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The Harry T. Fultz Albanian American Educational Foundation

USAID Project Number 180-002, Grant Number EUR-G-94-00035-00

The Business Development Center

The Fultz Technical School, Tirana, Albania

Calendar Year 2000, Second Quarter Report

This report covers the period from April 1 to June 30, 2000

Overview

This Second Quarter witnessed dramatic events in the privatization of the Fultz Technical School (FTS). During the early weeks of April, a continuous series of meetings and consultations were held with individuals in all branches of the Government of Albania (GOA) as the Official Resolution for Privatization was moved by the Ministry of Education through its last reviews on the way to approval by the Council of Ministers and the signature of the Prime Minister. He signed the Resolution on April 29, 2000.

In early May, steps were taken to legalize the new "Harry T. Fultz Albanian American Foundation of Tirana, Albania." (Tirana Foundation) A legal file of all supporting primary and secondary documents was submitted to the Tirana Court. The court hearing occurred on June 15th, followed by a fourteen day waiting period. The new foundation was authorized to act as of July 1, 2000, marking the start of the school's transition to a private, non-profit status scheduled for introduction at the school upon its opening in September.

This major change in status—from a public secondary school to a private educational institution—will enable a substantive improvement in the quality of secondary and adult education at the FTS. It was celebrated with a dinner on June 14th attended by GOA notables, of whom the Prime Minister was the guest of honor, by the US Ambassador, members of the USAID staff, and representatives of FTS and the US Fultz Foundation.

Privatizing Processes

Fultz Program Manager, Dr. David Hansen, is also the interim administrator of the privatizing process. He began by creating new financial accounts at the American Bank of Albania and improving accounting systems. A strategic plan has been developed and will be used to guide the Transition Management Team at FTS that is supported by recent amendments to the USAID/Fultz grant. A reorganization is underway. A new director for the adult education program, Ilia Cili, has been named and a director for the high school is being recruited among qualified candidates. The present director of the Business Development Center (BDC), Mirela Mulaj will move to a newly created position as Development Office Manager. She will be responsible for public relations, advertising, and seeking external financial support, including grant writing. FTS Director Arian Kapedani will assume duties as overall General Director.

With the GOA there remain procedural negotiations to be completed: on the details of moving to adjust tuition and salary scales at the school; on absorbing the now separate Electrical School into the FTS system; and, importantly, on the transfer of title of properties from the GOA to the new foundation. A critical related process is to identify funding sources for the institution's stabilization and growth. This was begun in June by submitting an application to the American Hospitals and Schools Abroad (ASHA) for funding to upgrade the water, sewage, electrical, and security systems of the property.

Dr. Hansen is contacting the seven organizations asked to name ten of the eleven board members of the Tirana Foundation. It will have an office at the Fultz Technical School. The initial meeting of the Board of Directors is planned for the last days of September or early October.

The Business Development Center (BDC)

BDC enrolments have been dropping recently because of market competition, especially in basic computer skills training for which no adult evening courses were given. English language instruction languished too with eleven classes formed, attended by a total of 175 students. In comparison with other training providers, the BDC's instructors offer a lesser quality. They are recruited, in general, from the student body of the University of Tirana, have no teaching experience, and cannot teach high-level courses. As previously regulated by the Ministry of Education, fees for BDC courses are very low (about \$25) and instructors' salaries (at \$2.15) are too low to attract either university graduates or in-house recruits from among the FTS teaching staff. Even the quality of the latter has decreased in the last year or two. There has been a large turn-over as some of the best teachers have left for better-paying jobs in Tirana, e.g. interpreting for the many NGOs during the Kosova crisis last year. This situation can be dramatically turned around now that the FTS is privatized. Course fees can be made more competitive and teaching salaries can be raised to attract more capable instructors. Moreover, the FTS faculty can be appropriately staffed, replacing poorly performing teachers with those well-qualified, such that the BDC will have a stronger pool from which to draw. Its new director will try to use FTS high school teachers as BDC instructors or, failing that, will recruit on the open market, using short-term contracts for their employment. In short, with privatization, there are several good options for improving the quality—and reputation—of BDC instruction. Mirela is already preparing a package of advanced-level computer courses that can be started in September. Courses in Computer-Aided Drafting (AutoCAD I and II) were offered to FTS teachers of whom 17 received the training.

The BDC's specialized, tailor-made training programs offered under contracts are going well. The East-West Management Institute is continuing to finance secretarial training for the judiciary, with the next cycle to be offered in September to 30 judicial personnel from outside Tirana. Training will be provided in two groups of 15—each group spending 1/2 day in each of two modules—computer skills and secretarial skills/office management—over a two-week period. The Institute is arranging housing for the participants. The course will be repeated for another group of 15 secretaries from the

Tirana court. Six sessions have been completed to date. Suela Qerreti is the BDC's intern, assisting Mirela Mulaj and Ilia Cili in the smooth running of the adult training courses. She and Mirela prepared a proposal to World Learning (USAID's contractor for participant training) for providing after-hours secretarial skills training for the secretaries of government ministers in July.

The financial sustainability of the private institution, to a large extent, and during the transition in particular, will depend on expanding course offerings and increasing revenues from the BDC's adult education program. Such an expansion has led to consideration of post-secondary education within the organizational framework of a technical/community college. Students could take courses, which in the aggregate, could lead to a diploma in a specialized technical field. Alternatively, students could take individual courses and receive a certificate upon successful completion—as is the case now in the BDC. The FTS physical plant and facilities would be used by the high school from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and by the BDC/Technical or Community College after 2:00 p.m. through the evening. The goal is to transform the currently few evening classes into a full-day schedule of broadly selected, market-driven offerings of adult educational courses.

Other Activities

On June 16, Director Kapedani and Dr. Hansen addressed a meeting of parents and several FTS teachers to explain the rationale for the tuition fees that will be charged in September. Each parent had ample opportunity to voice his/her concerns. By the end of the meeting it was clear that all understood and accepted the need to pay for quality education. They appreciated the introduction of a sliding scale for fees for students already enrolled FTS; only new September entrants will pay the full charge. Entry will continue to be based on the results of an examination but there will be arrangements made to ensure that no qualified student is turned away for inability to pay. School administrators are thinking through options for this, including a work-study program and financial aid based on verification of need.

Later on June 16, the Mayor of Tirana hosted a ceremony to recognize 300 honorary citizens of Tirana. Harry T. Fultz was among them. Dr. Hansen accepted the framed citation, which now hangs at the school.

Both the volleyball and basketball teams of FTS won the Tirana high school championships this year. FTS also won top honors in painting, drama, and poetry.

In September 2000, the US Embassy will launch an Albanian-American Chamber of Commerce, directly affiliated with the US Department of Commerce. The new Chamber plans to open its office at FTS on September 18. This is part of a larger effort to combine business resources at the school. In addition to the Chamber, the current office of the Junior Achievement Program, and the FTS/BDC Business Programs, plans are underway to develop a joint project with the Tirana District Office of Education to improve business education curricula in Tirana public high schools.

Second Quarter April - June 2000					
Course Title	Course Hrs.	Classes	Female	Male	Trained
Beginner English	60	2	26	14	40
Intermediate English	50	3	31	12	43
Advanced English	50	3	37	13	50
Further Advanced English	50	2	13	13	26
TOEFL	45	1	13	3	16
Driving School		1	3	7	10
E.-W. M. I. "Introd. to Computers"	50	2	22	8	30
AUTOCAD I	40	1	4	6	10
AUTOCAD II	40	1	4	3	7
2nd quarter 2000 Total		16	153	79	232
Total BDC 2000 (two quarters)			330	175	505
Total FTS/BDC 1994			238	352	590
Total FTS/BDC 1995			1308	1108	2416
Total FTS/BDC 1996			2108	2002	4110
Total FTS/BDC 1997			1363	1002	2365
Total FTS/BDC 1998			1261	1217	2478
Total FTS/BDC 1999			1150	1386	2536
TOTAL FTS/BDC TO DATE			7758	7242	15000

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