

# Teacher Lifelong Learning System as a National Model Supported by HEI-s in Albania

Eva Cipi<sup>1\*</sup>, Flora Qarri<sup>2</sup> Edvina Cipi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Regional Development Centre · University Ismail Qemali Vlore, Vlore, Albania

<sup>2</sup>Chemistry Department, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University Ismail Qemali Vlore, Vlore, Albania

<sup>3</sup>Chemistry Department, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University Ismail Qemali Vlore, Vlore, Albania

eva.cipi@univlora.edu.al

## ABSTRACT

This paper shows the research work made with the purpose of developing a national teacher training system in Albania focused on teacher competencies on lifelong needs and based on the academic educational experience of universities. This paper demonstrates how to pattern a national platform of teacher training activities in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Agency for pre-university education in Albania. In this paper, it has been established a successful methodology of setting up this training system starting from the teacher needs mapping, designing of teacher training capacities at universities, and the implementation and assessment of pilot courses. The main benefit of developing this model is an optimal productive solution by coordinating and disseminating accredited modules with much higher expertise involved in a TLLL center network standardized that promotes the academic collaboration and European standards of teacher qualification.

## Keywords

Teacher Qualification; LLL Training, National Registration System

## Introduction

The education system in Albania is undertaking a radical construction and many drastic changes have been made after the communist system collapsed. HEI-s in Albania intends to play a key role in this process by developing innovative programs and educational training services for teachers at the non-tertiary education level. Lifelong learning is a new philosophy in the acquisition of knowledge (education) and qualification that is strongly supported by the education reform in Albania. In this case, Universities have been actively engaged in a third mission action on how to design, implement, and supervise comprehensive lifelong learning training system for teachers. There is a document titled "Development Strategy of Pre-University Education 2014-2020" [6] contrived by the Albanian government, where is clearly designed the vision of an educational system that focuses on students' demands and wishes.

According to [7], this is a competitive process that needs structural changes and new teacher

competencies in the education system in order to guarantee quality standards of education performance. The report [8] sees that the development of new curricula reform, introducing the use of innovative methods and tools, requires ITC skills and competencies resulting from a new profile of the school and students' capacities. Teacher long-life learning should be a philosophy in education conditioning the performance and the success of a teacher profile. But there is a low teacher's performance and the gap in consecutive education in the learning and teaching sector. This is confirmed also as an imperative problem by [9]

## Problem Statement

HEI-s in Albania support periodically the pre-university education system with human resources in several teaching profiles like language and literature, social and natural sciences, active citizenship, ICT skills and technology, etc. Their insight centralises the national development strategy of pre university education and the stance to be taken on contemporary teaching in accordance with all international standards. In the

study [1], these services have been considered to be more efficient and to influential to community through comprehensive programs for teaching students and teachers in action.

Self-evaluating the HEI-s role and activity in this framework, the academic research distinguishes an at hand problem relating to the general mission of HEI-s:

- Does it provide a leading role in the local economy as well as in the cultural development of the region and beyond?
- Does it help to meet the social, cultural, and development needs of the country?
- Concepts of education as learning to know, to do, to be and to cohabit.

According to the UN 2030 Agenda (Goal 8), in [9] the investment in education and vocational training entitles someone to obtain a good job in the future. Due to this, professional growth and LLL have to be key strategic priorities. LLL concept in the country has met a very gradual implementation. Maybe, this is likely to stem from the large number of Universities (experience gap) and also still emulating old teaching stereotypes. There are two dimensions that could analyze LLL. The first is the personal opportunity to meet the individual and potential goals of each one. At the same time it is a good prospect for employers to increase the potential of their employees. Both dimensions are linked and develop four key

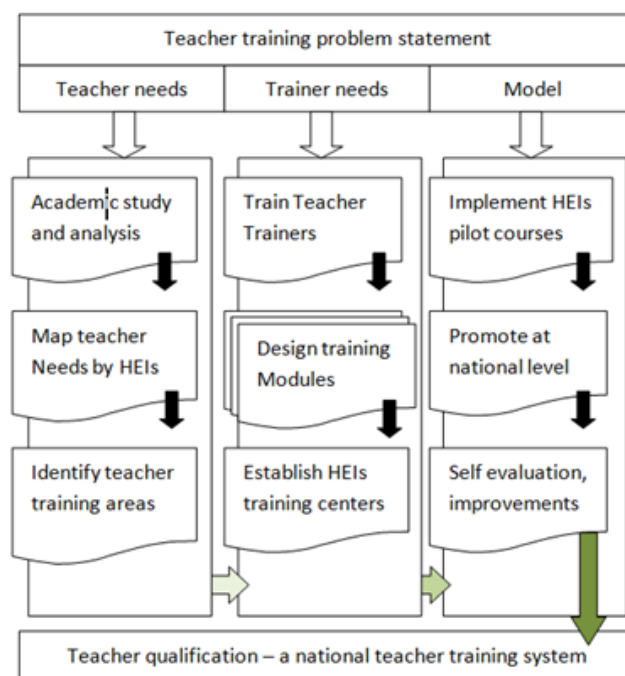
### Teacher Needs Analysis

As attested by the Albanian’s Government strategy, the improvement of teacher’s qualification system process by a new LLL perspective is a peremptory task to be in the focus of the main educational actors. In Albania, there are two categories of educator’s profiles: traditional teachers with a good experience and young teachers whose professional improvement is going slower than predicted. Curricula improvement and supervised practices are an ultimate need. At some extent, selection of Education Departments usually has been done by students with low grades and whose admission quotas in most cases are not fulfilled. There is also a lack of a monitored and proficient system to train in-service teachers focused by [1] in the study. In schools many teachers are not involved

in trainings or in courses for LLL. Additionally, good regulation of training sessions and the organizations that will provide these services are not very transparent. As stated by a study, schools do not have statistics related to their performance appraisal. An in-depth analysis must be conducted to better assess a current teacher’s needs/wishes and preferences. This analysis assists Albanian Universities in better preparing a coordinated, goal-oriented and comprehensive training system for pre-university teachers and also to support their continuous education.

### Methodology

In this research, two methods have been used, qualitative and quantitative. The first sets out to emphasize the study on the qualities of teachers and other target groups involved, like the social and cultural framework, specific conditions including economic and political statements. In contrast, the quantitative method has been focused on the measurement and analysis of responses related to the actual relationships of teachers and questionnaires, processing the perceptions and fillings by parts.



**Figure 1.** A model of national teacher training system in Albania

The paper [3] the research model has been used on studying and analysis of the target group in the focus of this study. The quantitative and

qualitative questionnaire form has taken into account many professional, social, and behavioral aspects of people involved in this research so as to generate a reliable investigative approach. The plan has been schemed to approach their needs and reality as well as in line with the project implementation, the purpose of the teachers' needs analysis lies in:

- Amassing structured information on the teacher's profile and their social-economic status
- Understanding and giving precise idea of the teacher competencies.
- Gathering knowledge of teacher's needs and the topics to be focused on them.

Motivation, resources, and obstacles they have to participate in training. All these assist us in properly apprehending which trainings are most valuable to be offered during the implementation of this model of teacher LLL training system.

### Data and observation on teacher needs

The purpose of the needs analysis is the improvement of the teacher qualification process from a LLL perspective. The aim is to build a high-quality training system for teachers, according to international guidelines. That will guide to the pre-university education curricula improvement and supervised practices. Schools do not have statistics related to their performances and this work provides to have one. In a general overview of the problem, there will be a better knowledge of actual teacher needs/wishes/preferences by an in-depth analysis. This analysis also helps Albanian Universities (the University of Vlora in this case) in better preparing a coordinated, goal-oriented, and comprehensive training system for pre-university teachers and also to support their continuous education. In order to gather some realistic data, the method of questionnaires and interviews has been chosen on mapping teacher needs. The study has detected three main target groups: teacher, teaching student, teaching academic staff. This means three different questionnaires have been designed per each target group. The design aims to ensure information about needs in six problem statements regarding the

- ethics and communication,
- teaching and learning methodologies,

- digital skills,
- culture of learning,
- active citizenship,
- inclusive strategies

In this paper, the research work shows the data research from Vlora region area conducted by the University Ismail Qemali expertise, focused on target groups of - 300 teachers, 50 academic staff, and 50 teaching students. Regarding the data collection tool, questionnaires have been prepared in hard copy, online questionnaires by Google forms, delivery by emails in collaboration with the Educational Regional Directorate. Data analysis has been developed by automatic processing of online questionnaires and SPSS 22.0 version software.

### Questionnaires and surveys – some results

Teacher training needs to be perceived by stakeholders in Albania: some questions like

- What are the main teacher training needs in terms of competencies required by the labor market?
- What is the main gap perceived by pre-university teachers between the competences acquired at the university and required by the labor market?
- What are the main resources needed by pre-university teachers for LLL?
- What are (or would be) the main incentives for pre-university teachers to enroll in Continuous Professional Development?

A context sensible analysis has been placed in this research by findings in professional, social and specific context; referring to answers with the possibility of generalizations across the meaning and adaptations of other option of questionnaire content. Referring to the Table 1 image, some results has been generated. 294 participants took place by filling in the questionnaire.

Most of them (64.8%) use Facebook as social network. The 74.8% would like to exchange professional experiences in a social network. The most common device used is their personal mobile phone. As far as the need for ICT use is concerned, the majority of them have a lack of knowledge. Except Moodle and Google Forms programs, in all other programs, a large proportion of participants do not know to use them. Additionally, only a small percentage use these

kind of programs in their profession something that make of paramount significance immediate training of teachers in ICT programs

### University and teacher training needs

**What is the main gap perceived by pre-university teachers between the competences acquired at the university and required by the labor market?** Among responders, only 28.6% agrees that it's easy to make use of ICT according the curriculum. The most important thing for a teacher (60.5% believe that) is what pupils/students are expected to be able at the end of the module/program and 39.5% how well the pupils/students absorbed the material taught. A huge majority (83.2% n=114) feel well prepared by their studies for their everyday work as teachers while only 16.8% are not of the same opinion. However, the most important shortcomings were reported to be lack of application of relevant educational theory in practice during university studies (43,7%), lack of students career guidance and counseling (38,9%), lack of possibilities to identify job demands (34,2%) and lack of ability to match teacher ICT competencies with the tech-savvy of the new generation of Learners. Author in [5] emphasizes the importance of a self-assessment system model and the implementation for at least preliminary education teachers.

Table 2. Use of ICT in classroom

Answers	Moodle	Mahara	Prezi	Kahoot	Padlet	OneNote	Socrative	Google Forms	Google class.
Don't know	100 (36.6)	149 (70.6)	105 (48.8)	65 (70.7)	151 (96.8)	133 (50.4)	189 (71.6)	105 (38.7)	125 (46.8)
Know	123 (45.0)	36 (17.1)	86 (40.0)	23 (25.0)	5 (3.2)	107 (40.5)	64 (24.2)	129 (47.6)	111 (41.6)
Personal use	35 (12.8)	22 (10.4)	17 (7.9)	3 (3.3)	-	15 (5.7)	8 (3.0)	34 (12.5)	17 (6.4)
Professional use	15 (5.5)	4 (1.9)	7 (3.3)	1 (1.1)	-	9 (3.4)	3 (1.1)	3 (1.1)	14 (5.2)

Figure 3. View of Table 2

### Forms of teacher training

The training should be on-line (e-learning courses) with face-to-face meetings also. Each course should have ex-ante and ex-post questions for a better assessment of the knowledge gained. After finishing each module participants could take a certificate with credits. Learning environment must be interactive, personalized, comprehensive, to encourage participants to make questions and discuss / share knowledge with other participants, open to new ideas and to summarize key points of learning. There is still

improvement to be made in LLL in Albania. Referring to the final graphic shown in Figure 3, the most important directives generated by the research are:

- Definition of legal framework for LLL and its role in whole educational system;
- Increase of funding on education;
- Increase of funding on LLL and vocational training;
- Improvement of current infrastructure;
- Development of a coordination office/unit at national level;
- Development of on-line platforms for allocating best practices;
- Updating the curricula, based on labor market demands;
- Networking and sharing information among higher educational institutions and establishment of a career guidance systems within LLL.

To encapsulate, changing and adapting a LLL culture at schools is of immense importance.

**What are the main resources needed by pre-university teachers for LLL?** Almost all participants (n=235; 90.0%) would like to learn about LLL and its implementation in EU countries. Additionally, 38.5% believe that a teacher training course should be independent and 51.7% that must be part of other in-service training courses. However, 53.6% believe that the most appropriate training form is E-learning with face-to-face meetings, while 35.7% support short intensive face-to-face courses. As about the main resources needed from pre-university teachers were mentioned:

Table 3. Teacher training needs according teachers

Answers	Yes	No
Employers provided ICT equipment	92 (40.7)	134 (59.3)
Technical support	52 (26.5)	144 (73.5)
Wi-Fi network	105 (39.8)	159 (60.2)
Pedagogical support person	134 (53.0)	119 (47.0)
Know to utilize digital teaching materials	211 (79.3)	55 (20.7)
Hard to find high quality digital material	135 (53.1)	119 (46.9)
Familiar with CCC	180 (69.5)	79 (30.5)
Seek best practices and courses	215 (85.3)	37 (14.7)
Enhance digital skills	127 (56.4)	98 (43.6)
Use Internet to update knowledge	76 (28.6)	190 (71.4)

Figure 4. View of table 3

**What are (or would be) the main incentives for pre-university teachers to enroll in Continuous Professional Development?** Unfortunately, only 46.5% of respondents have participated in training courses for professional development (53.5 declared not participation in such activities) with 36.1%, 34.0% and 29.9% participating once, twice and three or more times respectively. As about



information accessibility, 32.6% knows where to find it and 25.8% declare the opposite.

To what extent, as main issues reported to motivate them in participation in courses:

- Need for creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments (72.8%);
- Formal need for professional career (56.2%);
- Improvement of self-knowledge (48.7%);
- Need for the specific knowledge in everyday work (45.6%);
- Development of ICT teaching skills and support of digital innovation in the institution (33.7%);
- Assistance for pupils to use their learning time better (24.0%).

### Teacher training needs perceived by the university

**What are the main teacher training needs in terms of *competences* required by the labor market?** According University staff responses, only 47.1% declares that their employer (university administration in this case) has provided ICT equipment that fulfills their needs and only half of them (50%) said that a Wi-Fi network is accessible by students and visitors. However, 55.6% reported that a pedagogical support person is available to help with using ICT in education and 83.3% of them use digital teaching materials during classes. To some extent, finding high quality digital materials is difficult despite the fact that most of participants find good ways

- Improvement of self-knowledge (48.7%);
- Need for the specific knowledge in everyday work (45.6%);
- Development of ICT teaching skills and support of digital innovation in the institution (33.7%);
- Assistance for pupils to use their learning time better (24.0%).
- Utilizing ICT in various learning situations.

The 94.1% seek out best practices to enhance their digital skills, 61,5% seek best practices and courses to improve their pedagogical and wider digital competencies. Additionally, 61.5% know that need to improve their digital skills. Finally, of paramount significance is that 81.8% do not receive technical support with sufficient speed for ICT use and only 35.3% rarely use Internet to update their knowledge and skills. (Figure 5)

**What is the main gap between the *competences* acquired at the university by pre-university teachers and those required by the labor market?** The 53.3% of participants reported that

is easy for them to use ICT according to the curriculum. However, 89.5% believe that their university programs have not provided them with the adequate preparation for everyday work as teachers. The 44.4% of participants declare that training including both pedagogical and technical components is among their main needs in terms of competences that are required by the pre-university education system.

Table 4. Teacher training needs according academic staff

Variables N (%)	Yes	No
Employers provided ICT equipment	8 (47.1)	9 (52.9)
Technical support	2 (18.2)	9 (81.8)
Wi-Fi network	9 (50.0)	9 (50.0)
Pedagogical support person	10 (55.6)	8 (44.4)
Know to utilize digital teaching materials	15 (83.3)	3 (16.7)
Hard to find high quality digital material	8 (44.4)	10 (55.6)
Familiar with CCC	13 (72.2)	5 (27.8)
Seek best practices and courses	16 (94.1)	1 (5.9)
Enhance digital skills	8 (61.5)	5 (38.5)
Use Internet to update knowledge	6 (35.3)	11 (64.7)

Figure 5. View of table 4

Other key issues reported were the trainings according to good practices and in ways coherent with local context, integration of pedagogical innovation in skills development and integration of entrepreneurship education into training. Additionally, the most important thing for a teacher (94.7%) is how the students/pupils are expected to be able to do at the end of the module or the program. Finally, academic staff reported lack of possibility to identify job demand (67.4%), lack of abilities to identify what the student need to learn to be effective in employment (55.6%), lack of application of relevant educational theory in practice during university studies (42.2%) and lack of ability to match teacher ICT competencies with tech-savvy of the new generation of learners (39.3%).

**What are the main *resources* needed by pre-university teachers for LLL?** All reported that higher salaries are the main resource needed by pre-university teachers for LLL. Other issues mentioned were more spending on education (73.4%), physical infrastructure (56.8%), more training for teachers (42.3%), teachers professional's development (40.7%) and improvement of student-teacher ratio (37.9%). Moreover, 47.4% mentioned the requirements to enter the teaching profession. In order also to improve resources needed by pre-university teachers for LLL of paramount significance is learning about LLL initiatives and its

implementation in Europe (88.9%). Teacher training courses should be part of other in service training courses (55.6%) and the most suitable forms are E-learning with face-to-face meetings (64.7%).

**What are (or would be) the main incentives for pre-university teachers to enroll in LLL?** Only 55.6% has participated in training courses for LLL and more than half (53.8) only once. The 15.4% participated twice and 30.8% three or more times. However, 66.7% mentioned that the courses offered are insufficient and 27.8% that is very difficult to find them (61.1% reported that are easy to find/might be more efficient). As about their motivation to participate in courses the main issues reported were:

- Need for creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments (34.7%);
- Formal need for professional career (32.0%);
- Need for the specific knowledge in everyday work (32.0%);
- Development of ICT teaching skills and support of digital innovation in the institution (28.6%)
- Improvement of self-knowledge (24.0%)

### University as provider of LLL for teachers

**What are the capacities of the university to be a provider of LLL for pre-university teachers?**

During the last years encouraging developments have been introduced to the Albanian Higher Educational System. The approval of the Law on Higher Education in 2015 prepared the basis for well-structured changes in the system. Since 2017, University of Vlora has established Professional Development Unit (PDU). It consists of three staff members (head of the unit and one specialist-not yet hired). Despite the initial steps that have been taken with the aim of involving the university in this process, the situation is still unclear. This is mainly due to the lack of a long-term strategy for higher education system in Albania as well as the inability to meet the standards set out in the previous one. UV has incorporated LLL in its strategy and mission as an ongoing objective. Actually, we are at an adoption phase where LLL is not among university's integral activities, but a form of organization through its ad hoc structures. In order to better organize this unit, UV has called international experts (from EUCEN network) to transfer their knowledge and experiences. UV from time to time

offers short courses for raising qualification and retraining. Despite the implementation of these courses a well-established and structured LLL policy/strategy has not come yet into action. These courses are mainly organized in a Faculty or Department levels are less systematic or systematized. However, there is a lack of labor market research for the development of LLL courses and the teaching methods sometimes are not relevant to adults. Additionally, there is a lack of collaboration between PDU and different teacher associations as well as with different international organizations. This collaboration is done spasmodically, with not a clear strategy and sometimes in a very informal way (mainly with domestic stakeholders). Support services for learners are not always present. To sum up, in UV there is an absence of a coordinated and comprehensive training program targeting pre-university teachers.

**What are the needs of the university to be a provider of LLL for pre-university teachers?**

First of all this research work needs to establish a new academic culture, in which LLL becomes an integral part of the university and of the whole system till the phase that the university becomes a LLL university. This will be achieved by putting LLL in a central place of University development. This must be implemented step by step in order to create a sustainable integration of the LLL for the future. The second step is to prepare the university's capacity for future capacity building of specific LLL structures. UV must establish a good and transparent cooperation with local stakeholders (public and private sector), international experts, civil society organizations as well as research and educational institutions. One of the key issues/needs in implementing LLL policies is the lack of financial support. Except this, labor market is not well studied during the process of developing LLL courses. Thirdly, support services for learners must be strengthen and better organized (career guidance system). Establishment of mechanism to guarantee the quality of these services is also significant. It is indispensable to improve collaboration, networking and sharing information of UV with other Higher Educational Institution in this field. Improvement of physical infrastructure and designing curricula based on European practices is among key needs for UV. PDU must utilize training materials and other capacity development

tools developed during its actions, and provide opportunity to adapt new information and continuous information exchange with wide groups of experts and stakeholders in the region.

## SWOT analyses

### Strengths

Development of the pre-University strategy 2014-2020 with a clear aim and objectives by Albanian government is important. One of the strengths (seen in the results in Vlora) is the high number of participants who know to utilize digital teaching materials during their classes. Additionally, familiarization with the principles of using Creative Common licenses and the actively seeking of best practices, courses or advice to improve digital competencies is a quality base to start improving ICT knowledge and skills of school teachers. Development of the PDU in Vlora,

### Weaknesses

First of all it is important to invest on the adjustment of legal framework in order to be comparable to that of EU countries. After the adaption of the new legislation, it has been needed a new strategy and its implementation. There is an immediate need to start collaboration between different players/stakeholders in order to reorganize current curricula in conformity with the demands of labor market. Lack of curricula to provide ICT knowledge and skills of teachers, lack of technical support provision for ICT use at schools, lack of possibilities to identify job demands, lack of supporting and funding participation in training courses for professional development, lack of infrastructure, lack of integration pedagogical innovations in skills development are some of the main deficiencies found by the current needs analysis in Vlora city.

### Opportunities for teaching and training.

Participation of the majority of teachers in training activities shows their will to improve their knowledge, skills and to continue professional development. Additionally, they are aware of their need to enhance their digital skills and actively seek best practices and courses to improve ICT competencies. This is a great chance to invest on these people by making their education better

which means a more prosperous society in the future.

### Threats

Lack of sufficient funding, lack of infrastructure, lack of curricula that provide ICT knowledge and skills, lack of E-learning courses and problematic student-teacher ratio are the key risks to address.

## Conclusions

According to the results of the current study, LLL and training of teachers is of paramount significance (.Figure 6) First of all, the content of teacher training programs must improve knowledge and skills of teachers for ICT use. Most of them do not have adequate information about several online educational software programs.

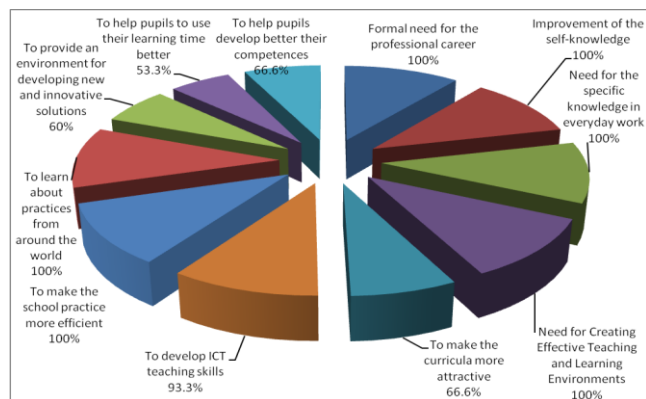


Figure 6. Graphic of teacher needs according to the questionnaire elaboration

Secondly, these programs should inform teacher with high quality digital material. For a easier accessible way to the teacher training courses, a pre information about courses is needed. Additionally, it would be more effective to consider teacher training courses and other in service training courses as a whole system. A national registration system of teacher training and qualification allows a better management of the process, to be based on a collaborative learning, organization of learning environments, management of learning process, management of differentiated environments, improvement of group working skills, better delivery of knowledge on the use of new technologies, the use of smart phones on learning environments, more skills and competences of teachers in the long life learning.

## References

- [1] Antoni M, Sula G, Mustafai A. Didactic basics in vocational education and formation. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/bazat\\_e\\_didaktkes\\_ne\\_arsimin\\_dhe\\_formimin\\_profesional\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/bazat_e_didaktkes_ne_arsimin_dhe_formimin_profesional_0.pdf) (26/01/2018).
- [2] Aspin D., Chapman J., Hatton M., Sawano J., "International Handbook of Lifelong Learning", Springer Int. Handbooks of Education 6, 2012
- [3] Delors J., "The treasure within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication", Int. Rev. Educ. (2013).
- [4] Haxhiymeri E, Mita N. Professional Development and teachers assessment in Albania. Available at: <http://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/Raport%20per%20vleresimin%20e%20mesuesve.pdf> (26/01/2018).
- [5] Leka K. Implementation of preliminary school teacher assessment in Albania. Available at: <http://www.doktoratura.unitir.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/KLODIANA-LEKA.pdf> (28/01/2018).
- [6] Ministry of Education and Sports. Development Strategy of Pre-University Education 2014-2020. Available at: <https://arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/apu/2016/STRATEGJIA-2014-2020.pdf> (27/01/2018).
- [7] Ministry of Education and Sports. National report. Needs for training of directors and teachers in pre-University level. Available at: [https://arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/apu/2016/Raporti\\_IDENTIFIKIMI\\_I\\_NEVOJAVE\\_PER\\_TRAJNIM\\_10.03.2016.pdf](https://arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/apu/2016/Raporti_IDENTIFIKIMI_I_NEVOJAVE_PER_TRAJNIM_10.03.2016.pdf) (26/01/2018).
- [8] Report of Teacher needs -2016 by Albanian Ministry of education available to the link <https://ascap.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Raporti.pdf>
- [9] United Nations. "Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" A/RES/ 70 /1. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (26/01/2018).
- [10] United Nations. The Organization of United Nations. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/overview/index.html> (26/01/2018)