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Albanian Model School

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The DfEE will need to ensure that applications from LEAs for capital support are soundly based. Mechanisms are therefore planned to assess the robustness of AMPs. These will need to cover the quality of the Plan itself and of the underlying processes. These will include:

- the thoroughness of the LEA's consultations with schools;
- the commitment the LEA has secured from schools to the way it approaches the assessment of their premises;
- the objectivity, transparency and fairness with which the LEA prioritises capital applications across all schools;
- the realism of the LEA's plans to maintain and monitor the development of the AMP.

Next steps

To facilitate the development of AMPs, the DfEE will be shortly publishing further guidance on standard methods for assessing the condition, sufficiency and suitability of school buildings. Guidance will also be produced to encourage the development of a common framework for property information systems in LEAs.

This article was contributed by Alan Jones of the DfEE.

ALBANIAN MODEL SCHOOL

The school soon to be completed in Paskuqan, a suburb of Tirana, was created to meet the present and changing needs of the community. The long-lasting, flexible structure designed to stimulate learning is the result of a close collaboration between pedagogical and building experts. The Albania Education Development Project (AEDP) of the Soros Foundation has financed the school – for pupils in the first eight years of education – as part of its larger programme to foster the country's educational system.

Design for education

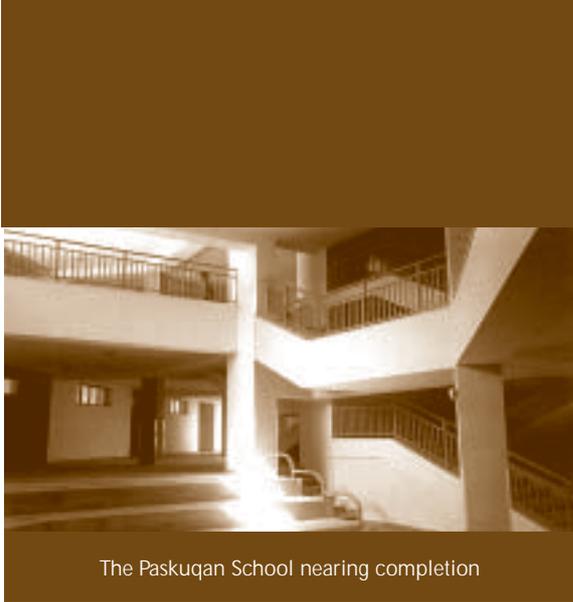
The design team has taken care to maintain structural quality while providing for the school's educational and extra-curricular vocations. The building's interior and exterior environments are expressly planned to facilitate the work of the pupils and teachers. Centred upon efforts of modernisation, the construction exceeds current Albanian building standards.



The final blueprint was chosen because of its composition of functional units. Teaching areas, administrative offices, faculty rooms and sports facilities are grouped according to function. Elementary grades (ages six to nine) and junior secondary grades (ages ten to thirteen) are separated but share an administrative centre, a central multifunctional hall and a gymnasium. Each grade system has its own entrance, and its classrooms communicate internally; the corridors of both sections lead to a spacious multifunctional area that can be used by part or all of the school for meetings, festivals or recreational activities. Administrative offices are located on each of the three floors of the building conveying easy access, while they are also connected by an independent staircase. The school's functional sections, in addition to offering independence, has facilitated construction in stages.

The project allows for a variety of teaching possibilities. Of vital importance is the classroom, where students learn through group work, experimentation and independent research. The architect was sensitive to the direct influence of a room's physical qualities on the effectiveness of teaching such as its size, shape, height, lighting, colour and furniture. Each of the sixteen classrooms is rectangular with a capacity of 30 seats and a surface area of 1.4 m² per student. Furniture and equipment can be arranged for various purposes depending on the subject of study and the teaching method. Classroom layout for the social sciences, for instance, encourages conversation and interaction. For the natural sciences, the layout gives priority to working individually and in small groups. Five special study rooms (e.g. physics and chemistry laboratories) provide greater possibilities for experimental work.

Corridors, perceived by the architect as an indispensable means of communication, were designed with optimum dimensions for comfortable movement. A central staircase connects all of the floors, and each school cycle has its own staircase



The Paskuqan School nearing completion

which can also serve for emergency evacuation. The hydro-sanitary installations, electricity and central heating system were equally designed with the vital functioning of the school in mind.

The school's location in the community, the slope of the terrain, solar orientation and climate were taken into consideration in the planning. The construction reflects traditional Albanian architecture, and finishing emphasises the school's aesthetic values. The grounds harmonise naturally with the building. The quality of the project, the spatial division and solid building materials – reinforced concrete and brick – will contribute to a long life for the Paskuqan school.

Role in the community

The Paskuqan school is expected to create close ties with the community and the local government. The structure will be used for cultural, sports and

municipal activities organised for the community. In addition, investment in a new school building is certain to have a positive influence on the community's perception of the worthiness of education.

Costs

Albania has undergone important demographic changes since 1990. The State is faced with the urgent task of reconstructing many existing educational buildings particularly in certain rural areas. At the same time, the State is constructing new schools, though funds for these are insufficient to meet the needs of the country.

The Paskuqan school is being built at a cost of US\$1 280 000 (of which US\$360 000 is for the gymnasium), or US\$300 per square metre. Though this is above the cost of most educational buildings in Albania, which range from US\$230 to US\$260/m², it is equivalent to the average cost of Albanian buildings on the whole.

Following the success of the Paskuqan project, the AEDP is constructing three larger model schools in Tirana. These improvements however come at a time when the situation in Albania creates an unfavourable atmosphere for teaching and learning.

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Ground floor plan

1. Classrooms
2. Doctor's office
3. Dentist's office
4. Library
5. Guard's office
6. Director's office
7. Secretary's office
8. Electrical room
9. Corridors
10. Multipurpose hall
11. Boiler room
12. Service room
13. Girls' restrooms
14. Boys' restrooms
15. Girls' locker room
16. Boys' locker room
17. Teachers' locker room
18. Storage
19. Gymnasium

