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An Analysis of the State Matura Exam in Kosovo

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RIT KOSOVO

An Analysis of the State Matura Exam in Kosovo

Vjolla Gashi

7/1/2018

Advisor: Venera Demukaj, PhD

Submitted to RIT Kosovo as part of requirement for education

**An Honors Society Project
Presented to the Academic Faculty**

By Vjolla Gashi

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Membership in the Honors Society of RIT
Kosovo**

Abstract

This paper's aim is to analyze the State Matura Exam. The focus of the analysis is in particular on the administration process of the exam. The analysis is conducted by relying on both primary and secondary research. The research discusses the issues with the administration process of the test, whereby it identifies organized cheating as one of the most problematic issues. It also identifies methods of cheating by relying on primary research e.g. surveys and focus groups. Thus, the study analyzes whether the State Matura Exam fulfills the criteria needed to be considered a standardized test.

To conclude, the purpose of identifying the methods of cheating is to find the potential problems with the State Matura Exam and provide recommendations that would influence the students, teachers and the education system in general.

Acknowledgments

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I take this opportunity to immensely thank my parents, siblings and friends, who have supported me throughout this entire process. Lastly, I want to thank my special person for always being there. I am forever grateful for the love and support all of you have shown me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DESM- Division for Evaluation, Standards and Monitoring

KAS- Kosovo Agency of Statistics

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

MED- Municipal Education Departments

MEST- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

OECD- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA- Programme for International Student Assessment

SDG- Sustainable Development Goals

SMC- Central State Matura Commission

INTRODUCTION

On April 2015, the first PISA test was held in Kosovo. This test was considered an important milestone in Kosovo's education system journey, mainly because it would provide a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. The results, that were published one year after, seemed to have confirmed the expectations and the beliefs about the insufficiencies of Kosovo's education system. Internationally, Kosovo scored on the bottom five of countries, whereas regionally it was placed in the last place (OECD, 2016). As one of the most important international standardized tests in the world with 72 participating countries in 2015, PISA has shown that Kosovo is lagging far behind the rest of developing and developed countries.

The results of the test were discussed by major news outlets, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) officials and education experts. According to the education expert Dukagjin Pupovci, "the Pisa test has shown that when it comes to problem-solving skills, the average Kosovar student on the ninth grade can be compared with an average student in the sixth grade in the developed countries" (Zëri, 2016). The results show that the majority of 15 year-old students in Kosovo scored below basic proficiency level; thus, showing that these students do not possess the basic skills needed to be a productive labor force (Zëri, 2016). The PISA test result confirmed clearly that serious government commitment and attention is needed to improve the quality of education in Kosovo, primarily because education is a key contributor to the growth of the economy.

However, the PISA test is not the only available tool of the government to evaluate both the student's skills and the effectiveness of the education system in Kosovo. A tool that can be

used by the government is the State Matura Exam, which is one of the most important standardized tests in Kosovo. When it comes to the students, the exam is a requirement for graduating from upper-secondary schooling and as a pre-requisite for continuing undergraduate studies (The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2015). The State Matura Exam can also be used to analyze the schools and teachers performances, and thus, potentially portraying the problems of the education system and the areas that need improving. However, the State Matura Exam has been mainly a topic of discussion for the challenges it has faced with the poor administration of the exam. These problems have had a negative impact on the trustworthiness and credibility of the results. The discussion of this topic has been covered mainly by media outlets e.g. TV podcast, news report, online articles, debates and so forth; hence, there has been lack of academic research on this topic. Needless to say, the topic has gained much more attention since the PISA test results have been published, because as another measurement tool, it has shown that students are performing better than the PISA test. For instance, in 2015, the same year the PISA test was held, 79.9% of the students passed the threshold of 40% (MEST, 2015). The results are portraying a scenario where the majority of the students seem to possess the necessary knowledge and skills needed to continue with their undergraduate studies or be a productive member of the labor force.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the State Matura Exam by relying on both primary and secondary data. The focus of the analysis is on the administration process and the content of the test. The research is done to show if the State Matura Exam can be used as a tool to measure education quality in Kosovo; thus, to see if the purpose of the State Matura Exam as a standardized test is fulfilled. The paper will contain six sections. Firstly, background

information will be provided. Secondly, the background information part will be followed by the methodology section that gives a detailed description of the data gathering process. The third section will include the results obtained from the primary and secondary sources of information. The results section will be followed by a detailed discussion of the results. Lastly, based on the gathered data and the analysis of these data, recommendations will be provided.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The background information part will consist of four parts. In the first part, the impact of education on economic growth will be discussed with focus on both quantity and quality of education. The second part will provide a brief introduction on standardized testing where the focus will be on the advantages and disadvantages of the test. Furthermore, a brief description of Kosovo's education system development and challenges will be examined, and also relating to the State Matura Exam as an important component of this system. Lastly, a brief introduction of the State Matura Exam will be provided with the focus on its organization structure, laws and challenges.

2.1. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

Human capital is considered to be a crucial factor for sustainable economic growth in a country. Since the beginning of the 20th century, education has become a key component to ensuring the development of human capital. Education has been viewed as being a pivotal factor for the quality improvement of human capital; therefore, education role is essential in the social and economic growth of a country (Ozturk, 2001). One of the most important indicators of the

role of education on economic growth is that countries with high economic growth tend to have higher standards of schooling strategies and well developed human capital (Hanushek, 2007). Education contributes to an increase in human capital, which then translates to a more productive labor force with the end result being an increase in the overall equilibrium level of output (ibid). Consequently, investments in education translate to an increase in the economic growth of a country.

Education does not only play a role on economic growth and development, but also on social development. Education tends to make individuals more active and aware of their responsibilities (Ozturk, 2001). Moreover, education develops citizen's knowledge and understanding of government policies and manages to transform culture and traditions of a society (ibid). That is why both the social and economic roles of education have been emphasized continuously by national and international organizations, most notably the United Nations. In 2000, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were set by the United Nations. The second goal in the MDGs agenda was to ensure universal primary education by 2015. The MDGs agenda is continued by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and as the MDGs agenda, the SDGs puts emphasis on education, with the fourth goal to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning" by 2030 (Sustainable development goals).

In the recent years, more emphasis has been given to the quality of education. The emphasis on education quality is being backed up by the fourth goal of the SDGs agenda. Consequently, countries have been focused on the cognitive skills of the population, because these skills are closely related to productivity increases, and consequently to the economic

development of a country (Mayer, 2000). Therefore, the purpose of education is not only to provide the curricula to students, but also prepare the students to live responsibly and effectively as citizens of not only local, but national and international society (Mayer, 2000). Measuring education quantity and quality is needed to ensure that the country is following the right track toward economic development. Measuring education quantity is relatively easy because we tend to rely on the years of schooling. However, measuring education quality has proven to be quite a difficult job for countries. An important indicator of education quality is the teacher's professional development, experience, and strong academic skills (ibid). For instance, studies show that students tend to learn more from more experienced teachers than less experienced ones (pg.11). Murnane and Philips study showed that three to four months more progress in reading skills is made by children when the teacher has five years of experience rather than one year of experience (pg.11). Moreover, other indicators of the quality of education are classroom size, course content, and available technology (ibid). Nowadays, because of the increased emphasis on education quality, evaluating both the teachers and students knowledge and skills has become essential. Thus, standardized testing is used as an important tool for this evaluation.

2.2. STANDARDIZED TESTING

The legal definition of standardized test, "A test administered and scored in a consistent or standard manner... administered under standardized or controlled conditions that specify where, when, how and for how long children respond to the questions. In standardized tests, the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent. A well designed standardized test provides an assessment of an individual's mastery of a domain of

knowledge or skill” (Gawthrop, 2014, pg.5). In other words, the assessment of the student’ knowledge is the primary function of standardized testing.

There are two fundamental assumptions of standardized testing. The first one is that standardized tests are designed objectively, whereas the second one is that the standardized tests can accurately evaluate the academic knowledge of a student (Gawthrop, 2014, pg.3). It is assumed that the content and also the administration of the test is the same for all students. With this uniformity, it is believed that bias is removed; hence a certain measure of objectivity and fairness is achieved (pg.4). Since these tests are objective and unbiased, they assume that it is an accurate measurement of students’ abilities (pg.3). These assumptions have convinced schools officials to use test data to determine students’ academic abilities and to create or improve the school curriculum. The data are also used by legislators to draft numerous education policies (pg.5). Other than that, the components of validity and reliability are needed to ensure that tools created provide usable interpretations of the student’s academic abilities in specific areas of study (Gawthrop , 2014, pg. 5). A test can be reliable if the results of the test are consistent, meaning that no matter how many times students take the test, the scores are similar. Furthermore, a test is valid based on how accurate the results are, what it is designed to measure and how well it measures it. The tests that are both valid and reliable are then norm-referenced, meaning that a student’s skills and knowledge can be compared to a national sample of students that are in the same grade level (pg.5).

Numerous advantages and disadvantages have been mentioned when it comes to the use of standardized testing. One of the advantages is that standardized testing has been used by the administrators and legislators as a primary tool to assess the effectiveness of schooling on

children, to offer data to provide better management of the school systems and develop education curriculum because standardized tests are both efficient and affordable (Gawthrop, 2014, pg. 6). Hence, standardized testing has become an essential evaluative tool of the current education systems in many countries. For instance, universities tend to use standardized testing for selecting and classifying applicants (pg.7). Another advantage of standardized testing is that it can show the strengths and weaknesses of the students in particular fields, but also the strengths and weaknesses of the education system in general. For example, if in a national standardized test in X country, students show a weak performance in Mathematics, the results can be analyzed to potentially find the problem with this bad performance; hence, finding a solution to improve the Math skills of the students. Other than that, standardized tests provide insights to teachers on the areas they should focus, and on how to better structure lesson plans (pg.6). Because standardized tests are affordable, they are an efficient method to be used by the government to ensure that schools are achieving state standards. This allows schools to modify their curriculums, and develop programs that help them reach the state standards (pg.7).

With all its advantages, standardized testing still is a controversial topic of discussion mainly because critics argue that standardized tests are in fact not the efficient way to measure the students' academic abilities (Gawthrop, 2014, pg. 7) Critics of standardized testing argue that these tests are more useful to legislators than students, because in this case legislators have found a very easy and affordable way to accumulate and analyze the data (pg.7). They believe that the proficiency level of a student is not only determined by standardized tests but also by his/her homework, classroom participation or quizzes. Furthermore, they argue that the test fails to measure the total academic ability of students because qualities e.g. student's ethics, self-esteem,

sense of citizenship, desire to learn are not measured. These qualities are also being neglected because teachers tend to focus on quantifiable skills. Standardized tests fail to note that the learning capacity of students is affected by numerous factors e.g. parent's education level, mental, emotional and physical health, income level and so forth. Lastly, with standardized tests being an important component of education systems, the curriculum of schools has become gradually more test-driven, meaning that teachers focus more on "teaching to the test" (Columbia University, 2013). That is why critics argue that relying on the data from the standardized tests to make policy decisions about curriculum changes and instructions is risky because there are limitations to what these tests can do.

2.3. KOSOVO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system in Kosovo has experienced major developments and challenges since 1989. In 1989, Kosovo lost all its legislative and executive powers, including sovereignty concerning local matters e.g. decisions concerning education (Shahini, 2016). So, the decisions on textbooks and curricula were made in Belgrade. Albanian language was not allowed in schools, and neither were lessons about Albanian history, culture and literature. In 1990, Belgrade demanded the segregation of schools in Kosovo, so completely separating Albanian and Serb students (Shahini, 2016). This event combined with numerous others forced the Albanians to create a parallel education system. This system did not have all the necessary school resources, but it at least managed to save Albanians from illiteracy (Shahini, 2016). After 1999, the education system in Kosovo experienced substantial transformations. In the period 1999 to 2003, Kosovo has managed to introduce 9 years of compulsory education instead of 8 with the 5-4-3 structure, improve enrolment rates, improve data collection, and increase in

awareness about the overall educational needs. (Wenderoth. et al, 2004). During this time, one of the biggest developments in the education system was the establishment of MEST in 2002 (Wenderoth. et al, 2004). Since its establishment in 2002, MEST is responsible for promoting an inclusive education system in which each person’s right to education and training is respected and equal quality learning opportunities are available for all (Wenderoth. et al, 2004). It is also the responsible institution for organizing the State Matura Exam.

Kosovo’s general structure of the education system is presented in Figure 1. General education in Kosovo lasts twelve years; it consists of nine years of compulsory education, and three years of upper-secondary education (MEST, 2016). The main language of instruction in Kosovo is Albanian, but instruction is also provided in the other official recognized languages e.g. Bosnian, Serbian and Turkish (Danuza, et.al, 2016).

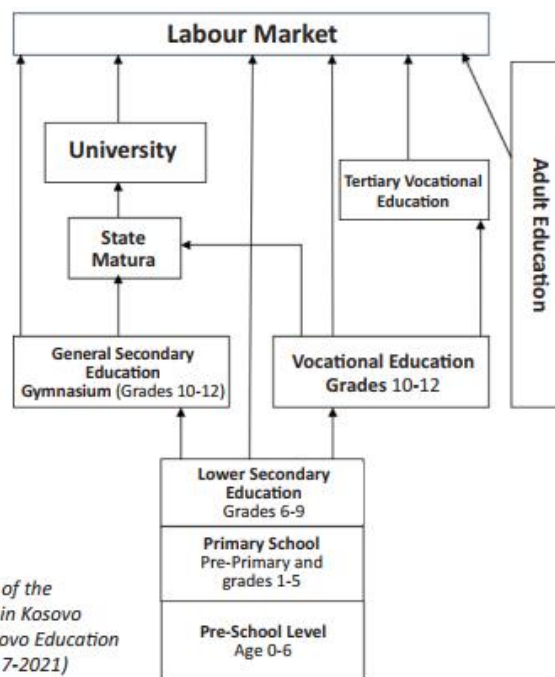


Figure 1. General Structure of the Education System in Kosovo
(Source: Draft Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021)

Compulsory education begins at the age of six and ends upon the completion of the lower-secondary education at the minimum age of fifteen (MEST, 2016). After the completion of lower-secondary education, students can decide to continue in the upper-secondary education or the vocational education which are not compulsory and end at the minimum age of eighteen (MEST, 2016). In order to graduate from upper-secondary or vocational schooling, the students are obligated to pass the State Matura Exam. The successful completion of the State Matura Exam allows the students to continue to tertiary education (ibid).

In the period 2015/6, Kosovo had 969 lower-secondary schools and 52 gymnasiums (Danuza, et.al, 2016). According to the latest Education Statistics in Kosovo provided by Kosovo Agency of Statistics, there are approximately 367,940 students enrolled at the pre-university level (2016). Since compulsory education involves both primary and lower-secondary schooling, the enrolment rates are almost universal, whereas upper secondary school enrolment rate is 84.5% ((Danuza, et.al, 2016). Furthermore, Kosovo is at the top of European countries with 6,669 students for 100,000 inhabitants for higher education enrolment (ibid).

Additionally, in the past few years, the Kosovo government has focused more on increasing investment in education. When it comes to public spending on the education sector, Kosovo is comparable to other countries in the region. For instance, in 2013, Albania's spending on education was 3.53% of the GDP (Anon, 2018). In Kosovo, we can see a steady increase of government spending on education from 3.3% of the GDP in 2007 to 4.2% of the GDP in 2014 (Danuza, et.al, 2016). However, 15% of Kosovo's education budget was used to increase teacher's wages in 2011 and 2015; thus, in general, with the increase in wages and also a young population, Kosovo lags behind in terms of student per-capita spending on education (ibid, pg.7).

For instance, in 2014, per-capita spending at the pre-university education level was 16.1% of per-capita GDP, whereas it was 23.8% of per-capita GDP in the higher education level (ibid, pg.7). In OECD countries, expenditure per student by educational institutions averages 21% of GDP per capita at the primary level, 26% at the secondary level and 41% at the tertiary level (ibid, pg.7). The comparison with OECD shows that Kosovo needs to focus its spending more on students.

Regardless of the major improvements since 1999, the education system in Kosovo continues to face challenges that threaten both the quantity and quality of education. For instance, a problem in upper-secondary education is the number of students in classrooms which sometimes exceeds forty students per class (KEC, 2014). Research shows that greater gains in student achievement occur in classes with 13 to 20 students compared with larger classes, especially for disadvantaged and minority students (Mayer, 2000, pg.31). Moreover, some other challenges in the pre-university education are problems in the process of licensing teachers, school dropouts, low rate of participation of students from marginalized groups and so forth (KEC, 2014). Lastly, one of the problems relies particularly with the State Matura Exam, since both MEST and MED have insufficient capacities to properly administer the process (ibid). Therefore, though Kosovo institutions recognize the importance of the role of education for growth, the improvement of the quality of education has been slow.

2.4. THE STATE MATURA EXAM

The State Matura Exam is a standardized test in Kosovo that is a requirement to graduate from upper-secondary schooling and continue tertiary schooling. This exam does not only represent the final exam of the upper-secondary school, but also a continuation that regulates the

transition from secondary to tertiary education (The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2015). It is defined as the “assessment of achievements, knowledge, skills, and abilities of students acquired during the pre-university education in compliance with Curricula of the Republic of Kosovo, or determination of level of achieved competencies of students and their allowance to continue education at university level.” (The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2015). The 2003/2004 generation of students in the upper secondary school were the first ones to take the State Matura Exam in the school year 2005/2006 (Retkoceri, 2017). However, until 2008, the exam was held only based on the administrative directives that were issued by MEST (ibid). In 2008, the Law on Final Exam and State Matura Exam Law (No. 03/L-018) was firstly introduced (ibid). After the implementation of the law, the State Matura Exam became one of the most important assessments of pre-university education in Kosovo.

Law No. 05/L-018 on State Matura Exam regulates the administration and implementation of the State Matura Exam. The tests are provided in Albanian, Serbian, Bosnjak and Turkish language (The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2015). The exam is divided into two tests, where the first one has 120 questions from the general subjects such as Albanian, Mathematics and English (ibid, pg.8). The second test has 80 questions from professional subjects (ibid). The minimum passing threshold is 40% (ibid, pg.8). MEST is the authority responsible for organizing the State Matura Exam, and it coordinates with the Central State Matura Commission (SMC). SMC is the decision-making, organizational, advisory, and supervisory body for the State Matura Exam (ibid, pg. 3). Amongst many duties, SMC is responsible for publishing the results, setting the administration standards of the tests, and for approving the exams that are compiled by the Division for Evaluation, Standards and Monitoring

(DESM) (ibid, pg.4). The DESM is not only responsible to design the standardized tests that are based on Kosovo's Curriculum, but also to propose supervisors, committee members, administrations that are involved in the process (ibid, pg.5). It also has the responsibility to train the proposed supervisors, administrations and committee members.

Even though the State Matura is crucial for evaluating the student's academic abilities acquired during upper-secondary education, the administration process of the exam has been criticized continuously. According to MEST, the 2015 State Matura Exam was considered to provide the most realistic and satisfying results. The Director of the SMC stated that "the test administration was in the appropriate level, but also the conditions under which the test was held were also better, therefore rightly we can say that the results are realistic, and compared to the last year, a 1.4 percent increase was marked" (Retkoceri, 2017). MEST also declared that continuous efforts are being made from both MEDs and MEST to improve the test administration, and both they and MEDs have gained the needed experience for organizing various national tests (ibid). However, problems with the administration of the test persist. One of the most discussed problems is the mass and organized cheating. Mass cheating has been observed at all levels of the education system in Kosovo; so, students tend to make efforts to cheat by using the most sophisticated technology. There seems to be a lack of efforts by educational institutions to prevent this phenomenon. Therefore, more work is needed to improve the administration of national tests, primarily in regards to the mass cheating, accommodation of students with special needs, the quality and reliability of the test and the test administration.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to better comprehend the issue of the State Matura Exam in Kosovo both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data is collected through interviews, surveys and focus groups. The research was conducted in four phases, as discussed in the following sub-sections.

3.1. SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

The first phase of research consisted primarily of an in-depth review of secondary data to identify preexisting criticism of the administration of the exam. Kallxo.com reports assess the administration process of the State Matura Exam. These monitoring reports were used as a guide to determine the types of irregularities, to be included in the surveys aimed at identifying the frequency of their occurrence. Moreover, the test results for the period 2015-2017 will be provided for analysis. Lastly, media outlet reporting on the preparation for the State Matura Exam of 2018 will be analyzed. This analysis of the reports done by media or the Ministry's website will be used to see if there are any changes in the preparation for the administration of the exam.

3.2. SURVEYS

The second phase of the research included two surveys. The first survey was conducted with undergraduate students. The purpose of the survey was to gather student perceptions of administration of the test. Students from all academic levels: freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors were the targeted population sample. This sample will ensure that data will be gathered from different years in which exam was organized. The survey was distributed online to the different universities Facebook groups to meet time limitations and to guarantee a larger

representation of other districts of Kosovo. In other words, even though the study was based in Prishtina, the online survey distribution allowed the representativeness of students from other regions/districts e.g., Gjilan, Gjakova, Peja including municipalities that belong to these regions. The survey consisted of 10 (ten) questions and it gathered more than 300 answers. However, the partially filled surveys were excluded from the study and in the end the analysis was focused on 285 surveys.

The second survey's focus was on 12th grade students who will be graduating from upper-secondary education in June. The aim of the survey was to see if the students have started studying for the State Matura Exam, and determine how familiar they are with the problems of the administration of the test. As with the first survey, this survey was distributed online. The survey targeted students from the municipality of Prishtina, and was distributed to five high schools, public and private.. It consisted of eight questions. Because the survey did not particularly relate to the administration process of the State Matura Exam, I chose to analyze 120 surveys. (See Appendices A and B for the survey questions).

3.3. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The third phase of research included interviews. The aim of the interviews was to assess the effectiveness of the State Matura Exam as a standardized test. The criteria for the selection of the interviewees were based on the individuals' expertise and the work s/he has done with regards to the State Matura Exam. A consent form was provided to each interviewee (See Appendix D). Two of the interviews were done through email because of busy schedules of the interviewees. Both the interviewees received the consent form and allowed follow up questions. The interviews were semi-structured, and the questions varied with every interviewee, but they

consisted primarily of seven to ten questions (See Appendix E for interview questions). In the beginning of the research phase, five potential interviewees were chosen. However, even though continuous efforts were made to conduct an interview with representatives of MEST, they failed to respond. Hence, the analysis will be focused on four interviews. The interviewees were two school professors, an education expert and a representative from Bit Kosova. Since the digitalization of the State Matura Exam has been discussed throughout these past few years an interview with a representative from Bit Kosova was conducted to see at which phase of the implementation process they are currently at, and the potential benefits of this project. Questions for the school professors and the education expert were formulated on the basis of the administration of the test and also on the content of the test. The interviews conducted with the professors were done to discuss how much students are preparing for the test, the content of the test, in particular as related to potential improvements, the cheating phenomenon and its implications. The interview with the education expert focused more on the benefits and challenges of the test on a national level.

3.4. FOCUS GROUPS

After gathering the data from surveys, I decided to organize two focus groups to further elaborate the results of the surveys. In other words, the aim of the focus group was to discuss the results of the survey and gather more detailed information from the participants. The majority of the participants in the focus group were female, and they were more forthcoming than males to talk about their experience. The questions developed for the focus group discussion were semi-structured. The discussion was done primarily on the first two questions provided in Appendix F; however, additional questions were used if further response from students was needed.

The first focus group consisted of 6 participants. They were selected based on the year they took the State Matura Test, thus the participants had to have completed the test during the period 2015-2017. The participants were from Prishtina, Istog and Rahovec. With regards to gender, fair representation was not achieved. Two of the participants were male, while the other four were female. Each of them graduated from a different high school. The second focus group also consisted of 6 participants. The same selective criteria were used. In this focus group, gender representativeness was achieved. Moreover, the participants were from the municipalities of Prishtina and Peja.

3.5. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to note that limitations to this study exist, and they are primarily time-constraints. Another limitation to this study is the territorial coverage. Efforts were made to include and represent other municipalities with the first survey distribution. However, since the study is based in Prishtina, fair representation of other municipalities on the phases of research is not achieved. Moreover, the study fails to include multiple ethnicities, because the lack of time and financial resources made travel to minority communities difficult. A broader inclusion with focus groups was not achieved primarily because of the busy schedules of the contacted participants. Lastly, attempts were made to analyze the content of the State Matura Exam. However, there was a lack of willingness by MEST officials to respond to questions and also limitations with regards to the available information about the ways MEST designs the tests. Thus, this made it impossible to analyze the content of the test, primarily to focus on whether the content is achieving the expected results.

4. RESULTS

This part of the paper will introduce and briefly discuss the gathered data from the secondary and primary research. The data introduced in this section will be used and analyzed in details in the discussion section.

4.1. FIRST SURVEY RESULTS

The First Survey:

This section will only summarize the findings of the first survey which will be used as points of references for the analysis in the following section. The survey results will be provided and explained in the following paragraphs and tables. Results presented in figures from the demographic questions can be found in Appendix C. With regards to gender, 51% of the respondents identified as female, whereas 48% identified as male.

Figure 2: Number of respondents by districts

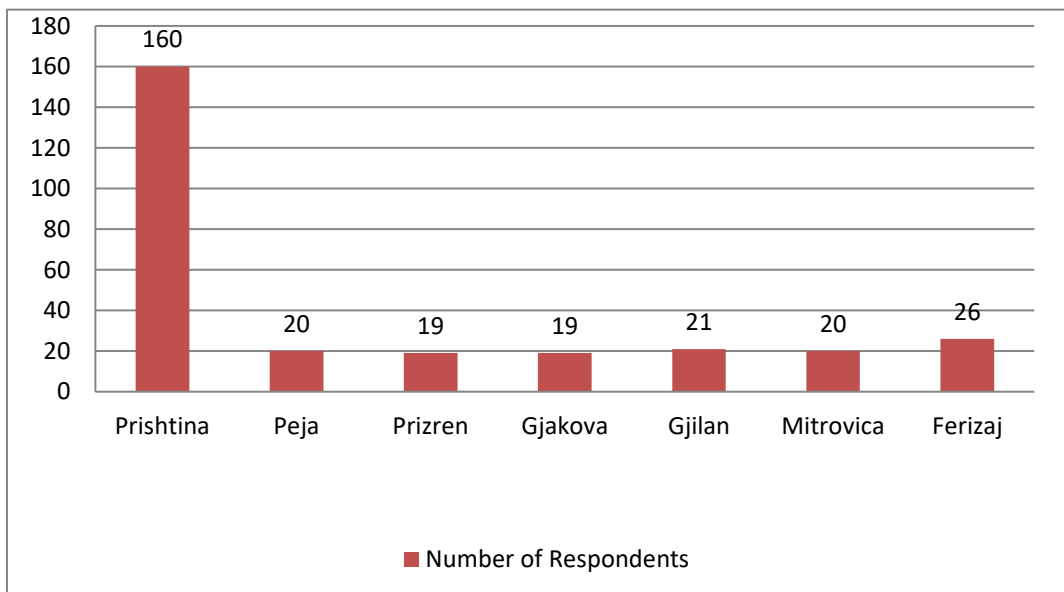
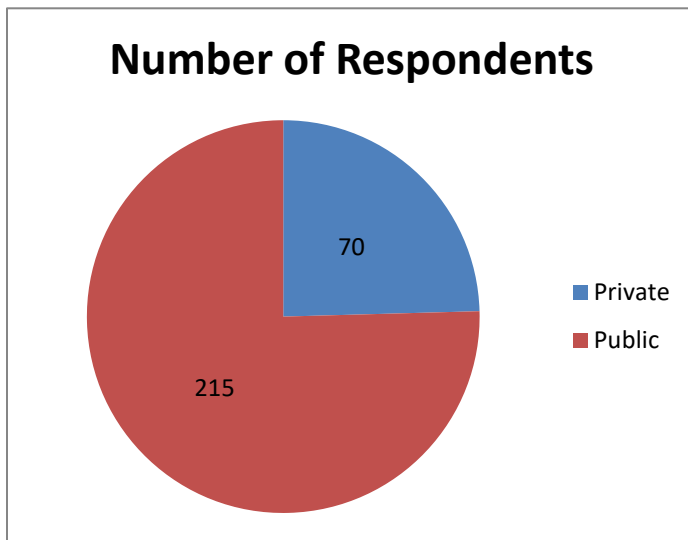


Figure 2 shows the representativeness of each district. Considering that the study was mainly based in the district of Prishtina, this district has the largest number of respondents, with 160 responses. As it can be seen, the second largest number of respondents is in the district of Ferizaj. The other municipalities have somewhat similar representativeness.

Figure 3: Respondents by private or public high school



As we can see in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents were from public schools in the districts of Kosovo. This is true, because overall Kosovo has more public than private schools.

Figure 4: When did you take the State Matura Exam (year)?

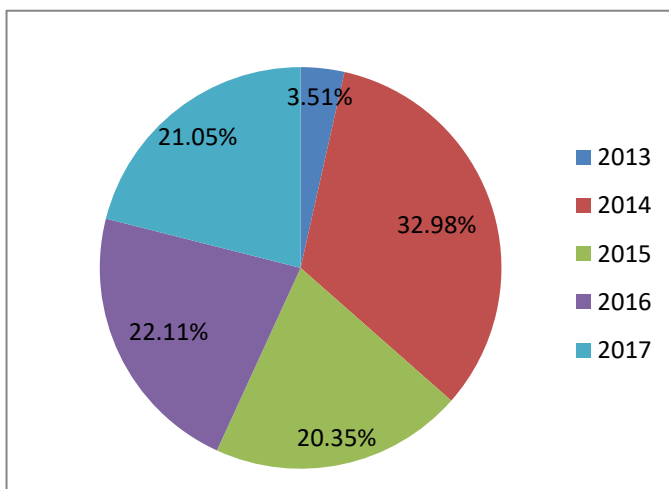
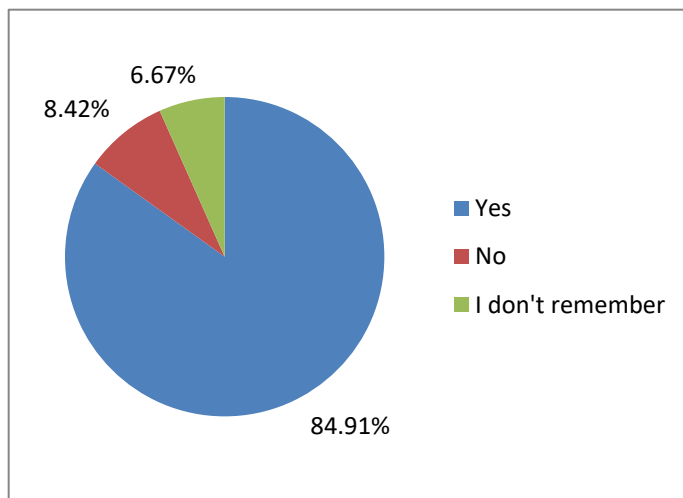


Figure 4 divides the respondents based on the year they participated in the State Matura Exam. This division was done to ensure that the sample will represent all academic levels, which will make it easier to compare the administration process of the test. Detailed information on the current academic level of the respondents can be found in Appendix C.

The majority of the sample with 32.98% has finished the State Matura Exam in 2014. The rest of the respondents are fairly distributed amongst years 2015, 2016 and 2017. Only , 3.51% of the respondents have taken the State Matura Exam in 2013.

Figure 5: Did you experience any irregularities e.g. delays, cheating etc., while taking the State Matura Exam?

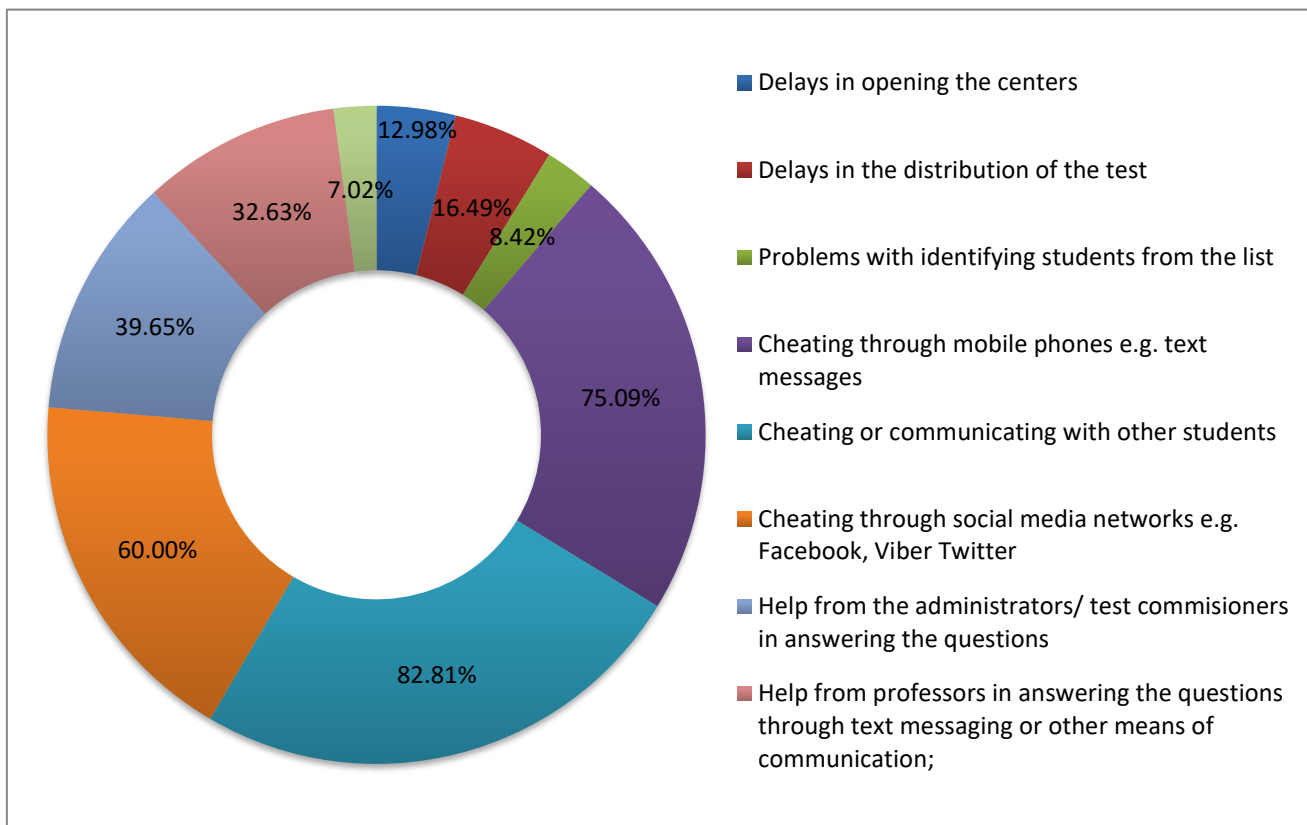


The majority of the respondents have reported that they have experienced irregularities on the day of the test. Thus, 84.91% of the respondents have noticed cheating, delays or other types of irregularities.

One of the focuses of the survey is to depict the cheating methods used by students during the exam and also determine the frequency of the usage of these methods. Thus, Figure 5,

lists different types of irregularities that have been reported previously. Cheating has been divided into different methods in order to determine the most frequently used method by students. Moreover, the respondents had the opportunity to select more than one answer to the question.

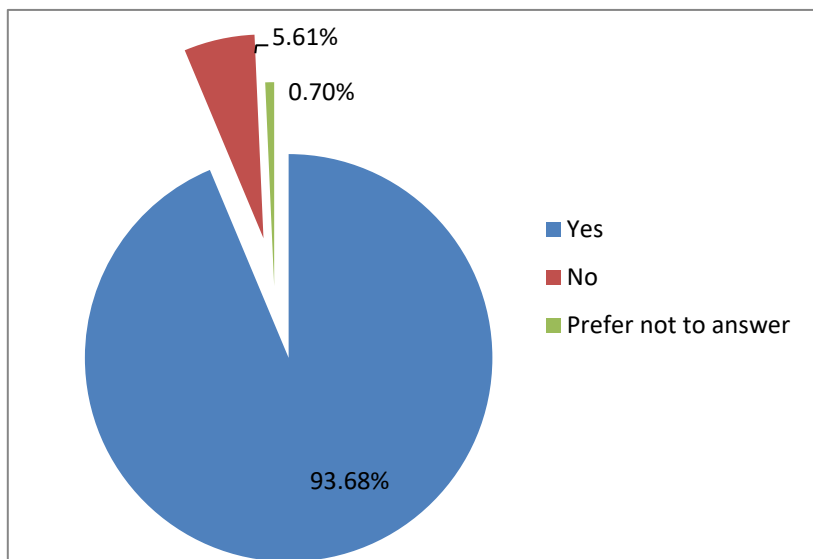
Figure 6: Based on your experience, what were some of the irregularities on the day of the test?



As we can see in the figure, delays were not that frequent, with around 16% of the delays happening with the distribution of the test and around 13% with opening the centers. 82.81% of the respondents reported to have experienced cheating on the test through communicating with other students. Moreover, around 75% have reported to have experiences cheating through

mobile phones, and 60% have experienced cheating through social media networks. 39.65% of the respondents reported to have witnessed assistance from the administrators in answering the questions and around 33% reported to have witnesses help from the professors via mobile phones.

Figure 7: In general, do you believe due to cheating in the Matura Exam, the real results of students are not portrayed?



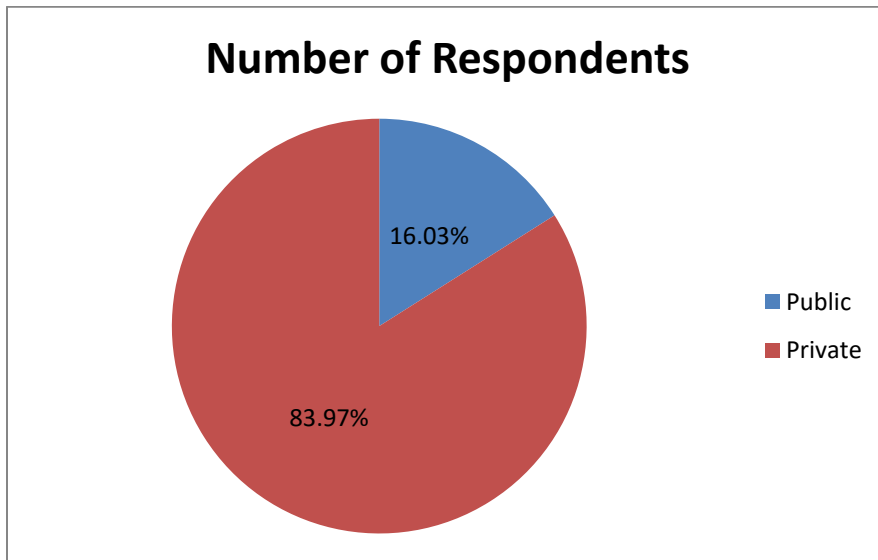
Approximately 94% of the respondents believe that the State Matura Exam results do not portray the reality. In other words, because of the mass cheating happening, the reliability and trustworthiness has been diminished.

4.2. SECOND SURVEY RESULTS

As mentioned above, the second survey’s focus is the 12th grade students. The following figures provide the results of the survey which will be analyzed in the discussion section. With

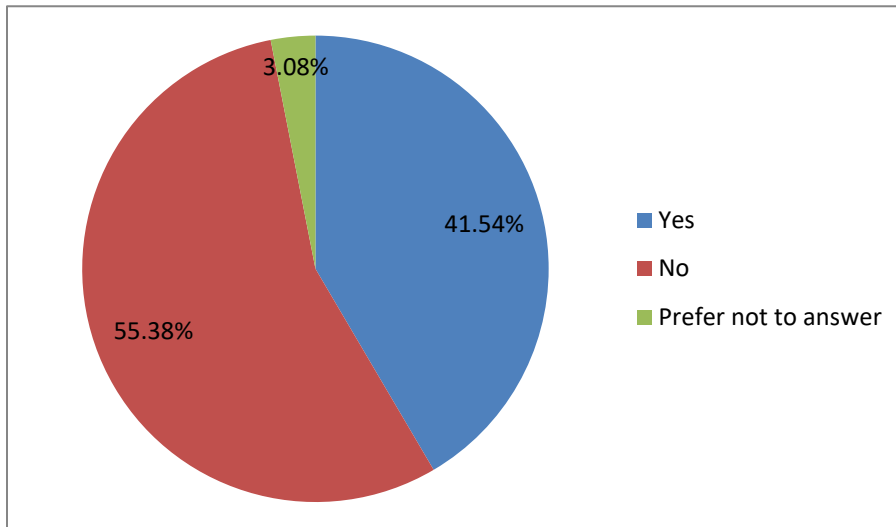
regards to gender, 51.54% of the respondents in the second survey have identified as female, whereas 46.15% have identified as male.

Figure 8: Respondents by private or public high school



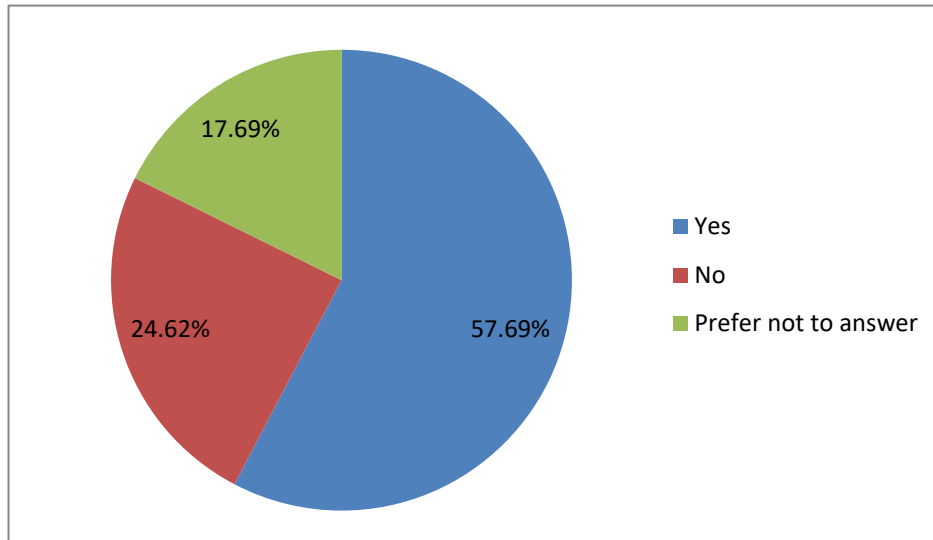
The focus of this research was in the district of Prishtina because of the time-limitations. Figure 8 shows the number of respondents in the district of Prishtina with regards to whether they are attending private or public high schools. Considering that the number of public high schools in this district is higher than of private ones, the majority of the respondents, with around 84%, are attending public high schools.

Figure 9: Have you started preparing/studying for the State Matura Exam?



As we can see in Figure 9, when the survey was conducted (March 2018), around 55% of the respondents have not yet started to prepare or study for the State Matura Exam which is to take place in June 2018. Moreover, the respondents that have started studying for the State Matura Exam report that their methods of studying include taking additional private courses, reviewing tests from previous years, and reviewing lectures. Around 80% of the respondents reported that their school does not offer additional classes to prepare for the test. However, paid courses are available for students interested in participating in them. 12% of the respondents reported that their high schools offer additional classes for approximately 3-4 hours per week. Other than that, the students were asked about their knowledge of the digitization of the State Matura Exam where 60% of the respondents have heard about the Digital Matura. When it comes to whether the Digital Matura will make the process easier, the respondents are equally distributed between yes and no.

Figure 10: Have you ever heard of any irregularities that happen during the State Matura Exam?



Considering that this survey was done to primarily look at the level of preparation for the State Matura Exam and get insights on the information they have with regards to irregularities happening during the exam, Figure 10 shows that more than half of the respondents, with around 58%, have heard of irregularities associated with the State Matura Exam. 58 out of 130 respondents reported that they have been informed of the massive cheating that happens during the State Matura Exam.

4.3 FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Two focus groups were organized with the purpose being to get more detailed information on the habits and methods of cheating the students have experienced during the State Matura Exam. The focus groups results proved and emphasized the phenomenon of cheating in this test. Both focus groups revealed the tendencies of students to prepare cheating strategies

with their classmates two-three weeks prior to the test. Moreover, the focus group discussion concluded that the majority of the students have cheated through communicating with each other, or helping each other solving the questions. Other than that, the majority of the participants discussed the use of phones during the exam either to communicate with one another or to find answers to the questions online. Phones were also used to post the questions in different Facebook groups and asking for assistance from their high school professors. The discussion also revealed that students would come prepared with two phones in case the administrators decided to collect phones before the exam starts. Lastly, to conclude this section, the focus group discussion emphasized the preparations and ways students try to cheat during the test, and offered insight on some “extreme” cases of cheating which will be mentioned in the discussion section.

4.4. INTERVIEW RESULTS

The interviews conducted showed that scope of the State Matura functions include much more than testing the knowledge and skills of students. The interviewed professors showed that they include in their study plans ways to assist the students in studying for the State Matura Exam and they believe that these methods help the students be more prepared for the exam. Moreover, they believe that the tests are relatively easy, thus the questions correspond to the lessons being taught in high schools. Interviews also showed that all the interviewees were aware that the cheating phenomenon exists in these test, and this massive cheating is interfering with the process of the test. Other than that, the interviewees believe that the results of students are inflated, thus do not show the potential of neither the students or the performance of the high

schools these students are attending. In other words, the massive cheating is resulting in the loss of credibility of the results. The representative from Bit Kosova provided insight on the implementation process of the E-education process and the benefits and challenges of this process. The project started in 2015 and ended in 2017. According to the interviewee, its main purpose is to advance the education system in Kosovo by digitization, and this includes the digitization of the State Matura Exam. With regards to the digitization process, three successful trials were conducted in seven municipalities of Prishtina and the project is in its maintenance phase. Furthermore, she believes that the digitization of the State Matura Exam would prevent cheating during the exam. However, problems with regards to the MEST capacities and the available digital infrastructure exist and these problems have made the implementation process a more difficult one.

4.5. SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION RESULTS

As mentioned in the background information section, one of the SMC responsibilities is to publish the results. They usually publish the results by organizing a press conference. After the press conference, MEDs provide the results to high schools which then distribute them to students. However, these results cannot be found in any of the databases of the aforementioned education institutions. The results can be rarely found in a news article provided by MEST e.g. for the first round in 2015. Other than that, the results can only be found by browsing through news portals. Even though the study focuses on the State Matura Exam from 2014 to 2017, no information on the passing rate for 2014 was available.

Figure 11: State Matura Exam Results for years 2015-2017

	2015	2016	2017
First term	53.9% (MEST, 2015)	74% (Kallxo.com, 2016)	83.5% (Klan Kosova, 2017)
Second term	56.7% (KosovaHaber,2015)	60% (Baliu, 2016)	X

The figure above shows the percentage of people who have passed the State Matura Exam. The students that did not pass the test in the first term are the ones who take the test again in the second term. Thus, the second term includes the students who were not able to pass the test in the first one and is usually organized in August. As we can see, the passing rate of students has increased every year. Thus, in 2017, the majority of students have passed the exam on their first attempt. It is important to note, that every student participates in the first term of the test which is held in June.

There are two monitoring reports of the State Matura Exam conducted by Kallxo.com. The first monitoring report is from the second round of the test in 2014. In 2014, Kallxo.com signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with MEST which allowed the Kallxo.com team to monitor 36 centers (Hajrullahu et.al, 2014). During their monitoring process, the team identified many irregularities with the conduct of the State Matura Exam. The team noticed that there were cases when the administrators were absent, thus making the administration of the test rather

difficult for the other administrators (Hajrullahu et.al, 2014). Moreover, delays in opening the centers and distributions of the test happened in numerous centers. Other problems identified from the team were the presence of unauthorized people, the lack of instructions by MEST, problems with identifying students from the list and so forth (ibid, pg.5). The team also monitored social media activity where they noticed that in some centers the tests were posted online e.g. in Podujeve (ibid, pg.10). They reported unusual and unnecessary conversations between the monitors and students. This led the team to believe that the students were being assisted in answering the questions. Lastly, communication between students was prevalent in the test, and they reported that students had plans e.g. using sign language to communicate with each other (ibid, pg.12).

The second monitoring report was conducted in 2015 also by the Kallxo.com team. The team monitored the centers in both the first and second round, where they monitored high schools in 10 municipalities (Hajrullahu, 2015). The monitoring team reported that they noticed improvements in the administration process of the test. Nevertheless, they also reported numerous problems e.g. delays, problems with lists, cheating and so forth. One of the biggest issues reported by the team was the distribution of the tests on social media networks and answers to the questions were being provided by organized groups (Hajrullahu, 2015). Thus, as in the first monitoring report, the same problems accompanied the administration process of the State Matura Exam. In both the reports, a number of recommendations are provided for MEST. The team believes that the recommendations, if followed, will guarantee major improvements in the administration process.

Lastly, this section also includes the preparation that is being done for the State Matura Exam 2018. Even though the focus of the study is from the period 2014-2017, this paper also includes the available data on the MEST's attempts to improve the administration of the test. MEST has declared in the beginning of April that changes will be made to the administration of the State Matura Exam. The minister of MEST, decided that the test will not be held on the same day for all the districts. Thus, the exam will be held on eight days per term (KOHAnet, 2018). This was done to try and prevent any irregularities associated with the administration process of the test. Moreover, MEST has also decided to ban the phones on the day of the test for both the students and the administrators (KOHAnet, 2018). Students who use phones during the test will be penalized, whereas the administrators if involved in any means of manipulation will be punished by automatically losing their jobs. However, the State Matura Exam 2018 has not been completed yet, and considering that drastic improvements are needed with regards to the administration process, the changes are only incremental and can prove to provide positive effects only if they are implemented properly.

5. DISCUSSION

Every year since 2015, MEST has been declaring that the State Matura Exam process has ended without any major problems or irregularities. On the other hand, most of the media outlets report numerous problems with the conduct of the test, whereby numerous videos and articles show instances of students cheating habits, inappropriate behavior of administrators or school directors, threats and verbal fights between students and administrators and so forth. Moreover, every year, MEST declares that they have made improvements with regards to the administration process of the test. However, not much is expected because the cycle of these problems has

proven very difficult to be broken. MEST declarations on the exam process have somewhat lost their trustworthiness when the discussion on the Matura Exam has always been focused on the problems associated with it.

The results from surveys and focus groups have revealed that one of the biggest problems with the State Matura Exam is cheating. This is because cheating in this exam has been happening in an organized and obvious way. However, cheating is not only a problem in this test, but has proven to be a challenge for the whole education system. The interviewed education expert believed that the majority of the society is responsible for this phenomenon. He stated that:

The culture of cheating in Kosovo is being developed from the beginning of the first grade, where parents are assisting their kids in doing the homework. This bad habit is being transferred to the students and the students are further developing it. Moreover, the teachers are tolerating the cheating habits of their students, because cheating in our culture is not considered a serious violation. The biggest punishment for cheating would be cancelling the students test

Cheating habits amongst students are not being developed during the exam, but rather are being cultivated throughout the years. Moreover, the students are not receiving any serious punishment for their behavior, thus resulting in them not taking this issue seriously. This statement can be supported by the data gathered from both the surveys and focus groups. For instance, focus group participants have declared that together with their classmates they have prepared cheating strategies. A graduate from a high school in Rahovec stated:

My friends and I planned that each of us will study for a specific subject. We also had the phone numbers of our professors and we planned to contact them if we could. In the first

round of the test, the administrators were very strict and collected all our phones.

However, we managed to communicate with each other. In the second round of the test, the administrator was more tolerant which allowed us to contact the professors for assistance. One of our professors even came to the center where the test was being held and assisted us in solving some of the questions.

Moreover, other participants have also admitted to strategizing with their classmates and developing sign language for communication and assigning responsibilities to each other as in the aforementioned example. The survey results and the monitoring reports from kallxo.com have shown that the majority of students communicate with each other during the test. The survey results showed that the second most used method of cheating was through phones. The survey results were supported by the focus group participants, whereby they admitted that the majority of the students used phones to communicate with each other or look up answers online. Most of the students had two phones available on the day of the test in case the administrator decides to collect the phones. Participants of the focus group also admitted that the administrators were aware that the students had another phone with them but did not intervene.

These results can potentially show that the students take risks when it comes to cheating in the State Matura Exam primarily because they believe that they will not face consequences. Their beliefs were supported also by the administrators where in numerous instances the administrators were aware of the massive cheating happening but chose to ignore it. The monitoring reports of Kallxo.com notice the administrators making unnecessary conversations with the students, which led them to believe that the administrators were assisting the students in answering the questions. Furthermore, the survey showed that in fact administrators are assisting students in answering the questions, whereby around 40% of the respondents admitted that help

from the administrators occurred during the test. Moreover, the focus group discussion led to many experiences being shared that relate to the behavior of the administrator in the test. For instance, a graduate from a private school in Prishtina stated that:

In the beginning, the administrator was strict and did not allow us to communicate with each other or use our phones. However, this lasted only in the first sixty minutes of the test. The administrator was always hinting to us to stay quiet until the last 30 minutes of the test so that cheating would not be obvious. She also warned us to stay quite when the officials from MEST came to check on us.

Another student that graduated from a high school in in Gjilan shared her experience during the first round of the test by stating:

The administrator gave us his sons' phone number and asked us to communicate with him since his son was also taking the test. So, for sending him the answers of the test we were allowed to communicate with one another and use our phones. The administrator also allowed one of our classmates to stand by the door and check if the MEST officials are coming. When he would see them, he would turn the lights off to warn us to stay quite.

These examples mentioned in the focus group discussion allowed the participants to come to the conclusion that the results are not deserved in most cases, thus they do not show the true knowledge and skills of the individuals. Similar instances happened to almost every participant in the focus group where the administrator was tolerant on the massive cheating happening. Moreover, other actors involved in the organized cheating of the students have been their high school professors. The survey results showed that around 33% of the respondents received help from their professors. Other than that, focus group discussion revealed that professors offered to assist in answering the questions in numerous cases. Moreover, one participant revealed that she

attended an additional Chemistry course where the teacher opened a Facebook group and on the day of the test answered the questions posted by the other members of the group.

The above provided examples show that this phenomenon of cheating is being organized in ways that guarantee the passing rate of the students to be inflated. Even the secondary data gathering showed the increase in the passing rate for each year. For instance, in 2016 74% of the students passed the test in the first term, whereas in 2017 the number increased to 85.3%. An increase by more than 10% within a year can be seen as suspicious when the evidence shows the widespread organized cheating. Thus, the inflation of results can be depicted in numerous instances. Furthermore, the majority of the survey respondents agree that the results do not portray the reality. The interviewed professors also expressed their doubtfulness for the results. The professor from “Mileniumi i Tretë” believes that neither the students’ knowledge nor the performance of the teacher can be measured when the results are inflated due to cheating.

Furthermore, the education expert believes that we have failed to create a system of education that ensures accountability. Thus, professors see cheating as a way to justify their inactivity and the grades they distribute. Moreover, the government is relaxed because the majority of the students have passed and nobody is protesting over the results, thus creating a false belief that the education system is working. This is seen as a way of corruption where the majority of society is included. Moreover, the accountability issue is also noticed with the result publication. The SMC does not publish the results anywhere electronically. It is also very difficult to get the results for research purposes, thus ensuring that an analysis of the scores is not being conducted. The analysis of the scores would allow more transparency and accountability in

the system. Even though the results are inflated, using them could provide information on where the students or the system is having problems.

The consequences of this cheating phenomenon are greater than just the falsification of the results. As the professor from a high school in Prishtina stated:

The students who are cheating are in the end being rewarded for their cheating, whereas the test is only harming the good students. In a way the good students are being penalized for studying six to seven months prior to the test and for not cheating.

One of the potential consequences is that the hard-working individuals would not be rewarded for their accomplishments. For instance, in numerous instances the students have reported that the students who gave zero efforts during the studies managed to get enrolled in the highly demanded departments of the public university in Prishtina, thus, in a way “stealing” the place of someone who studied hard to get enrolled, but didn’t. Allowing students who cheat to benefit from the system that was created to potentially reward the hard working students shows clearly that the education system has failed in providing the instruments to punish the cheaters of the system. Moreover, the education system has failed in holding accountable firstly the cheaters, and also the individuals who are allowing this phenomenon to continue. In the end, this is producing an unbreakable circle that results in the creation of a corrupt society, whereby the consequences of it would always relate to potential problems in the development of the country. Thus, it can be suggested, that the State Matura Exam is not fulfilling its function as a standardized test.

The phenomenon of cheating can also be categorized as a form of corruption. Since, education contributes to the development of human capital; numerous studies have shown that

corruption in the education system can have negative effects for this development. Education serves its purpose by also teaching students how to behave in the future. So, by allowing cheating in a system that promotes certain values, one can expect the development of a corrupt society. Thus, we are developing a society with distorted norms and values. Moreover, the irregularities associated with the State Matura Exam undermine the credibility of the exam and also loses the public trust. Another issue with cheating is that because of the better performance of the cheaters, the good students are being denied access to better schooling, admitting unqualified students and potentially unqualified teachers in the future. Thus, education is becoming a low-quality good and it is failing to ensure a full developed human capital, but it achieves a culture of corruption and manipulation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the detailed analysis and discussion of the collected data, the following recommendations are provided:

- Strengthen the administration of the exam
- Increase accountability
- Increase transparency by reporting to the public on policies, actions or changes with regards to the State Matura Exam.
- Remove the State Matura Exam

The first four recommendations provide solutions to the problem of the administration of the test by considering that there is a potential for change. So, these recommendations would be advisable only if MEST is committed to fight the poor administration of the test. Considering

that MEST has shown its willingness this year to fight cheating by introducing some changes to the administration process, the recommendations, if implemented properly, can lead to a further improvement in the administrations process. This can be done through awareness campaigns, clear instruction manuals, intensive trainings of the responsible authorities and lastly strong punishments if the instructions are not followed. Moreover, the strengthening of the administration of the test needs to happen together with an increase in accountability of all the responsible actors, and lastly increased transparency. This paper addresses the issue of the lack of information from the MEST officials with regards to test designs, results or any changes/improvements that are being done. The reporting done by MEST can allow the society and experts to follow closely and provide input on the necessary changes that are needed for the State Matura Exam to be an effective standardized test.

If no action to improve the administration process is taken, it can be stated that the State Matura Exam is failing to fulfill its function of assessing the knowledge, abilities and skills of the students. Therefore, the State Matura Exam should be removed because it is only proving to be an exam where time and financial investments of the students, teachers, schools, municipalities and lastly MEST are being misplaced. The removal of the State Matura Exam would remove the tool available to the government to hold the municipalities and high schools accountable. Since no action from the government has been taken to analyze the results and find the potential problems with the test, the removal of this test would not cause any drastic changes to the system. However, if the test is removed, MEST should propose a regulation to ensure that every university develops its own entrance exams to make sure that the students possess the knowledge needed to continue tertiary schooling.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey for Undergraduate Students

1. Gender:
 - a) Male
 - b) Female
 - c) Prefer not to answer
2. What is your current academic year?
 - a) Freshman
 - b) Sophomore
 - c) Junior
 - d) Senior
3. Where are you from? _____
4. From which high school did you graduate? _____
5. When did you take the State Matura Exam (year)?
 - a) 2014
 - b) 2015
 - c) 2016
 - d) 2017
 - e) Other
6. Did you experience any irregularities e.g. cheating, delays etc. while taking the State Matura Exam?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't remember
7. Based on your experience, what were some of the irregularities on the day of the test?
(You can circle more than one option)
 - a) Delays in opening the centers;
 - b) Delays in the distribution of the tests;
 - c) Problems with identifying students from the list;
 - d) Cheating through mobile phones e.g. text messages;
 - e) Cheating or communicating with other students;
 - f) Cheating through social media networks e.g. Facebook, Viber, Twitter;
 - g) Help in answering the questions from the administrators/ test commissioners;
 - h) Help from professors in answering the questions through text messaging or other
;means of communication;

- i) Prefer not to answer;
- 8. In general, do you believe due to cheating in the Matura Exam, the real results of students are not portrayed?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Prefer not to answer
- 9. In a few words, can you explain the experience you had while taking the State Matura Exam?

Appendix BSurvey for 12th Grade Students

1. Gender:
 - d) Male
 - e) Female
 - f) Prefer not to answer
2. Which high school do you attend? _____
3. Have you started to prepare for the State Matura Exam?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Prefer not to answer
4. If yes, approximately how many hours per week have you been studying?

5. Can you list the methods of studying for the test?

6. Is your high school offering any additional classes to prepare for the test?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
7. Have you ever heard of any irregularities that happen during the State Matura Exam?
8. If yes, can you list some of the irregularities? _____
9. Have you heard of the digital Matura?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
10. If yes, do you believe that the digital Matura will make the process easier?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

Appendix C

Results from the Survey with Undergraduate Students

Figure 12: Gender of the Respondents

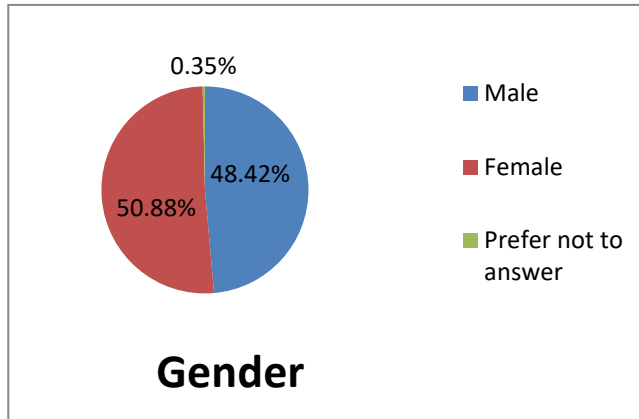
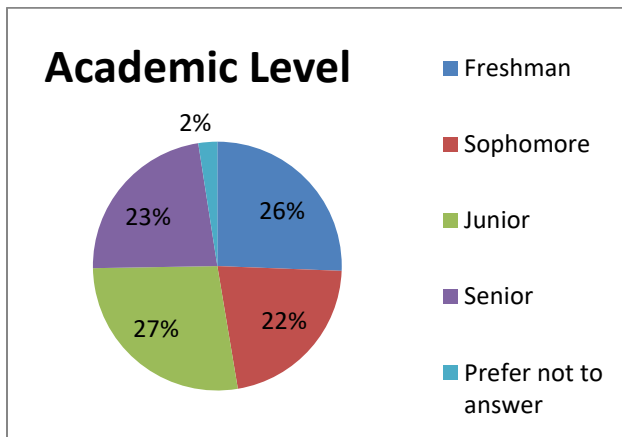


Figure 13: What is your current academic level?



Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

RIT Kosovo

Title of Project: A Critical Analysis of the State Matura Exam

Principal Investigator: Vjolla Gashi, RIT Kosovo Student

Gërmia Campus

Dr. Shpëtim Robaj st. nn

10000 Prishtina,

Republic of Kosovo

045/-437-335; vjollag@auk.org.

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to critically analyze the State Matura Exam by focusing on the process of the formulation of the test to the distribution of the test. Furthermore, a special focus is on the problems that result during this process of formulating the Matura Exam.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer nine questions during this interview.
- 3. Duration:** It will take about 20-30 minutes to complete the interview.
- 4. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be used only for the “finding “and “conclusion” sections, which will be mentioned in my methodology as source of primary data.
- 5. Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records

Participant Signature _____

Date

Person Obtaining Consent _____

Date

Appendix E

Interview questions #1 (Education Expert)

1. Cheating on the Matura State exam is a problem that has been discussed for many years in Kosovo. As part of my research and data gathering, I also included a questionnaire where I asked students from the schools about their experience. A question in the questionnaire seeks to list some of the irregularities that have occurred where I have identified several copying methods. The findings of this questionnaire have shown me that besides cheating through messages or social networks, and communicating with each other during the test, it has also happened that during the test, the teachers and the test administrators help the students. Like, for example, 35.4% of students have shown that teachers have been assisted during the test, when 38.3% have shown that administrators have been helped. Can you talk a bit about this phenomenon? Why do you think teachers and administrators are helping the students?
2. How much do you think this test demonstrates / reflects the teaching skills of a teacher? In other words, do you think that good or poor student performance reflects on the teacher's ability to lecture?
3. Do you think that this form of organized cheating in the test is pushing students to find other alternatives in their undergraduate or graduate studies that they avoid preparing for the test? So, instead of studying and getting the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for the labor market they are creating and perfecting their cheating skills?

4. I want to talk a bit about the content of the test, so for questions on the Matura test. I believe that you have had the opportunity to analyze or focus on the questions of this test. How much do you think the questions that are included in the test are appropriate to test the student's knowledge, does that mean that these questions reflect the level of knowledge and skills that students receive during high school?
5. Do you think that one of the problems that are taking place in the test, in this case, organized copying is happening as the test questions are not consistent with the curriculum that is taught at school? Is the idea of this test to be passed regardless of whether knowledge is tested or not?
6. Do you think that this test should be a basis or a criterion for admission of university students?
7. What do you think should change in terms of the content of the test? So where do you think the formulators of this test should focus? Where you would specifically make changes
8. What do you think should change in the process of organizing the test i.e. the administrative aspect? How to avoid these irregularities?
9. Do you think that the problem relies solely on the State Matura Exam as an exam or the quality of education in upper-secondary schools?
10. Based on your knowledge of standardized tests around the world, how do you think the State Matura exam meets certain criteria to qualify as a standardized test?

Interview questions #2 (Professor from Mileniumi i Tretë)

1. Based on your knowledge, how much do students prepare for the State Matura Exam?

2. I believe that you have ever had the chance to analyze math test questions for the subject of Mathematics. As a teacher of this subject, can you give us a brief analysis of these questions? For example, do they match the literature taught in schools?
3. Do you think that the content, thus the questions of this test are the right questions to test the general knowledge of the student in the Mathematics?
4. In your opinion, what would be the aspects (parts) that should be changed in this test? For example: where should the test focus more?
5. Is this test providing pressure to teachers to focus on a particular curriculum? In other words, is the teacher's focus on the literature that is closest to the test questions?
6. How much do you think this test demonstrates / reflects a teacher's teaching skills? In other words, do you think that good or poor student performance reflects on the teacher's ability to lecture?
7. There has been a lot of discussion about cheating and other irregularities that prevail in this test. . Can you tell me if you think these tests show the true results of the students, since cheating is a widespread phenomenon during the test?
8. As part of the data collection I have included a questionnaire where students had the chance to share their experience during the State Matura Exam. so far, 35,4% of the students have experienced or noticed that during the test students have communicated with their teachers and the teachers have helped them solving the questions. Can you talk about this phenomenon? Why do you think teachers are helping students, thus participating in cheating in this test?
9. Do you think teachers' help is creating a habit of students to try to copy in their future studies or work?

Interview Questions #3 (Bit Kosova Representative)

1. Can you briefly discuss the implementation process of the Project for the digitization of the Matura test? For example, the partners in this projects, difficulties in implementation, the delays, when the project will be executed etc.
2. At what stage of the process is the project of the digitization of the Matura test currently?
3. What are some of the problems or difficulties that have emerged during the process?
4. What are the positive aspects or results from the digitization of this test?
5. Do you think that the digitization of the Matura test will be a solution to the many irregularities that have characterized the administration process of the test e.g. cheating, delays?
6. What do you think will be some difficulties or problems when the project reaches its final stage, thus the students start taking the Matura test electronically?

Interview questions #4 (Mehmet Akif Professor)

1. To your knowledge, how much do students prepare/study for the State Matura Exam?
2. In the past, Mehmet Akif College used to offer and I'm assuming that are still offering additional classes to prepare for this test. Do you think that providing these additional courses is helping the students be more prepared?
3. I believe that you have ever had the chance to analyze test, in particular the test questions for the Albanian subject. As a teacher of this subject, can you give us a brief analysis of these questions? For example, do they match the literature taught in schools?
4. Do you think that the content and the questions of this test are the right questions to test the general knowledge of the student for the Albanian subject?

5. In your opinion, what would be the aspects (parts) that should be changed in this test? For example: should the test focus more on grammar or literature?
6. Is this test providing pressure to teachers to focus on a particular curriculum? In other words, is the teacher's focus on the literature that is closest to the test questions?
7. How much do you think this test demonstrates / reflects the teaching skills of a teacher? In other words, do you think that good or poor student performance reflects on the teacher's ability to lecture?
8. There has been a lot of discussion about cheating and other irregularities that prevail in this test. . Can you tell me if you think these tests show the true results of the students, since cheating is a widespread phenomenon during the test?
9. As part of the data collection I have included a questionnaire where students had the chance to share their experience during the State Matura Exam. So far, 35,4% of the students have experienced or noticed that during the test students have communicated with their teachers and the teachers have helped them solving the questions. Can you talk about this phenomenon? Why do you think teachers are helping students, thus participating in cheating in this test?
10. Do you think teachers' help is creating a habit of students to try to copy in their future studies or work?

Appendix F**Focus group questions**

1. Let's start by discussing some of your experiences during the State Matura Exam?
2. Some of the most frequently used cheating methods are communication with one another, usage of phones, cheating through social media networks and so forth. What do you think about this phenomenon? Did you experience or see any of these methods used on the day of the test?
3. What do you think about the administrators or professors assisting the students in answering the questions? Why is this phenomenon happening?
4. What are some of the consequences of the widespread cheating habits of students in the State Matura Exam?