



### **Sister Teuta Buka**

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**Equal access to high-quality learning opportunities is a fundamental human right for all and a cornerstone of social cohesion. Educational programs under the European Cultural Conventions are increasingly required to address the challenges of social inclusion for vulnerable groups and building democracy together, prosperous, stable, tolerant and cohesive societies. The main goal of future education programs in both formal and informal learning contexts will be the development of educational policies, standards and practices for quality lifelong learning, with a particular focus on values, as well as attitudes, knowledge and the necessary skills for an inclusive, responsible and active social citizenship with a democratic culture**

[Video](#)

**Our approach: dialogue and care for each person, through accompanying children and families. We are based on gospel values: human dignity, respect, honesty, justice...**

**Our schools are always looking for new methodologies for a complete formation of the child, bearing in mind that education is a public good.**

**We aim to change the mindset of educational institutions that will also lead to legal changes, focusing on the person, values, educational approach, motivated and trained teachers with personal and professional ethics. In order to avoid uniformity and to ensure the possibility of choice in education, a new legal framework with a new vision for education is also needed.**

**Pluralism as a guarantee for a better education and for all in Albania.**

#### **Introduction**

**As I mentioned in my opening speech Dialogue and care there are two ways in which we see our presence in the field of Education as well as alongside parents and families in the well-being of children and young people of the country. Precisely these guiding values have driven us that on one side to be present where it comes to education, actively participating in all institutional roundtables, those of the Ministry of Education and Sports and not only, and particularly in the platform of the partnership for European integration in the roundtables that the Ministry has called to discuss and address various issues. In these fora we have continued to offer suggestions on solving problems; making ourselves available to the reality of all schools in the country and to the policy and procedures for the protection of minors as an internal system of protection in schools, which we have been building for 5 years that we operate as a network....**

**On the other hand, these two values have inspired us to become initiators of round tables as this conference today, where different actors can give their contribution together with us, which proves our concrete desire for a dialogue. This dialogue is understood and lived as an opportunity to enrich ourselves with freedom, with our specific characteristics and with our vision and holistic approach to children's education.**

**Starting from the above, let me briefly bring, on behalf of the network of our institutions, the contribution of our opinion in this accession process for a qualitative development in the field of education.**

#### **1. Catholic school and the values it transmits.**

**Like the Universal Declaration of human rights, Gravissimum Educationis, the document of the Second Vatican Council concerning education, establishes the principle that education is a fundamental right for all people.**

**The schools that ecclesiastical entities, religious congregations, or parishes have founded, as is the nature of the school, fulfill the cultural finality that characterizes it together with human formation of young people.**

**In addition, these schools, even if not religious schools they aim to give life to a school community environment permeated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and divine love.**



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*The values they promote emanating from the Gospel are in fact universal values, such as human life and dignity, truth and love, respect and dialogue, honesty and justice, family, work and the common good, peace, etc. In other words, in such an educational environment, the care for the person, as a whole, is realized by accompanying young people in their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social maturation. These dimensions correspond to the concept of person according to Christian anthropology, where the human is considered capable and able to enter in a dialogue with the world, with others, with himself and with God.*

*Of course, every Catholic school, first of all, is conscious for his own serving and complementary / supportive role, at the side of the family that is the main protagonist in the education of the respective children, and not the other way around. It is clear in the value that it transmits; a constant search for new methods in order to make possible a complete education of children and shares with the educational community its vision of the person and the values that inspire him.*

## **2. The view of Catholic schools on education in Albania today**

### **a. Education as a public good**

*As stated, and argued by previous interventions, many European countries have a clear awareness of being at the service of the family as a support. As a consequence, these countries have consolidated the concept that education is a public good, that is, it belongs to the whole society and of course it is not a monopoly of the State nor only of formal educational institutions. The prosperity of a nation, its future and the vitality of every society lie upon the ensuring of this good, upon the education of the young generation.*

### **b. Before legal amendments, a new pedagogy and anthropology**

*Knowing closely the challenges of education and schools in our country, we think that before Albania adapts to the laws of Europe, as a society in our entirety, we should deepen and agree on the view of the person, on the values and the educational approach which, today more than ever, are in crisis and the time is urging us to change. Moreover, in Albania, state bodies that care about education should be freed from the fear of change, because only by being open and ready for dialogue with everyone, especially the family, can we show our responsibility towards the next generation.*

*It is no longer the time, nor the need, to crystallize in education every procedure, every external or internal evaluation process in school, to repeat cliches which, deprived of context and human creativity, risk becoming barriers to moving forward. It is time to research, to move towards the principles, to a holistic and critical thinking of teachers first of all, as they are the ones in contact with young people. Teachers need to have the freedom and enthusiasm to experiment, as they are the ones who give worthy answers to the needs of our young people today. Our country must take this courage starting with the formation of the teachers and strengthen them in their continuous training. We need to analyze the numbers of teachers and children; shortages in the system, first numerical shortages of new teachers. The problems and difficulties of education today should not leave us indifferent, we have to have the courage to discontinue with the implementation of overlapping innovations, without making serious analysis on the results of piloting, without predicting in detail the impact they can have on the growth of the younger generation and on the quality of life of teaching staff.*



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*This courage will enlighten us to understand which things we should give importance to: principles or forms, educational needs or subject programs. What is missing from the formative curricula of teachers today if not a reflection on Anthropology and pedagogy, on the formation of the person and on Ethics which are unfortunately insufficiently articulated terms in the curricula of the formation of our teachers in Albania and therefore in our entire educational system.*

#### **Pluralism in education**

*In our country there is a great risk of a barren bureaucratization and a uniformity of the education system, and this is not in favor of the future.*

*As the new generation presents us with urgent and more educational and formative tasks, rather than just the cognitive sphere, it seems that we are increasingly hiding behind bureaucracies. Maybe with the desire to arrange things and to feel sure that we are doing something, but in fact we are not developing human capacities of pedagogy experts, who know how to get to the core of problems in education, but often stop at the consequences. It should also be noted that in the field of education. This expertise should be decisive and guiding for the political choices that should be made in the field of education (and not vice versa). Continuous standardization, the ready-made provision of instruments with definite steps to achieve a "school model", do not serve education. In this aspect, our efforts as a network of Catholic schools to make a sincere contribution to this journey often fall on deaf ears. The different experiences that we can bring, of course not only us, but also the new methodologies we are implementing, the more flexible managing models with which we move our schools forward, would help in the challenges of education throughout our country. For this to happen, line ministries need to promote real spaces and dialogue.*

#### **Inclusion in education**

*Albania in our view is a bit late in understanding the institutions as ministerial servants. In this phase of transition, it is now understood that the transition from a nationalization and the former ideologic nature education towards an open promotional and creative system is not easy. Our society still feels the impact of a past that, in 4-5 decades of dictatorship, has left deep traces. These processes take time, but I think now is the time to make qualitative changes on the eve of our efforts to access European Union, starting with the involvement of all stakeholders that contribute to the public good, that is education. Before implementing policies, we need to work together with all stakeholders.*

*Inclusion of European civilization as a value must begin from being open to accepting and supporting actors who contribute to it, making possible the improvement of educational quality, which always remains an objective to be achieved. From this first step, and other steps will be articulated, including the involvement of all in education, attention to children with disabilities, non-discrimination, etc.*

#### **Effective guarantee of a right by the State**

*Another element related to education as a common good is the fact that different actors should live together as partners. Moreover, the State should take into account the fact that the constitutional right to choose education gets a real answer if families are really offered different and varied educational proposals, to respond to the values and needs of communities, of course always according to the principles of the Constitution.*



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### **As a conclusion**

*The experience of European countries tells that in contexts where a pluralism of opportunities and different approaches to education have flourished, this has produced quality, freedom and enthusiasm, both among children and teachers, bringing the school closer to the real life and responsible choices of individuals, who have entered the world of work not only with the appropriate knowledge but also with their human richness and the values that characterize them.*

*Nothing like this is happening in Albania yet. We think that in addition to reflecting on Anthropology and pedagogy there should happen also amendments in legislation, as we have proposed several times to the Ministry of Education. Where the expression of educational pluralism is clearly regulated, where Catholic schools have a special place by defining the range of definitions such as private non-profit schools or better yet public schools not managed by the state, they are public because they serve the public good: education of the young generation.*

*It is not enough. We think that the benefit of families who choose these schools from public funded should be guaranteed by the state, i.e. part of the budget, within the principle of freedom of education which is the key point of the right to freely choose education. This freedom is interpreted in two directions, the right of the State to organize education and the right of parents to freely choose the education they wish for their child, unconditioned by the economic criteria. This means that if parents are not in conditions of equal opportunity to pay for the education they choose for their children, they should be supported by providing their children access to schools that practice non-profit educational activities.*

*The possibility of having a specific legal provision for the State to support these schools arises as a need to respect the principle of secularism of the school, the right of parents as taxpayers to choose a public service which in itself increases the individual development potential of each child in favour of its highest interest.*

**Thank you for your attention!**

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