional learning component for teachers that includes opportunities for teachers to engage in: collaborative lesson planning, observation of others’ classrooms, reflection on the lessons and observations with colleagues, and extended work on assessment for as well as of learning.</td>
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<td>Short  Medium  Long</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Integrate student assessment components in the teacher training programmes, considering performance standards as well. Specifically, include in professional learning activities instruction in the use of data from formal and informal assessment for and of learning for purposes of instructional planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.5 Through collaboration between MES and IED, conduct ongoing reviews of whether new textbooks are adequate for the purposes intended and provide additional information to schools regarding technology requirements related to the new curriculum. Discuss with publishers the importance and possibility of increasing contextualization to Albania in textbooks, especially in maths and science.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.6 Through collaboration between MES, IED, and teachers, prepare a guide to help educators identify what factors to consider in the selection of textbooks; for example, factors such as the previous experience of students, availability of other resources (including ICT), and students’ language levels could be considered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.7 Through collaboration between MES and IED, explore the possibility of building digital resource repositories for teachers of all grades and subjects, taking account of successful examples from other jurisdictions.</td>
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</table>
**POLICY ISSUE 1.3**

Inclusion is a key function of the curriculum in which the curriculum design helps to ensure that appropriate learning experiences are available to all students including those who have different abilities and challenges (physical, behavioural, and cognitive), those from linguistic and ethnic minorities and those who may not previously have attended school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 In the short to medium term, expand teacher training and professional development to support the implementation of the new curriculum, adapting it to inclusiveness while teaching (differentiated instruction) as well as to classroom management (strategies for managing those who have behavioural issues or students who have difficulty participating).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3.2 As part of, or in addition to, the training underway for the new curriculum, engage in a process of collaborative inquiry at the school level that assists teachers and principals in developing a repertoire of high level pedagogical and assessment skills required for the implementation of both the curriculum and effective inclusion practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3.3 Invite international experts from countries with well-established inclusion practices to assist Albania in the design process for such collaborative inquiry, to help educators and policy-makers in developing new practices and to aid in identifying systemic obstacles to effective inclusion.</td>
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**POLICY ISSUE 1.4**
The implementation of the curriculum, and the collection of student achievement data, should be guided by effective monitoring and evaluation procedures.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1 Through collaboration between the IED and ANE, ensure that the Matura examinations and any other nationally mandated assessments reflect the reformed curriculum.</td>
<td>H H M</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Broaden the set of indicators used by MES, IED, and REDs to assess progress to include qualitative and outcome-based measures.</td>
<td>H H H</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.3 Systematically develop short surveys for teachers, principals, and regional education directors to be administered annually with the intention of identifying successful practices, unexpected issues, obstacles and successes with implementation.</td>
<td>M H M</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.4 Collect annual feedback from students in the lower and upper secondary grades who are using the new curriculum.</td>
<td>H L L</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.5 Determine key milestones for the development and implementation of a robust student information management system, to be used as indicators of progress.</td>
<td>H M H</td>
<td>Short</td>
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## ICT IN EDUCATION

### POLICY ISSUE 2.1
The lack of a stable, responsive and widely available infrastructure and digital learning resources hinders the use of ICT in schools.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Address the need for a stable, responsive and widely available ICT infrastructure by setting clear, medium-long term goals to expand devices and Internet access; these should be backed by the funds that are necessary to cover devices, connectivity and maintenance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Increase the investment in ICT infrastructure and connectivity to remote areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Increase the investment in digital learning resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Ameliorate and maintain the pre-university information management system and the Electronic Higher Education Database.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.5 Increase the investment in the human resources necessary to utilize these tools and systems, and capitalize on the training provided to teachers by the ICT academy.</td>
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**POLICY ISSUE 2.2**

Teachers need stronger basic pedagogical ICT skills.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Implement the Higher Education Reform, with a particular focus on the education of candidate teachers, and develop a national system to monitor the ongoing development of pre- and in-service teachers' ICT skills.</td>
<td>H M M</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Collaborate with international donors in order to design and implement continuing professional development initiatives aimed at training in-service teachers, and ICT teachers in particular, in the use of ICT for educational purposes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Encourage collaboration among teachers and school leaders with different levels of expertise in the use of ICT for teaching and learning purposes.</td>
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**POLICY ISSUE 2.3**

Improving online safety for children and youth should be a greater priority.

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<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Through collaboration across education institutions, raise awareness of problematic online situations among children, adolescents, young adults, and their families.</td>
<td>H M M</td>
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</table>
## POLICY ISSUE 2.4
Albania would benefit from a central evaluation system and national guidelines on the use of ICT in education.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.4.1 Develop a central system for the periodical (annual or biannual) collection and publication of statistics that comprise data on infrastructure, equipment, training, teaching resources, assessment resources and the use of ICT.</strong></td>
<td>M M M</td>
<td>Short Medium Long</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.4.2 Develop a platform for implementing ICT in education and national guidelines on the use of ICT in education.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.4.3 Build on the important efforts made thus far to improve access, equity and quality in education by addressing the remaining ICT challenges that must be overcome in order for students to develop the digital competencies necessary to succeed in a digital world.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.4.4 Develop and include in the future Digital Agenda of Albania clear milestones stated for every year with regard to the development of digital learning materials, competence development, and infrastructure improvement so that progress can be measured annually or biannually.</strong></td>
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</table>
TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP POLICIES

POLICY ISSUE 3.1
There is a need to raise the status and increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, while making strategic financial investments to improve the education system as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 In the short to medium term, invest in efforts to raise the status of the teaching profession by attracting high-quality applicants to ITE programmes and raising the bar for entry into these programmes.</td>
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</table>
### Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low) | Timeframe
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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Medium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2.2</strong> In the short to medium term, Albania’s education system would benefit from investments in infrastructure, including investments to reduce overcrowding in public schools in urban areas and attention to the issue of the collective (multi-grade) classes.</td>
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### POLICY ISSUE 3.3
Initial teacher preparation should support Albania’s education reform efforts and prepare teachers for the realities of classrooms and schools.

### Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low) | Timeframe
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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Long</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3.1</strong> In the short term, strengthen teacher preparation by enhancing the practicum and elements key to Albania’s education reform.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.3.2</strong> In the medium to long term, consider introducing more flexible routes into the teaching profession to address teacher shortages.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.3.3</strong> In the medium term, improve coordination of teacher preparation in universities, practical training, professional development and performance evaluation, including through harmonization of legislation.</td>
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POLICY ISSUE 3.4
The teaching internship programme needs to better support both interns and mentors.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 In the short term, further address mentors’ workload challenges and consider how they could be better prepared, supported, and recognized for their role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4.2 In the short to medium term, conduct an evaluation of the internship programme to determine its effectiveness and identify necessary improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4.3 In the medium to long term, ITE programmes at the Bachelors level should include a well-designed practicum component, and the conditions of service applicable to interns could be reviewed.</td>
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POLICY ISSUE 3.5
The state exam for teacher certification should provide a reliable assessment of readiness to enter the profession.

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<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1 It will be important for Albania to ensure that the state exam for teacher certification is properly piloted and that the test instrument is psychometrically assessed.</td>
<td>H M M</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5.2 Albania could improve ITE and the state exam to better reflect the revised pre-university curriculum.</td>
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</table>
**POLICY ISSUE 3.6**  
Changes are needed to make teacher hiring and deployment procedures more efficient, effective and equitable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Costs</th>
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<th>Medium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1 In the short term, ensure that the <em>Teachers for Albania</em> test is methodologically robust, and in the future, consider augmenting it with other assessment methods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.6.2 In the short to medium term, provide more support and information to parents who are involved in hiring and decision-making processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.6.3 In the medium term, schools should exercise a greater role in decision-making to ensure a good fit between REDs, schools and the teacher. Principals should also exercise their role in staffing decisions, consistent with their role in school leadership.</td>
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<td>L</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.6.4 Albania’s education system would benefit from efforts to recruit qualified teachers to harder-to-staff schools and regions.</td>
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**POLICY ISSUE 3.7**  
A coherent strategy for continuing professional development aligned with the country’s education reform priorities is needed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Costs</th>
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<th>Medium</th>
<th>Long</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1 In the short term, proceed with plans to provide more support for school-based learning and professional networks to support teachers’ CPD.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2 In the medium to long term, Albania could establish a well-resourced national structure for teacher education and professional learning to develop and implement a CPD strategy to support Albania’s education reform.</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## POLICY ISSUE 3.8
Albania needs an effective process to assess teachers’ performance, promote improvement, and recognize good teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8.1 In the short term, the development of a system-wide, growth-oriented performance appraisal system based on teacher standards would support improvements to teaching quality.</td>
<td>Priority: H, Difficulty: M, Costs: M</td>
<td>Short: , Medium: , Long:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8.2 In the medium to long term, Albania could use the teacher performance appraisal process as one factor to reward good teaching with career progression and diverse career opportunities including leadership.</td>
<td>Priority: M, Difficulty: M, Costs: L</td>
<td>Short: , Medium: , Long:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## POLICY ISSUE 3.9
The school principal’s leadership role needs to be strengthened and supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Decision-making aspect (High/Medium/Low)</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.9.1 In the short to medium term, create a well-resourced structure or central body dedicated to school leadership across Albania that could create and implement programmes to develop the professional capacities of school leaders.</td>
<td>Priority: H, Difficulty: M, Costs: H</td>
<td>Short: , Medium: , Long:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annex 2

**Strategic Prioritization Matrices**

### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUST HAVES</th>
<th>QUICK WINS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity at point of delivery</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources where they yield most</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In the short to medium term, expand teacher training and professional development to support the implementation of the new curriculum, adapting it to inclusiveness while teaching (differentiated instruction) as well as to classroom management (strategies for managing those with behavioural challenges or students who have difficulty participating) (1.3.1);</td>
<td>- Through collaboration between MES and IED, explore the possibility of building digital resource repositories for teachers of all grades and subjects (1.2.7);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Alignment and coherence</td>
<td>- Provide teachers with subject documents and planning documents that serve as useful and flexible guides (1.1.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Through collaboration between the IED and ANE, ensure that the Matura examinations and any other nationally mandated assessments reflect the reformed curriculum (1.4.1);</td>
<td><strong>A learning system</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Continue reviewing all curriculum documents (curriculum framework, core curriculum, programs, assessment documents, etc.) with a view to maintaining their inner coherence, so they all clearly state the intentions, commitments and goals of the curriculum reform, and how it will work for both compulsory and upper secondary education (1.1.1);</td>
<td>- Place emphasis on communication and higher order thinking skills, and on the possibility that there may be more than one appropriate or successful approach to a task or problem (1.1.2);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Through collaboration between MES and IED, conduct a review of whether the new textbooks being used are adequate for the purposes intended (1.2.5);</td>
<td>- In the short term, incorporate into the implementation an additional learning component for teachers that includes opportunities to engage in collaborative lesson planning, observation of others’ classrooms, reflection on the lessons and observations with colleagues and extended work on assessment for as well as of learning (1.2.3);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discuss with publishers the importance of increasing contextualization to Albania especially in maths and science. (1.2.5).</td>
<td>- Include in teacher training instruction in the use of data from formal and informal assessment for and of learning for purposes of instructional planning (1.2.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- As part of, or in addition to, the training underway for the new curriculum, engage in a process of collaborative inquiry at the school level that assists teachers and principals in developing a repertoire of high level pedagogical and assessment skills required for the implementation of the curriculum and effective inclusion practices (1.3.2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality assurance

- Through collaboration between MES and IED, develop a structure for sustainable dialogue about the curriculum at two levels: with representatives of SIE, REDs, principals and teachers (including unions) regarding the implementation and professional learning activities, and with education representatives, parents, faculties of education, tertiary education and employers to review the progress and success of the reform (1.2.2);

- Broaden the set of indicators used by MES, IED, and REDs to assess progress to include qualitative and outcome-based measures (1.4.2);

- Systematically develop short surveys for teachers, principals, and regional education directors to be administered annually with the intention of identifying successful practices, unexpected issues, obstacles, and successes with implementation (1.4.3);

- Collect annual feedback from students in the lower and upper secondary grades who are using the new curriculum (1.4.4);

- Determine key milestones for the development and implementation of a robust student information management system, to be used as indicators of progress (1.4.5).

Stakeholder participation

- Continue to implement a comprehensive public communications programme to explain to all teachers, principals, parents, employers, teacher training institutions, tertiary education institutions and the general public the nature and reasons for the curriculum reform (1.2.1);

- Invite international experts from countries with well-established inclusion practices to assist Albania in the design process for such collaborative inquiry, to help educators and policy-makers in developing new practices and identifying systemic obstacles to effective inclusion (1.3.3).
ICT IN EDUCATION

HIGH IMPACT ON OUTCOMES

Capacity at point of delivery:
- Address the need for a stable, responsive and widely available ICT infrastructure by setting clear, medium-long term goals to expand devices and internet access backed by funds to cover devices, connectivity and maintenance (2.1.1);
- Increase investment in the human resources that are necessary to utilize ICT tools and systems (2.1.5);
- Increase investment in ICT infrastructure and connectivity in remote areas (2.1.2).

Quality assurance
- Implement the Higher Education Reform, with a focus on the education of candidate teachers, and develop a national system to monitor pre- and in-service teachers’ ICT skills (2.2.1);
- Ameliorate and maintain the information management system and the Electronic Higher Education Database (2.1.4);
- Develop a central system for the periodical (annual or biannual) collection and publication of statistics that comprise data on infrastructure, equipment, training, teaching and assessment resources, and use of ICT (2.4.1);
- Develop and include in the future Digital Agenda of Albania clear milestones stated for every year with regard to the development of digital learning materials, competence development, and infrastructure improvement so that progress can be measured annually or biannually (2.4.4).

Quick wins

Resources where they yield most
- Increase investment in digital learning resources (2.1.3);
- Develop a platform for implementing ICT in education and national guidelines on the use of ICT in education (2.4.2);
- Through collaboration across education institutions, raise awareness of problematic online situations among children, adolescents, young adults, and their families (2.3.1);

A learning system
- Capitalize on the training provided to teachers by the ICT academy (2.1.5);
- Encourage collaboration among teachers and school leaders with different levels of expertise in the use of ICT for teaching and learning (2.2.3);
- Build on the important efforts made thus far to improve access, equity and quality in education by addressing the remaining ICT challenges that must be overcome in order for students to develop the digital competences necessary to succeed in a digital world (2.4.3).

Partnerships:
- Collaborate with international donors in order to design and implement CPD initiatives aimed at training in-service teachers in the use of ICT for educational purposes (2.2.2).

LOW IMPACT ON OUTCOMES

Low Feasibility

Low hanging fruit

MONEY PITS

High Feasibility
## Teacher and School Leadership Policies

### High Impact on Outcomes

#### MUST HAVES

**Capacity at point of delivery:**
- Take steps to reduce overcrowding in schools (3.2.2);
- Create a well-resourced structure or central body dedicated to school leadership that could create and implement programmes to develop the professional capacities of school leaders (3.9.1);
- In the long term, Albania could establish a well-resourced national structure for teacher education and professional learning to develop and implement a CPD strategy (3.7.2).

**Quality and coherence:**
- Ensure that the *Teachers for Albania* test is methodologically robust (3.6.1);
- Ensure that the state exam for teacher certification is properly piloted and that the test instrument is psychometrically assessed (3.5.1);
- Develop and implement a growth-oriented performance appraisal system based on teacher standards to support improvements to teaching (3.8.1);
- Improve ITE and the state exam to better reflect the revised pre-university curriculum (3.5.2);
- Use the teacher performance appraisal process as one factor to reward good teaching with career progression and diverse career opportunities including leadership (3.8.2).

### Quick Wins

**Resources where they yield most:**
- Invest in efforts to attract high-quality applicants to ITE programmes and raise the bar for entry to these programmes (3.1.1);
- Recruit qualified teacher to harder-to-staff schools and regions (3.6.4);
- Introduce flexible routes into the teaching profession, particularly to address teacher shortages (3.3.2);
- Conduct a review to determine whether alternative financial investments would be a more efficient and effective use of resources than an across-the-board salary increase for teachers (3.1.2).

**A learning system:**
- Strengthen teacher preparation by enhancing the practicum component (3.3.1; 3.4.3);
- Conduct an evaluation of the internship programme to determine its effectiveness and identify necessary improvements (3.4.2);
- Proceed with plans to provide more support for school-based learning and professional networks to support teachers’ CPD (3.7.1).

**Communication and Inclusion:**
- Provide more information to parents involved in hiring decisions (3.6.2);
- Schools should exercise a greater role in decision-making to ensure a good fit between the RED, schools and the teacher. Principals should also exercise their role in staffing decisions, consistent with their role in school leadership (3.6.3);
- Further address mentors’ workload challenges and consider how they could be better prepared, supported, and recognized for their role (3.4.1).

### Low Impact on Outcomes

#### Money Pits

**High Feasibility**

- Low Feasibility
Bibliographic references


__. 2015f Udhezim 421, datë 04.11.2015 për funksionimin e agjencive trajnuese qu kane akredituar programe/module trajnimi [Order no. 421, date 04.11.2015 “For the training agencies that have been accredited training programs/modules in the past.”] (in Albanian).


