



INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



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Tirana, Albania 8th May 2019



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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

FULL PAPERS

Editors

Dr. Nazmi Xhomara

PhD (c) Virtyt Lesha

Msc. Ernest Balili

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The relationships between Work Integrated Learning theoretical learning and students' skills

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to investigate the relationship between theoretical learning and WIL (work-integrated learning) enhancing students' skills at Luarasi University. A cross-sectional mixed method research was conducted for this paper where an online survey was sent to the undergraduate students of the Law department in KU Luarasi, to investigate the effects of theoretical learning and WIL on their skills, followed by a semi-structured interview which was conducted with the academic staff from the law department and investigated in more detail the role of theoretical learning that affected students' skills. Theoretical learning in schools and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) during undergraduate studies enhance students' skills relevant for employment. The study found that theoretical learning combined with WIL, positively affect skills, such as communication, critical analysis, career-management skills and professional skills relevant for the labor market. Furthermore, recommendations for the update of university curriculums by private and public sectors in cooperation with the university were vital for the development of skills for the students.

Keywords

Communication, internships, mentorship, university, theoretical learning, work-integrated learning, students' skills

Introduction

Formal education has been considered vital for the improvement and the development of human capital. Education enhances productivity because it raises the marginal product from an educated individual compared to a non-educated individual, since different professions, requires a certain set of skills that may be acquired through formal learning (Etshim 2017, Mbalamula 2017). The importance of academic education lies on the significance to train human-resources for different



knowledge-based economies. Lectures and workshops facilitate the transfer of the updated knowledge for the development of human-resources (NaliakaMukhale& Hong 2017). Even if many individuals with graduate education are employed more than those without, previous working-experiences, may influence employment. Work Integrated Learning has been used by universities to improve the employability. WIL can take the form of internships, mentorships, placements and other professional practices and provides students with a learning by doing professional experience whereby they engage in job-related tasks under the supervision of experienced professionals. In addition, WIL can fulfil graduates with knowledge and soft-skills that would enable the (Jackson 2015) development of their professional identity (Bates et al. 2007).

Literature Review

Theoretical learning enhancing students' skills

The role of knowledge acquisition and skills development through learning in improving graduates' skills for employment has been an interesting topic to investigate. In some social sciences, theoretical knowledge is delivered through lectures and workshops and then, consolidated through course-works, exams and projects. Such methods allow students to develop an understanding of how knowledge is applied within practical contexts (Mbalamula 2017). Many students are driven by their intrinsic motivation to develop their knowledge and skills and fulfil their academic needs. If they are academically competent, then they can resolve academic challenges. Mukhale& Hong (2017) found that, to improve the learning outcomes and their soft-skills, academics may adopt the workshop way of teaching, which would make learning process and knowledge sharing, inclusive. Added to this, problem-based learning during the workshop provides positive outcomes because students maximize their learning by interacting with teachers and students. According to Lu et al. (2016), better exam results are derived when time in class is used effectively, as knowledge sharing, concept analysis are encouraged, and theory repetition is reduced (Nashash 2015).

Theories which come from scientific studies explain different concepts, assist students' understandings for the evolution of concepts and their learning environments. When academics use models or concepts in teaching, those generate discussions between students,



where controversial issues arise (Costley 2014). The more students investigate controversial contents, the more they criticise.

Course-works have been valued by many as a tool that consolidates skills and knowledge. By working on different theoretical models in course-works, students face a complicated process with frustration and begin to "betray" their early opinions. According to Lee, Dawson and Cawthon (2016), when students undertake different course-works, they develop an understanding of how theory is applied within real-world contexts. Added to this, students feel that their critical-analysis skills, develop as they investigate more in-depth the material that they learn. Creative projects offer students an opportunity to engage with the content by incorporating creativity. Students completing a project understand laws, adopt legal-reasoning and analytical skills (Kleefeld& Farnese, 2015).

Course-works materials may help students to develop their skills however the situation that predicts skills development depends on the effectiveness of the delivery process (Lu, et al. 2016). Communication tools (instructional materials, clear language, and learning devices), may increase student engagement in learning (Kleefeld& Farnese, 2015, Lee, Dawson and Cawthon 2016). According to Kayode (2017), effective communication reduces the psychological distance between student and instructors and increases engagement. Technological support helps instructors and students to achieve goals as it determines learning outcomes and performance.

Even though previous researches have accepted the role of theoretical learning in consolidating students' skills, other findings portray the situation differently. There are employers who value interpersonal skills that students may not fully develop and consolidate during their academic studies. Bates et al. (2018) were critical with Nashash (2015) approach, arguing that students enrolled in Criminal Justice accompanied with WIL are more likely to find relevant employment because students apply and consolidate knowledge and skills obtained from academic courses in real work situations (Nashash 2015).

Legal reasoning requires students to poses consolidated problem-solving, research and communication skills (identifying and applying legal rules and procedures in reaching conclusions). In fact, Burton (2016) described the traditional legal reasoning as an unnatural way to interrogate legal problems because it oversimplifies the cases. McCourt et al. (2013) further argued that the academic curriculums in law are not always updated. Learning statutes



and solving a few legal cases, does not improve legal understanding and their analytical skills. A shift towards the legal environment approach (understand how legal systems operates), through the evaluation an application of the laws may constitute academic courses because it exposes students to the legal environment (Shivoro et al. 2018, Etshim 2017) and establishes an effective model.

Social-media is another important factor in affecting learning compared to classroom learning. Social-media addresses learners needs, by offering learning opportunities, facilitating knowledge sharing (Bagarukayo 2018) more than the classroom learning, because students, share, collaborate, and collectively learn (Lu et al. 2016, Kayode 2017). Collaborative environments assist students to explore potential solutions as it makes low self-esteem learners more comfortable and enables knowledge sharing and interaction.

WIL enhancing student skills

Due to the competitive labour markets, the role of education in enhancing student competitiveness may not be enough to secure them employment. Effective instruments like WIL (work-integrated learning) allows students to apply academic knowledge in practice, acquire new skills and professional development. WIL can take the form of placements, practicum and internships, significant for students to attain self-efficacy. Since employability skills cannot be taught thoroughly through academic materials, students need to be exposed to employment experiences to cope with working environments (Coetzee et al. 2016).

Initially, career-adaptability (ability to adapt in roles and working environments) denotes the positive participation in the role. Graduates participating in WIL engaging in challenging job assignments draw on problem-solving, decision-making and group-working skills as part of career-adaptability. Feldman and Sprafke (2015) claimed that decision-making and group-working skills, and an adequate degree of autonomy, contribute to student career-adaptability during WIL. Good interactive skills result in feedback and community-based learning which takes place in every WIL experience.

Furthermore, an undergraduate course accompanied with WIL, helps students to develop networking and career-management skills (individuals advancing in an organisation in harmony with organisational needs), and competencies (job examination, motivation and career-control). Jackson (2016) highlighted that career-management skills are developed through undergraduate courses and consolidated through WIL. The changing nature of graduate careers have shaped



graduate employment and increased pressure to find adequately skilled graduates. Placements are extremely vital for developing student's ability, identify strengths and areas for future improvement as students work alongside professionals, from whom they learn. Even though WIL may help students in developing career-management skills, there are other skills which guarantee the competitiveness of students. Communication skills help graduates to understand the needs of others (feedback) however, those sometimes may not be enough for student's employability (Jackson 2015). Due to poorly organized WIL, students may experience difficulties in acquiring information, have problems with articulation and fail to engage with different audiences.

Students do appear to recognize that they need additional activities as well as their university degrees to improve their employability because they have realized that employers' value interpersonal skills. University courses accompanied by WIL have been utilized amongst universities to improve graduate employability as those provide students with a practical learning experience under the supervision of professionals. Bates et al. (2018) argued that students enrolled in a Criminal-Justice, accompanied with a WIL are more likely to be engaged in industry-relevant employment.

On the other hand, students with high levels of motivation may formulate strategies, necessary to navigate through uncertain employment markets. WIL is one extrinsic motivation instrument that improves decision-making and self-management. The development of such skills leads students to consciousness to sustain student's intellectual development and objectives attainment. Students motivated through intrinsic instruments who develop self-management skills, and psychological attributes have better learning outcomes and enhanced employability (Ibrahim and Jaaffar 2017) because their adaptation is smoothed, self-regulation and lifelong learning enhanced, and career-management (Jackson 2015, Khalid et al 2014).

Even though graduates leave university with generic skills, they have anxiety when coping with their job. Anxiety could be decreased if students have practical exposure (Bates & Bates 2007). While some students identified benefits from course-works, students believe WIL is beneficial for their upcoming work. In the research done by Bates and Bates (2013) participants who completed a WIL placement in legal offices had several benefits as they obtained employment within the area. Considerably WIL provide students with benefits like employment within the profession, understanding of the role and reduced stress (Reinhard et al. 2016). Differently, WIL may be difficult for students with limited understanding of legislation and legislative agencies

because universities do not to explain the function of legal agencies (Ibrahim and Jaaffar 2017). Students may become vulnerable, meaning that they focus on daily tasks to survive WIL rather than developing foundations for their professional development.

In some instances, WIL may be unfavoured by the employers they value students from high ranked universities. Students educated in highly rated universities face extensive interactions, good study environment and resources and even without any job-related experience, they get rewarded with good job offers since they are favoured by employers (Yu 2017). Finch et al. (2013) was critical to Yu (2017) and argued that employers' value soft skills, that are developed by WIL rather than the reputation of the university (Bates et al 2018).

The oversupply of young graduates in specific areas of the labour-market, consolidate the fact that in other professions where there is shortage of graduates, older people remain employed when they might have retired. According to Antonio and Tuffley (2017) IT graduates, compared to social science graduates, are more employable even without having working experience as they acquire employability skills during studies and because IT had more employment prospects. After reviewing the literature, 2 hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis₁ = The theoretical learning effects on student skills.

Hypothesis₂ = The WIL effects on student skills.

Methodology

To collect the data, a mixed method research, including surveys and semi-structured interviews was used (Bryman 2016). From this scientific work, the researcher wanted to understand the role of theoretical learning and WIL (work-integrated learning), on students' skills.

Informal conversations with students and surfing the literature, directed the researcher to understand the role of the theoretical learning and WIL on students' skills.

Due to different timetables, an online survey was constructed. For the experimental group, a random sample of students from the bachelor's in law, was chosen, including first year, second year and third year (Xhomara 2018). Respondents were informed by email with the survey link and instructions attached (Saunders et al. 2012). Survey questions included multiple choice questions, qualitative questions and Likert scale (Bryman 2016). The survey was sent to all



Bachelor of Law Students, counting 278. The returned surveys counted 71 respondents, 25.1% of all bachelor's students (unsatisfactory because only a quarter completed it) in period of 2 weeks. Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate areas not included in the survey (university curriculum). Some questions were prepared, and probing questions were used where interviewees built their responses on different phenomena (Saunders et al. 2012). The opportunity to probe ideas added significant details. Participants academics were selected based on service length, 6 months or more, and from 9 invitations, only 5 of them accepted. Note-taking during interviews helped summarization and follow up and the anonymity of the participants would be ensured (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). Descriptive analysis was used to compare the literature findings with the research findings.

Results and discussions

Table 1

Central tendency values of variables

	VAR000	VAR000	VAR000	VAR000	VAR001	VAR001	VAR001	VAR001	VAR002	VAR002
	4	5	6	7	0	1	3	8	0	1
N Valid	70	70	70	70	64	65	65	71	71	71
Missin	1	1	1	1	7	6	6	0	0	0
g										
Mean	1.14	1.44	1.13	1.33	1.56	1.20	1.28	1.17	1.03	1.18
Median	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Mode	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Std. Deviation	.352	.605	.337	.557	.664	.506	.484	.377	.167	.390
Variance	.124	.366	.114	.311	.440	.256	.235	.142	.028	.152
Skewness	2.086	1.033	2.268	1.497	.772	2.565	1.439	1.805	5.827	1.674
Std. Error of Skewness	.287	.287	.287	.287	.299	.297	.297	.285	.285	.285
Kurtosis	2.421	.093	3.236	1.359	-.457	5.857	1.054	1.293	32.883	.826



Std. Error	.566	.566	.566	.566	.590	.586	.586	.563	.563	.563
of										
Kurtosis										
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2

Theoretical Learning on student skills

Theoretical learning on group-working skills

Table 2

Frequencies of the group- working skills variable

		(Group-work skills)			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	43	60.6	61.4	61.4
	Neutral	23	32.4	32.9	94.3
	Do not agree	4	5.6	5.7	100.0
	Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.4		
Total		71	100.0		

The results of the survey, in Table 2 show that 43 students or 60.6% agreed with the statement that classroom learning improves group-working skills, meanwhile, 23 of them or 32.4% were neutral and 4 or 5.6% of them disagreed. The results of central tendency values, as shown in (Table 1), support frequency values of group working skills variable ($M= 1.44$; $SD= .605$).

More than half of the respondents from the survey questions that agreed with the statement mentioned that during workshops, working collectively on different exercises with students and supervisors allowed them to solve things easily (Table 2). These results are in line with the findings of Mukhale & Hong (2017) who claimed that students develop soft-skills and share knowledge due to the collaborative environment in workshops because students expose themselves to the horizontal information sharing thus, reducing uncertainties. Free discussions



allowed them to communicate with students and academics, resulting in the successful completion of tasks and better result attainment (Kleefeld& Farnese 2015). Based on survey, including quantitative and qualitative outputs, theoretical learning (lectures and workshops) is important as it improves the interactivity between students and gives them opportunities to express their opinions regarding a topic.

Theoretical learning on Critical-Analysis Skills

Table 3
Frequencies of critical-analysis variable

(Critical-Analysis Skills)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	61	85.9	87.1	87.1
	Do not agree	9	12.7	12.9	100.0
	Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.4		
Total		71	100.0		

The results of the survey as shown in Table 3 show that 61 students (85.9%) agree with the statement that theoretical learning improves students critical-analysis while only 9 of them (14.1%) did not agree with the statement and provided alternatives (Table 3). The results of central tendency values as shown in table (Table 1) ($M= 1.13$ and $SD= .337$) support frequency values of critical-analysis variable. Based on survey responses, in lectures, students understand the role of law in society and in workshops students analyse, criticise and link the law with practical examples. During workshops, most students (85.9%), had the chance to discuss legal cases in detail. Critical discussion during such exercises, lead to a greater understanding of facts in accordance with the legal procedures, though, students improve their critical and analytical skills, and become capable to do legal interpretation. Cases used in teaching, generate critical analysis and discussions, between students ‘where controversial issues arise (Costley 2014). Even if some students mentioned that technological facilities might be necessary for them, majority of the respondents in the qualitative survey questions and interviews, mentioned that without in-class interaction, students will not be able to criticise, share knowledge and reduce their learning opportunities (Costley 2014). Students who missed workshops and



lectures, lacked the legal analysis and critical reasoning on cases, contradicting the findings of Lu et al. (2016) who argued that social media helped learners.

Table 4

Frequencies of course-work variable.

(Course-Works)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	65	91.5	91.5	91.5
	Neutral	6	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

Frequencies of an extra-knowledge variable.

(Extra-Knowledge)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	55	77.5	84.6	84.6
	Neutral	7	9.9	10.8	95.4
	Do not agree	3	4.2	4.6	100.0
	Total	65	91.5	100.0	
Missing	System	6	8.5		
Total		71	100.0		

Table 6

Frequencies of university curriculum variable

(University-Curriculum)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	67	94.4	94.4	94.4
	Neutral	4	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Next, from the survey questions, 65 of the respondents (91.5%) agreed with the statement that course-works (essays, projects) are important (Table 4). 55 of the survey respondents or (84.6%),



argued that course-works help students gain extra knowledge by conducting research and doing practical work (Table 5). Such pieces of work offer students an opportunity to engage more with the content by incorporating creativity thus breaking down barriers, develop their understanding of laws, and legal skills having the possibility to reflect on the laws and legal systems. Due to this fact, students gain more appreciation and engagement with legal knowledge and understanding. This is in line with the findings of Lee et al. (2016) and Kleefeld & Farnese, (2015), who found that when graduate students undertake different course-work, understanding law topics because they move from a comfort zone, and start to analyse and learn proactively.

Universities which cooperate with the institutions may include relevant topics in their curriculums with updated materials that will serve students for their professions. Based on the survey results, 94.4% of them or 67 students thought that university curriculum is well organised because the updated legal cases and laws that they analyse are taught by academics who used to, practice their professions as a judges, attorneys, or advocates (Table 6). Updated curriculums allow students to understand legislative amendments and, help them to catch up with the legal environment, crucial for their professions. This argument is in line with the findings of McCourt et al. (2013) who argued that updated law curriculum, helps students to understand how legal systems operate and the causes and consequences in the society. In conclusion, it can be said that theoretical learning with all the relevant tools, enhances students' skills such as group-working skills and critical analysis skills. The findings of the research, support *Hypothesis₁= The theoretical learning effects on student skills.*

WIL on student skills

WIL on Professional Skills

Table 7

Frequencies of Professional-Skills variable

		(Professional-Skills)			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	69	97.2	97.2	97.2
	Neutral	2	2.8	2.8	100.0



Total	71	100.0	100.0
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Next, from the survey questions, 69 of the respondents (97.2%) agreed that WIL is important in improving student professional skills while none of them disagreed with the statement and only 2 of them (2.8%) were neutral. The results of central tendency values as shown in table (Table 1) (M= 1.03 and SD= .167) support frequency values of professional-skills variable. WIL under close supervision helps students to put in practice the academic knowledge though, reducing the gaps and allowing students in institutions to interpret laws. WIL utilized amongst universities, may improve the employability of graduates as it provides them with practical experiences under the supervision of working professionals. Students have demonstrated that WIL enables knowledge transfer from academia to the work context, where students attain self-efficacy and obtained employment feedback on individual skills and self-reflection. Since some skills and competencies cannot be taught through academic materials, students need to be exposed beforehand to employment experiences to cope with dynamic working environments (Coetzee et al. 2016, Bates et al. 2018).

WIL on Career Adaptability

Table 8
 Frequencies of Career-Adaptability variable

		(Career Adaptability)			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	58	81.7	81.7	81.7
	Neutral	13	18.3	18.3	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Majority of the respondents 58 of them (81.7%) agreed with the statement that WIL provides students the opportunity for career orientation and focus. The results of central tendency values as shown in table (Table 1) (M= 1.18 and SD= .390) support frequency values of career-adaptability variable. WIL provides students with the possibility to see job-specifics by integrating role activities and processes in an institution, allowing students to improve their knowledge about the subject and improve their career-adaptability. Initially, career adaptability



denotes competencies and behaviors that enable positive participation in the role. Graduates participating in WIL engaging in challenging job assignments, may draw on their problem-solving decision making and group-work as part of the career adaptability where they are also appraised 360°. Communication with other individuals during WIL will help students to profit from the practice in the best way possible. The research done by Feldman and Sprafke (2015) found that decision-making, communication, and an adequate degree of autonomy, contribute to career adaptability.

WIL on Career Management

Table 9

Frequencies of Career-Management variable

(Career Management)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	59	83.1	83.1	83.1
	Neutral	12	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Next, from the survey, 59 of the respondents (83.1%) agreed that WIL is important in improving career management while none of them disagreed with the statement and only 12 respondents (16.9%) were neutral. The results of central tendency values as shown in table (Table 1) (M= 1.17 and SD= .337) support frequency values of critical analysis variable. A WIL as a supplement of an undergraduate course may help students to form successful networks and consolidate their career management skills (job examination, and career control). WIL as an extrinsic motivating instrument that affects student decision-making and career-management skills, may lead students to attain better learning outcomes and enhanced employability (Ibrahim and Jaaffar 2017). The actual benefit of WIL is that it smoothens student adaptation in the working environment and enhances self-regulation, and increases their lifelong learning, (Jackson 2015, Khalid et al 2014). On the other hand, students with high levels of motivation formulate strategies, necessary to navigate through employment challenges. Jackson (2016) highlighted that career management skills are developed through undergraduate courses and



consolidated through WIL. The changing nature of careers (organizational restructuring, dynamic employment market) have shaped graduate employment and increased pressures for adequately skilled graduates. Placements are extremely vital for students to identify their strengths and areas for future improvement as students work alongside professionals, from whom they learn. These empirical evidences may contradict to an extent with Jackson (2015) who argued that due to poorly organized WIL and poor communication, students experience difficulties in acquiring information, have problems with viewpoints articulation and fail to engage with different audiences in the workplace. In conclusion, it can be said that WIL positively affects students' skills such as career adaptability skills, professional skills, and career management skills. The findings, support *Hypothesis 2= The WIL effects on student skills*.

Conclusions and recommendations

During the project, several limitations were faced by the researcher. Firstly, the low response rate both in the survey and the interviews (less than 50%) was disappointing and may challenge the generalisability of the results across the wider student's number of the university and the research results derived only from one department. Secondly, the formulation of survey questions was based on prior research and the literature, but due to the remote nature of the survey, clarifications provided could not be answered. This meant that some issues might have been misunderstood, generating invalid answers and expressing the actual opinions of the respondents. During the interviews, the limited interviewing experience of the researcher may have led to a lack of in-depth analysis and responses that a more experienced researcher might have been able to do. However, due to the piloted semi-structured interview questions and by utilising probing questions, some of these problems were reduced. Another limitation of the actual study is that the research is cross-sectional, so only captured results at a specific moment of the time. This might have affected the reliability of this study because the test-retest method was not applied due to time constraints. Even if there were several limitations faced during the study, the research achieved the objectives because both the Hypotheses tested, stand. The main finding of the research is that the theoretical learning affects some student skills (group-working and critical analysis), while WIL affects skills (career-management, career adaptability, professional skills), relevant for the successful career. Based on the research results it can be said



that theoretical learning and WIL, contribute to the development of a different set of skills, through a combination of both methods may be effective for a solid skill development, which the university should invest.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations that the university may adopt, to help students develop their skills. Since nowadays we live in a globalised world with a competitive employment market, an online Library is needed for students to have access to the most relevant and updated literature regarding their courses. Extra-academic resources for students may allow them to accomplish their course-works but also enhance their skills when working independently or in groups. By having an online library student will have the opportunity to access the resources that they need for their learning and nonetheless have access to updated materials, crucial for their skills improvement.

Nonetheless, there is a need for private and public institutions to assist the university curriculums. Most of the students agree that the university must have a long-term partnership with institutions because many students feel that they need to be professionally fulfilled. A partnership would allow such institutions to update university curriculums and help students to consolidate the needed skills, requested by the labour market and institutions. Most of the students agreed that the WIL that they undertook was not enough for their professional development. Students suggested that an unpaid experience lasting from 6-9 months spread all over the bachelor's course, would be enough for them to apply knowledge and consolidate the analytical and critical skills obtained during graduate studies.

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Knowledge, ignorance and law in the era of specialized education

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Abstract

The university system in the recent years is increasingly broadening its field of influence both as a form of learning and as a new status to access the world of work. But to do this, it seems that the academic world is currently concentrating on highly specialized and in a juridically imposed education. The University is turning its attention to new fields of research, new frontiers of interconnection between various scientific sectors and exchange of know-how between universities. In the world of jurisprudence, universities are directing students to be able to take advantage of such sectors that, if linked together, can create professionals of the future, who may also respond to the new borders of technologies. In doing so, the justice system digitalization as a new form of communication seems to unite in one the sacred and the profane of education in the juridical sphere. Even if the road is uphill, there is the possibility of integrating knowledge, now freed thanks to the internet, avoiding ignorance on legal issues that can be easily resolved and imparted in the faculties of law and thus can as well create an evaluation system, on a scientific level based on creativity, productivity and efficiency of the work done.

Keywords: *evaluation, criteria, law, enforcement, university reform*

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The University as a reservoir for the formation of the ruling class: a heterogeneous panorama of the Albanian level of education from the 90s to 2014

The elites, by their nature, hold a high level of education, which enables them to expand their influence in every field and sphere of social life. However in the recent years, even the formation of the elite seems to have lost that intrinsic strength arising from education. In the globalized world we are increasingly talking about education, training, specialization, but in essence all this accumulation of information leads to an expansion without an end to knowledge acquisition (Morin, 2017, fq, 100). In the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc, where the culture and formation, typical of the system touted by the USSR predominated until the 1990s, made that the countries that leave this system had to go through a profound crisis as well as in terms of education. On the one hand, the western world that advanced and progressed in the technological sciences and reinterpreted the classical humanistic theories, and on the other hand, the backward countries emerging from the culture of communist indoctrination, lack of freedom of thought and obtuseness in opening up to new forms and categories of thought.

This fate was precisely for Albania, which, after the fall of the communist regime lost its coordinates, lost much of the intellectual elite able to update itself with greater speed to new forms of democratization, as it evaporated through the streets of world because of the mass immigration that shook its foundations. Albania in the first decade of the democratic transition was confronted with creation of the new ruling class, the new elite, between the professorship marked by the vision and the formation of the inculcated concepts of the communist era and the need to adapt to democratic principles, where the right of freedom of expression, the right to education for all, the right to information and the civil rights proper to democracy reign supreme. Thus, the first period from the 90s to the 2000s will be characterized by the formation of a hybrid ruling class, where training will be based on acquiring democratic notions but imparted with the typical methodology of the former communist regime. The books will be missing, the authors who will work to write and readjust university texts to the new democratic reality will be few, and they will do it for more, by free choice rather than for a well-defined policy of the State.

With the process of democratization also in the graduate world, as a training ground for the new ruling class, new intellectuals, professionals and critics, the burden of corruption will be felt and



acquired by academic staff. This concept of corruption of the academic system will have its maximum flowering in the period between 2005-2014, where entire ranks of individuals will come into possession of a degree, especially in economics and law, where in many cases, "these students" did not even achieve a high school diploma. But to represent this reality in objective terms and statistical data in hand, from the relationship articulated by the Albanian Ministry of Education for the year 2014, it emerged that 70.50% of private and some state universities scattered throughout the territory do not meet the legal requirements to be able to carry out the academic activity in accordance with the established standards in the field of university education. Furthermore, the report² showed that these universities had 32,000 people completing their studies for the academic years between 2005 and 2014, of which 900 were foreigners, who did not know the Albanian language, and many of them were never present at the universities from which the qualifications had been issued.

These data are alarming and unfortunately show that corruption at all levels of the state, starting from the public administration to the judiciary and political, has produced enormous damage that is difficult to eradicate at the level of education in the country. Following the report, on the initiative of the Rama 1 Government, in 2014, 18 private universities and 7 branches of state universities were closed as those presented very strong legal problems. This operation that ended the "madness of the degree *ad nominem*", did not move, either the power of attorney and prosecutors or neither the state. The prosecutor did not worry, in the least, later on, to open *ad hoc* investigations into what had happened and bring the perpetrators to justice, nor was there any concern on the part of the State to create an *ad hoc* law aimed at regulating the consequences produced by this "democratic anomaly of education". The question "Degrees" closed quickly, without much criticism and with the absolute silence of the judiciary. Once again corruption and the level of responsibility and knowledge of the "massacre of education" had been accepted by all, including the civil society.

The 2015 university reform and the level of education today: among young people and statistics

Following the closure of the "phantom" universities, the Rama 1 government will strive urgently to reform the university system and to pass a new law governing the university/academic world.

²<http://shekulli.com.al/52612/> - Rapporto del Ministero dell'Istruzione Albanese per l'anno 2014 - <http://arsimi.gov.al/>



With the new law n. 80/2015, the Government, applies a reform that for many researchers, intellectuals and members of the professorship was too "capitalist" to be addressed by the Albanian population, expensive for families and too selective for young people who aspire to continue university studies. Despite the criticisms, the government, with the majority that held and holds in parliament approved law n. 80/2015 "*For universities*". The law in itself submits both state and private universities on equal terms, treating them in equal measure both for what concerns the grants to be distributed and the degree of access to financing provided by international institutions. Furthermore, both private and state universities are subjected to the annual ranking and accreditation process, which is typical of Anglo-Saxon countries, in equal terms.

This homogeneity of treatment between public and private universities has meant that many students choose the private university to continue their studies, where, the perception is that the degree, in these universities, is easily obtainable, since it pays more and that the accountability criterion by the academic staff is less pressing.

Currently in Albania there are 15 public Universities, scattered throughout the national territory³, while on the number of private Universities, the data relating to them is currently not available from any government source⁴. From the latest statistical data, concerning the academic year 2017/2018, as regards the number of university students, it emerges that 129,394 students attended the studies, marking a decrease of 7.3% compared to the 2016/2017 academic year.

The student population made up of women is equal to 77,899.00, or 60.20% of the total number of women and men students. Moreover, from the statistical data it emerges that about 25 thousand Albanian students study at foreign universities, thus lowering the general level of students who attend university studies at the Albanian universities. Moreover, from the ISTAT-Albanian report⁵ it emerges that in comparison with the 2016/2017 academic year, in the academic year 2017/2018, there was a 2% drop in the number of students who continue their university studies.

The phenomenon of lowering the numbers of those who continue university studies was determined by Albanian economics and sociology experts, based on the assumption that the

³ <http://www.arsimi.gov.al/arsimi-i-larte-publik/>

⁴ <http://www.arsimi.gov.al/arsimi-i-larte-jopublik/> - pagina vuota

⁵ <file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/statistika-t%C3%AB-regjistimeve-n%C3%AB-arsim-2017-2018.pdf> – ISTAT Albanese

migratory phenomenon of recent years, the degradation of education levels, given the high level of corruption, the aging of the population, the growing desire to educate abroad, the lack of hope that the qualification can be valid to compete with meritocracy especially in public administration, has led to a decrease in the number of students who continue their university studies⁶. Another staggering 2018 report on the survivability perceived by young Albanians is given by the report, carried out by the ANYN association together with CRCA-Albania, which reported that 70% of young Albanians want to abandon the country and move to another EU country, where only for the year 2017, 22,000 young people have applied for asylum in one of the EU member states and 26% of the youth population is unemployed. Comparing these data with the total number of the population present in the territory, around 2,900,000, the resulting data are alarming and significant for the level of democratization that the country presents. Below is a map of Albania, reconstructed by CRCA and ANYN⁷, where figures are given for the discomforts of young Albanians with respect to their country of origin.



Figure 1. Youth in Albania

⁶ <http://www.monitor.al/arratisen-studentet-braktisin-universitetet-publike-e-private-tabela/>

⁷ https://twitter.com/AlbaniaCrca?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctwtterm%5Eprofile%3AAlbaniaCrca&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.crca.al%2Fsq%2Fnews-youth-politics%2Fanyn-udheheq-veprimet-e-te-rinjve-per-pergatitjen-e-projekt-ligjit-per-rinine-ne



Knowledge, ignorance and law in the era of specialized education

From the data above analyzed and from what emerges from the Albanian university structure, it seems clear that the process of knowledge acquiring process for young people seems to face great difficulties. These problematic profiles are closely connected both with the migration phenomenon and with that relating to the level of education which is not yet able to adapt to European standards. So, even if, in the age of technology, we are working to specialize future generations towards a world of interconnection between various areas of study, the level of the academic staff seems to remain unprepared, inadequate and many times insufficiently responsible for the fate of youth training.

In reality, this phenomenon is not exclusively Albanian, but seems to touch all developed and undeveloped countries, as students graduate with a high average that does not correspond to a truly specialized level of education or intellectual growth. This problem emerges from the fact that no university or specialized courses want to increase the level of knowledge to the detriment of fierce competition that "sells" votes and titles to the detriment of intellectual growth. Another reason is also the fact that no university is willing to lower the average grade of their students even as a matter of image and the fear of being able to make their students seem less able in relation to those coming from other institutions. Today, we are in front of a reality in which the "political 10" has become the "must have" to be able to compete in the market distorted by an empty knowledge but which in the long term produces an intellectually incapable and irresponsible ruling class. The University has the task of investing in the ability of students to complete their studies, refine the research methodology, find authentic information, summarize them, analyze them and finally write them as they are suitable for presentation to other people.

Building democracy - elite, education and critical thinking

The process of democratization is never simple, especially in reality when the bond with the past is strong and handed down from generation to generation, so that even the elite circulation process becomes a daily challenge and full of deviant dangers of various kinds and species. In order to build a healthy democracy that is firmly rooted in democratic principles and universally recognized values, the role that culture itself must assume is of vital importance. In hybrid



democracies, prone to the hegemonization of power over a single subject, the creation of strong economic elites that directly and indirectly influence the fate of a country, social development finds difficulties and sometimes insurmountable obstacles (Nichols, 2017, fq. 106). From here comes the need to train, educate, strive to strengthen the individual potential of each, maintain the integrity of culture, respect the identities of local experiences, leaving free space for creative integration, for the common sense of living social and in harmony, for a better future. In hybrid democracies, such as the Albanian one, where power jealously guards its position, corrupting all values, and above all institutions, the struggle between civilization in a democratic sense and regression towards autocratic forms, becomes the crucial node for the positive progress.

In order to build a democracy, the fundamental role is given by education and the help that, in theory, the institutions must give to increase the level of awareness of the masses in order to carry forward the process of democratization of the country. For Albania in the 28 years of democratic process, it is now more than ever indispensable to raise its cultural level, invest in social and human capital, reflect on the concept of creativity and invest in art as the maximum form of aesthetic expression and elevation of soul, aimed at making people reflect on the social hardships that occur with an almost pathological frequency. According to the researcher Richard Florida (Florida, 2003, fq. 204), culture and creativity: those are the main sources of economic development, essential components of the common human nature, and therefore must be cultivated. Therefore, it is necessary to use the existing institutions to invest in the long term, so as to enhance the creativity of everyone, extending the benefits to all.

From a pedagogical perspective Angelo Semeraro (Semeraro, 2007, fq. 122) maintains that: the road through which to build creativity is tiring, and requires a long incubation: in this sense, for example, Gramsci believes that it should not be based, but at the height of education and human experience; a phase that must be prepared in time, through moments of coercion which he defined as dynamic. Not inspiration but effort, training, sweat, which slowly let the creative shot mature (Semeraro, 2007, fq. 122). Since democratic institutions operate through the ruling class that plays the roles, the proposed research path is to train and select the elite able to face the challenges of change, to achieve a new democracy, since, as we have illustrated, in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, Albania in the first place, the process of democratization has led more than anything to the recycling of the elites and not so much to their circulation and the creation of the new ones.



It must be kept in mind that democracy crystallizes around vested interests, employing huge resources, without making the system either more efficient or even more transparent.

Above all, talents, skills and qualified generational contributions are either not valued or even rejected, resulting in an intolerable waste: that of high-quality human resources that are largely underused (Cagliari, 2008, fq. 54). Human capital is the key to personal emancipation and the development of the community: its "accumulation" should be a long-term investment priority for public institutions (Spadolini, 2005, fq. 480). But this axiom in the new democratic realities, of hybrid matrix, turns out to be uncomfortable for the elite that has come to be created in these democracies, given that the internal struggle for power and control needs to feed ignorance through propaganda and suffocate freedom of thought, street demonstrations, critical thoughts and art as the maximum form of expression of human capital and visual representation in all its forms of social disadvantage. In this sense the expression used by Cagliari (Cagliari, 2008, fq. 56):

The more politics becomes technical, the more democratic competence regresses: it seems to be perfect to circumscribe the new form of democratization present in Albania, where the political elite tends to control the system through technical mechanisms, among which propaganda seems to be the most productive one more democracy and its vein of freedom and criticism is reduced to an empty shell.

Democracy built on tolerance and solidarity, in countries such as Albania, finds it difficult to show its power, given that democratic institutions in concrete management often direct these values in ways that are not in accordance with democratic principles. Ronald Dworkin (Cagliari, 2008, fq. 54) argues that to make democracy possible we need to initiate changes that affect the electoral system, the interpretation of the Constitution, but first of all we must focus on education.

Starting from the bottom (Hardt, 2004, fq. 410) could represent an alternative, through a movement based on education for democracy, with citizens who solicit viable social reforms for public decision makers. Citizens need to be better educated, including selecting the ruling class, which is also the object of subsequent specific training (Monbiot, 2004, fq. 208). It is not reasonable to think of the system's self-reform, because it would mean recognizing basic injustice. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly improve democracy according to the young generations, educating them to the rights and duties, both juridical and moral. In this sense, a



fundamental role must be assumed by the world of media, that of social networks, at the present stage it seems that thanks to technological advancement it is having the upper hand over traditional media, albeit a basin of misunderstandings and a soothing form of street rebellion. Nevertheless, it must, be admitted and without basic hypocrisies that the relationship between political power and economic power in their dualism governed by favoritism makes it increasingly difficult to identify a healthy democratic form, and not superimposed on this functional dichotomy between politics and economy. Precisely in connection with the new forms of technology, the Internet - network, which by definition is free, if used consciously, could represent a channel on which to build a new education for democracy to develop a policy that transforms society (Cagliari, 2008, fq. 181).

As the researcher Castells (Castells, 2014, fq. 537) writes:

The network is an appropriate tool for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalization and decentralized concentration for a civil society predisposed to the instant processing of ever new values and public moods; for a social organization aimed at overcoming the space and the annihilation of time. Today democracy is a term that is used constantly and in countries where it is implanted but not yet sprouted, it is seen as utopian, unrealistic, this is also because democracy, like all ideologies, is also an ideology and therefore bears limits (Zakaria, 2003, fq. 27).

And, therefore, to express democracy at its best and inculcate the positive part of it, Dahl (Dahl, 2006, fq. 194) writes:

One of the fundamental criteria of the democratic process is precisely the presence of well-informed public opinion: within certain reasonable time limits, each citizen must have equal and effective opportunities to know the main political alternatives and their likely consequences. This process is gradual and requires constancy and long-term commitment to produce, then, profound and lasting results. In the wake of Dahl's public opinion, the researcher Walter Lippmann, already in 1922, elaborated the theory of a "progressive democracy", where two classes of citizens coexist: the specialized one that actively manages general affairs and that represented by the majority of the population, which does not participate in the decisions in the least.

Lippmann (Lippmann, 2000, fq. 207) calls these last bewildered herd, "lost herd", from which "pawing and bleating" it is good to stay cautiously away.



In the name of democracy, today, also through the use of social media, an imposing mass of communication is poured into public opinion, where in most cases it is put in place to manipulate and propagate a reality different from that perceived in concrete. This new form of communication means that citizens are not able to benefit, given that their critical capacity is dormant, through the control that the elite puts in place through their channels of influence. In principle, all citizens must be able to play political roles and manage real power. In fact, this activity is mostly reserved for elites co-opted by political, economic and professional circuits.

As rightly noted by the scholar Norberto Bobbio (Bobbio, 1990, fq. 293): "In every society, any time, and at all levels of civilization, power is in the hands of a minority, there is no other form of power than oligarchic power". This is why on this trail of thought, the role of intellectuals and artists seems to be fundamental to maintain social balance and the level of "guard" high, as they represent a broad and in many respects indefinable category that, in theory, expresses three essential characteristics: creativity in producing ideas that allow us to understand the tumultuous social transformations; deep knowledge of media mechanisms; the ability to be opinion leaders in the community. By acquiring these characteristics, intellectuals/artists act as a social counterweight to the concept of the oligarchy of Bobbio. Intellectuals and artists (Cagliari, 2008, fq. 183) are subjects in charge of producing a cultural project that can be applied politically through choices, resources and strategies, setting as a premise the renewal of the education system, understood as the main instrument of education to democracy, thus recovering that sense of indignation which contrasts resignation and superficiality, trying to reconcile, as far as possible, the "intellectual courage" and the "political practice of power".

Conclusions

Finally, to be able to talk about a democratic concept that is firm in its values, we can refer to what was written by the researcher Giuseppe Spadafora (Spadafora, 2004, fq. 32), who has crossed education and democracy by supporting a cultural revolution: "To build a democracy that takes into account the complex problems of our time, a great educational project is needed that involves political institutions, universities, schools, social communities, social volunteering, civil society as a whole, to train people to a new citizenship, to a citizenship not only respectful of the rules, rights and duties according to the classic paradigm of the rule of law, but in solidarity with the poverty of all time and the new poverty that is emerging in our time. A new



democracy for the 21st century is not only a democracy of public deliberation and representation but must be a democracy of the social and civil community that integrates diversity and allows each person to give meaning to their existence".

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Criminal Offense of Smuggling

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Abstract

The topic presented in this paper is related to the criminal offense of smuggling widely dealt by the Criminal Code. This is an important work to deal with because it is directly related to the functioning of a state and the financial measures taken by a state in the development of fiscal and customs policies. The part related to the enjoyment of the customs activity can be said to be one of the key points of a country, considering the fact of entering and leaving the goods as well as the payment of the customs duty. Although our country has actually comes from a closed economy due to the centralized system, evolution over the years of democracy has led to an increased import and export of goods at the border. For this reason, we can say that the share of customs activity is essential as it has a direct impact on revenue growth that goes to the state budget, and then distributed according to the needs of the country. Precisely for this part, the consumption of the work of "Smuggling" results in a reduction of income in the field of economy that would have to go to the State Budget and consequently economic damage. It is important to understand that because of the economic development and the evolution of financial relations, the export of goods and goods, in fact, the level of crime in the field of customs has increased, thus also in well-organized structures in this regard. Smuggling is one of the manifestations of illegal activity that is punishable by the law, which damages or violates not only the legitimate interests of the state for the collection of customs revenues but also the fair competition and consequently the legitimate interests of citizens. Below we will look more closely at the criminal aspect related to the crime of "Smuggling" cases from the practice and the unifying decisions of the High Court regarding the consumption of this paper. Customs offenses pose a serious threat to the domestic legal order and beyond, so it is the duty of states to comply with legislation by providing for acts in this regard as crimes or even administrative offenses. Given its importance as well as the harm caused to the state from such crimes, we appreciate that the topic has value to be discussed, and having this paper published.

Key words: *smuggling, customs code, penal code, import, export, goods, declaration*



Methodology

In this study are used quantitative and qualitative methods. The work focused in the collection and processing of information. The study involves a range of legal analyzes, which are understandable to everyone. Also, the information and data provided by various field have been collected by the authors. They have come together, in order to analyze the decisions of the High Court practice. Also, I have presented my analysis, relying on my several years of experience as a lawyer in the criminal field. An analysis has been carried out in this paper, including the case law and case studies. Initially, the structure was drafted, trying to give an idea about the concepts of smuggling crime, including comparative parts.

The purpose of the subject

The purpose of this paper is to carry out a thorough analysis of the problems encountered in the field of crimes related to smuggling. Also in the comparative plan an analysis is given taking into account the provisions of the Criminal Code and those of the Customs Code. Also, taking in consideration different cases from the daily practice, referring to the decisions of the Supreme Court, we bring a clearer idea of the appropriateness of the relevant provisions.

Object

The object of this action is to present a legal analysis regarding the legal provisions related to "smuggling" as a criminal offense and as an administrative offense.

Hypotheses raised on the subject

- Criminal legislation related to the criminal offense of "Smuggling" (when it is "a crime" and when it is "administrative offense").
- Is there a likelihood between the criminal offense of "Smuggling" and "Documents False"?
- Is there a perpetual midids criminal code and customs code.
- Analysis of law enforcement in reference to court decisions.



Introduction

First of all, referring to the meaning of the word "Customs" we may say that it is about a state institution that controls goods entering or leaving a country in another country and collecting the taxes foreseen for them; the tax that is borne by the laws in force; point at the border. In order to carry out this kind of control, the concept of "customs" was initially created since the beginning of the creation of the first state formations, although there was no evolution process which can be presented today. If we refer to the ancient Greece, which is characterized by the city-states of that time, there we may find some elements of the origins of the creation of customs. Thus, to enter goods in Antique Athens, at the port of Pieros, the goods were subjected to a tax of 2%.

We can say that even in ancient Rome there was a kind of check on the entry of goods and tax was applied for their entry within the Roman territory. We also recall that the Illyrian people felt the same way, controlling the goods entering the port of Durres as one of the most important ports of that time. But of course, with the passing of time, as well as the increase of the possibility of transport, the definition of the borders of the states and the economic expansion, was extended the "Customs" cocaine, and also began to improve the legislation in the part of violations of the "Customs" which we will talk below. So it is important to emphasize the fact that from ancient times there has been the concept of Customs, Customs Taxes, and sanctions for their deception, considering the special importance that those have for the economy.

Passage of goods to customs

Before starting the analysis of these criminal offenses, I want to bring to your attention some definitions regarding the "Customs". The Customs is linked to the administrative services responsible for the implementation of customs legislation and collection of import and export duties and taxes, charged also with the implementation of other laws and relevant regulations, inter alia, on the importation, transit and export of goods. I do not intend to ask for this clarification, as we will see, and as part of this paper, it is included in the criminal offenses of the "Companion". Given the importance of the functioning of the customs system of a State, the criminal code provided for the commission of several offenses in the customs area as well as various sanctions in the case of their commission. It is important to note that the way in which the goods are entered and outlined have been evolved, the ways of avoiding legal obligations are



sophisticated, such as: concealing goods at customs, non-declaration of income, etc. The whole range of these criminal offenses is provided in articles 171-179 of the Criminal Code which I shall deal with, below. The main issues encountered in practice regarding criminal offenses in the field of customs are related to the different ways of expressing their objective side.

In general terms, the objective aspect of crimes in the field of customs is manifested by the same actions as import, export, transit, false declaration of goods over quantity, nature, type, price etc. Smuggling crimes are consumed not only by goods entering the Albanian territory, but also with outgoing procedures. Customs activity relates to international trade activities, where a commodity passes from one country to another, and in some cases, the number of countries where the product is transited is greater. The simplest case is that of a bilateral relationship, where the first country sells purchased products, while the second party realizes their import into the purchasing state, in our case Albania. In this case, the following and only the customs activity is completed within two countries. Consequently, the actions carried out as part of the objective side of the smuggling offenses are carried out in sending and receiving of the goods. However, the procedure for sending a certain quantity of goods is not easy. It requires some phases and it is important that we mention it in this paper to better understand the movement of goods.

Thus, the procedure of sending a quantity of goods consists of several links, namely:

- 1. Order/Purchase*
- 2. Physical departure of goods (country, transport, recipient)*
- 3. Declaration as export to the sending State (in exit customs)*
- 4. Transport by land, air, sea transport (Boarding)*
- 5. Discharge, (accompanying documents)*
- 6. Customs declaration*

As can be understood, these links are important from commodity order to cleavage and declaration at customs. The importance of this part lies in the fact that the malfunction of one of the control links, results in incorrect declaration of duty, concealment of goods, etc. Also, an



important part of this activity is in fact the exchange of information, accurate coordination of custom authorities, listing of goods, etc. Below, each of the main items will be analyzed in detail.

Customs- Customs Coordination

In practice, customs authorities cooperate and exchange administrative information within their activity. In this way, the incoming data from the sending state to the incoming country for the destined state are coordinated. Specifically, lists of goods transported from one country to another are sent, specifying the type of product, quantity, means of transport, weight, declared value, etc. Finding the differences in the declared data constitutes sufficient elements to suspect the consumption of the objective side of the criminal offense of smuggling.⁸

- ***Outbound Delivery:*** In the case of smuggling through import, export or transit outside customs points, the objective elements of the fact are simple. It is enough for the goods to be found passed out of the customs spot and the objective part of the offense is consumed.

-***Excellent Mall:*** In practice, cases are encountered when foreign authorities convey data on the delivery of a quantity of goods (vehicle, weight, price, vessel, etc.). The Albanian customs authorities verify whether the quantity of goods has been declared or not, and when the non-declaration results, follow the criminal prosecution.

- ***The entry declaration of goods is an insufficient circumstance to conclude on the existence of the objective side of this criminal offense.*** It must be confirmed that the products from the exit country have arrived in the receiving state.

Regarding these cases, the practice contains experiences in which the declarant subject of the goods accepts the first order;

- *Have declared the goods outgoing;*
- *Have returned the goods to the purchaser for various reasons.*

False Export Statement

⁸"Finance Science and Financial Law", Kristaq Gjyli, Tirana 2009



Another phenomenon emerging in international practices regarding the delivery of goods to Albania is the false declaration of exportations made by foreign companies to the customs authorities of the respective country. These practices have been applied to various purposes, linked in the majority with the taxation activities of foreign companies. These false statements created the possibility of reimbursing VAT or declaring goods in transit that were inflated into the domestic market. This action was ascertained, investigated and penalized by the authorities of these states.

Existence of fraudulent false declaration practices implies the fact of completing the objective aspect of smuggling in cases of non-declaration of goods in Albania, even when declared as being exported to the customs authorities of the sending State.

It is logical to think that any goods declared in the export will arrive at the place of purchase, in order to place it on the market. But the above practices, false statements of export from foreign entities or the return of goods to the sending entity, do not suffice the above logical reasoning to obey the objective aspect of smuggling. Arrival of goods in Albania is a crucial moment to acknowledge the existence of this criminal offense.

False statement

The richest is the objective part of the criminal offense when smuggling is carried out by means of false declaration for one of the data of the goods such as weight, price, etc. In such cases, the representative of the customer (administrator, representative with power of attorney, authorized customs agency) makes a declaration to the Customs Authority on the necessary data of the goods. Customs declaration of attachment of accompanying documents such as invoice of purchase, CMR (receipt of goods) and other acts required as proxy, NUIS, license, etc.

False Documents / Report on Smuggling

In the practice of investigating and adjudicating these cases with the object of committing criminal offenses of smuggling, they are always associated with the use of counterfeit documents in respect of goods data (weight, price, nature, etc.). Finding this fact is indispensable to conclude on the objective side of the criminal offense. In these cases, it is proceeded to obtain via the foreign legal liaison, the real documentation of the goods as the order sheet, the exit invoice, the tax invoice, the payment order etc. Comparative analysis of these data confirms the fulfillment of the false declaration, as an objective part of smuggling.



Criminal legislation related to the criminal offense of "Smuggling"

Following the above, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania provides for criminal offenses in the customs area, beginning with Article 171 (hereinafter), which we will consider below. It is clear that the division of the general figure of the criminal offense of smuggling into seven special smuggling figures was made by the lawmaker starting with the nature of the goods with which smuggling, their legal regime; secondly, the degree of social risk of each of these types of smuggling and, ultimately, by the subject, thus creating the legal conditions appropriate to enable the development of an effective fight against criminality in such an important sphere of economy, such as the activity of the customs authorities.

As is often mentioned in court decisions, and as is logically understandable, the purpose of these criminal offenses is to "avoid payment for the state budget of customs duties", thus creating a continuous chain of revenue cuts.⁹ Article 171 of the Criminal Code provides that: "The unlawful importation, exportation or transit of prohibited or restricted goods entering and leaving the Republic of Albania, committed in any manner or way, shall be punished by imprisonment, up to ten years." It is important to emphasize in this case the part where this article defines "prohibited goods". The question arises what we will understand with the concept of prohibited goods. In order to answer this question, we refer to the Decision of the Council of Ministers as follows with the respective explanation: 1. Remnants: In DCM no. 550, dated 22.08.2012, it is foreseen that it is forbidden to enter, exit or transit waste in Albanian territory, except for those described in the green list of this DCM. 2. Endangered Species: Other prohibited products are endangered species of flora and fauna, as provided for in Law no. 9867, dated 31.01.2008.

So, if the material object of the criminal offense of smuggling would be products prohibited by Albanian legislation then the fact would qualify under Article 171 of the Criminal Code.

Article 172 of the Criminal Code provides that: "Smuggling of goods for which excise tax is paid or with full or partial suspension from customs duties or excise duties. the exportation or transit of goods for which excise duty is payable, by way of passage through the customs warehouses, partial or complete seizure of 113, inadequate customs declaration, false declaration of the nature, type, quality, price, destination of the goods or other forms intended to avoid customs

⁹"Criminal Law, Special Part", Prof. dr. Dr. Ismet Elezi, Tirana 2009



duties or the partial or total benefit of an exemption, refund or reduction of customs duties, taxes, duties, excise duties or any advantage whatsoever relating to the import or export of goods shall be punished by imprisonment for up to seven years. The release for consumption of goods released for free circulation after being wholly or partly suspended from customs duties or excise duties due to their final destination or their final use, in order to avoid customs duties, shall be punished five years in prison. This offense, when committed in co-operation or more than once, is sentenced to five to ten years in prison. "

So, as we can see from the very content of the article, the main focus are the goods for which excise tax is paid. To better understand this article, we will refer to the law no. 61/2012 "On Excise" and no. 121/2012 what definition gives us about excise goods. "Products subject to excise" are: a) energy products; b) alcohol and alcoholic beverages; c) tobacco and tobacco products; ç) other products, as defined by this law. Considering the above definitions, when the material object of smuggling is one of the abovementioned products, the fact shall constitute the criminal offense of "Smuggling of excise goods", provided for in Article 172 of the Criminal Code. Article 173 of the Criminal Code provides that: "Smuggling with Licensed Goods (Amended by Law No. 135/2015, dated 5.12.2015). Import, export or transit of goods for which a license is required by the competent body, through crossing points customs, partial or complete seizure, incorrect declaration of customs duty, false declaration of the nature, type, quality, price, destination of goods or other forms intended to avoid customs duties shall be punished by imprisonment of up to five years. This offense, when committed in co-operation or more than once, is sentenced to five to ten years in prison. "

Thus, the most significant section of Article 173 of the Criminal Code is the import, export or transit of goods for which a license is required by the competent body. Regarding this part, various laws or sub-legal acts issued for their implementation provide for a license for the exercise of a particular activity. Such we can mention: 1. hydrocarbons, 2. pharmaceuticals, 3. weapons, ammunition, explosives, military technology, etc.¹⁰

Article 174 of the Criminal Code provides that "The importation, export or transit of goods, by passing out of the customs territory, the full or partial omission, the incorrect declaration of

¹⁰"Penal Code" "Amendments to Ministries", Publication of JSC, Tirana 2014

"Penal Code of the Republic of Albania", Publication of the Official Publishing Center of Tirana, August 2017



customs duty, false declaration of the nature, type, quality, price, or other forms aimed at avoiding customs duties, are punishable by a fine or up to five years of imprisonment ". This article deals with common goods (food items, etc.), however, the type of these is set by sub-legal acts. Also, Article 174 of the Criminal Code provides for "the purpose to avoid the obligation" as an element that must necessarily be present in order to be present before the commission of the offense.

The existence of the goal raises the level of the subjective side in the direct sense, excluding the consumption of the work indirectly. In the case of smuggling, the perpetrator knows and wants to avoid customs duties and acts to achieve this goal. If this is not the case of the subjective side, we can not be before committing the offense of smuggling.

One of the other articles related to smuggling is Article 177 of the Criminal Code.

This article provides that: "Smuggling with Intermediate Goods" Import, export or transit of goods, by displaying them as intermediate-goods, in order to avoid the customs duties or the partial or total benefit of an exemption, reimbursement or reduction of customs duties, taxes, taxes, excise duties or any advantage whatsoever relating to the import or export of goods shall be punished by imprisonment of up to five years. This offense, when committed in co-operation or more than once, is sentenced to five to ten years in prison. "

This provision, as well as Articles 171, 172, 173 of the Criminal Code, is a reference to other legal acts and by-laws that govern the categorization of certain products. Highlighting the categorization of certain products as in this criminal offense provided for "Smuggling of goods by interim regime ..." In the concrete case the article refers to the Customs Code and the by-laws issued for its implementation, which provide for regimes intermediate, which are not subject to customs duties.¹¹

Thus, in the Customs Code, Articles 108 to 113 clarify what is meant by the expression used in Article 177 "*Interim Regime*", referring to the following: i) *transit*; ii) *customs warehousing*; iii) *active processing in suspension system etc.* ; In case false declaration, importation, exportation or

¹¹"Penal Code" "Amendments to Ministries", Publication of JSC, Tirana 2014

"Penal Code of the Republic of Albania", Publication of the Official Publishing Center of Tirana, August 2017



transit occurs with goods declared in one of the above regimes, in order to avoid customs duties, the fact would qualify under Article 177 of the Criminal Code.¹²

An analysis regarding the subject matter of the aforementioned works

The above we have taken into consideration and have clarified regarding the classification of smuggling according to respective articles referring respectively to:

- *Smuggling of goods subject to excise duty, Article 172,*
- *Smuggling with licensed goods, Article 173,*
- *Smuggling on other goods, Article 174,*
- *Smuggling with Intermediate Goods, Article 177.*

Meanwhile, the existence of this form of subjective side is not required in the cases of "Contraband for Detained Goods" as provided for in Article 171 and "Smuggling of Cultural Values" provided in Article 176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In these cases, it is enough for import/export or transit to be carried out illegally and the offense is consumed.¹³ As to the intentional form in the cases of Articles 171 and 176, in relation to lawlessness, it may be either direct or indirect. The purpose of avoiding customs duties constitutes the subjective side of the crimes envisaged in the afore mentioned articles.

Competition/absorption between "Smuggling" and "Falsifying Documents"

In the case of consuming a criminal offense of smuggling with a false statement, the use of counterfeit documents is part of the customs declaration procedure in order to avoid monetary obligations. The false disclosure of the data itself is foreseen as one of the forms of objective smuggling. This statement includes not only the completion of the customs declaration but the use of counterfeit acts to support the false declaration. Moreover, the use of counterfeit documents stems from the intention to avoid customs duties, a circumstance envisaged as a subjective version of the criminal offenses of smuggling. For this reason, the subjective side of the criminal offense of "Falsifying Documents" is subjectively subjugated to the terms

¹²"Penal Code" "Amendments to Ministries", Publication of JSC, Tirana 2014

"Penal Code of the Republic of Albania", Publication of the Official Publishing Center of Tirana, August 2017

¹³"Penal Code" "Amendments to Ministries", Publication of JSC, Tirana 2014

"Penal Code of the Republic of Albania", Publication of the Official Publishing Center of Tirana, August 2017



"Smuggling". In conclusion all the elements of the figure of "Falsifying documents" are absorbed by the "Smuggling" and as a consequence is the latter that absorbs the crime itself provided by article 186 of the Criminal Code.

Such are the cases where the production is carried out in a country, but the sale is done through an entity located in another country which has regional rights to trade in goods.

Customs Code, projections regarding the "Smuggling" work

The Customs Code foresees other forms of contraband consumption, namely Articles 276 to 280 of Law no. no. 8449, dated 27.01.1999 "Customs Code". Such can be mentioned, among other things, articles 276-280. So, as can be understood, on the one hand, we have the provisions of the Criminal Code, starting with Articles 171 and on the other, and Articles 279-280 of the Customs Code (which we will quote below), which have a common feature: the "smuggling" element, but they also have the interference between each other. In fact, sometimes it seems that the Customs Code in its predictions creates little confusion and it seems difficult to understand and determine which of the codes along with its sanctions would be applicable. But before I continue to express my opinion as a lawyer, taking into consideration my experience and how the practice has proceeded, I would first like to refer to the provisions of the Customs Code below, and more specifically:

Customs Code

Conducts smuggling on the movement of goods through land borders and within the customs areas, whoever: - discharges or stores goods in the intermediate space between the border and the nearest customs office; - is found with hidden goods in the body, in luggage, in packs or in other articles carried, or in any means of transport to avoid customs control and / or supervision; - removes goods from customs areas without paying the obligations to be paid or guaranteed, except in cases of exemption from the obligation to provide guarantees as provided for in this Code; - Export goods subject to export duties outside the customs territory of the Republic of Albania in one of the ways outlined above; - keeps close to the customs line, goods for which it can- not prove its origin; - refuses to submit the manifest and the relevant documents; - loading, unloading or transporting goods, passengers and their baggage without the permission of the customs authorities. - breaking the customs stamp, replacing or replacing other security signs



placed on the means of transport or on the goods, the captain of the vessel that brings the goods through the maritime border, contrary to the provisions of this Code and its by-laws; while transporting goods to the floating vessel approaches the port, throws anchor or stops near the port without the permission of the customs authorities; etc.

According to the Customs Code, actions or omissions provided for smuggling are numerous. Their qualification as a criminal offense does not necessarily relate to the existence of the purpose of avoiding customs duties. Some of the cases contemplated as smuggling into the Customs Code are formal, as would be the non-appearance of the ship's manifesto by the captain, or the alteration or breaking of the customs stamp. Sufficient implementation of these actions and the offense would have been consumed. However, it should be noted that the actions provided for in the Criminal Code as part of the criminal code of smuggling, in the Customs Code, Article 261, are foreseen as an administrative offense. In this context, they constitute misconduct.

Replacement of goods in customs

Any action or alienation of the documents required by the customs authorities, which is not intended to avoid any customs control or non-payment, or reduction of the payment of customs duties, or the obtaining of any right to import or export. Failure to alter or alter the nature or type of goods declared for temporary export between the actual goods and the goods presented at the outbound. Finding goods that are not covered and which are undeclared.¹⁴

Without prejudice to the provisions on smuggling, an administrative customs violation constitutes a declaration of a quality, quantity, value or origin other than that established by the customs authorities at the moment when the declarant submits the declaration for release for free circulation. At the same time, Article 291 of the Customs Code provides that a person may avoid criminal liability if the following conditions are fulfilled simultaneously: a) prosecution has not yet begun; b) the amount of duty payable for the goods involved in smuggling is less than 5 million ALL; (c) the responsible person shall immediately pay the amount of customs duties and

¹⁴Lecture cycle "Counterfeiting and Smuggling", "School of Magistrates", Ervin Metalla



the fine imposed; and d) the accused person declares that he waives the right of appeal provided for in Article 289.¹⁵

So, in summary of what we said, it is not difficult to determine the applicability of each code together with the relevant projections, as Article 291 of the Customs Code clearly states which criteria are to be met for this work to be classified as administrative offenses.

In practice, in these cases, it is qualification as smuggling crime. Moreover, the majority of these cases are referred by the customs authorities themselves, in cases where the value of the deviation is higher than five million ALL and when the entity does not meet the other legal requirements provided by Article 291 of the Customs Code. We can say that jurisprudence is now constant in recognizing the existence of a criminal offense of smuggling (or of administrative homologation violations, by applying preconditions) in all cases where the fraudulent conduct of the author resulted in the deduction of goods in the payment of VAT.

Overview of the Supreme Court's unification practice for criminal offenses related to Smuggling. DECISION OF THE HIGH COURT Rasti Koka: Nr. Decision (372), dt. 21. 04. 2010

Objective side: Entry of goods outside the customs area

The High Court appreciates: It is plausible and legal for this College the reasoning of the Court of Appeals for Serious Crimes in relation to point 4 of its decision: "At trial it has been proved that the goods that pay excise duty (cigarettes) in all three episodes, have passed the customs point without declaring them, avoiding customs duties.¹⁶ So these goods are proven to be imported, imported through the coastal line of the port of Durrës. Article 41/1 of Law No. 8449, dated 27.01.1999 "The Customs Code of the Republic of Albania", defines as the moment of entry of the goods (their importation) the moment of their passage to the state border of our country. This provision has the following content: "Immediate entry" or "exit time" means the moment of transit of goods, regardless of the means of transport at the state border of the Republic of Albania, to enter its customs territory or to exit from him. In this Code, Article 42/1

¹⁵Law no. 102/2014 Customs Code of the Republic of Albania
www.dogana.gov.al (customs legislation)

¹⁶Supreme Court Decision, Case Case: No. Decision (372), dt.21.04.2010.



sanctions the manner in which the person who carries (imports) goods in Albania should act: "Goods brought into the customs territory of the Republic of Albania shall be transported without delay by the person who carries them and in the manner laid down by the customs authorities and in accordance with their instructions, if any: (a) at the customs office designated by the customs authorities or in any other country designated or approved by them. Article 6/2 of the Customs Code lays down the definition of the maritime surveillance area, such as the port area of Durrës, defining it as: "The customs area of maritime surveillance consists of a sea line extending from the customs line to the border of external waters and inland waterways ". The third paragraph of Article 65 of the Customs Code thus defines "smuggling": "Avoidance or attempt to avoid, in any way, the control and / or customs supervision over goods in order to avoid payment of import and export duties, as described in Articles 276 to 280 and each of the actions described in these articles constitutes smuggling and is punishable as such. " In interpreting these provisions, this court concludes that smuggling of excise goods (cigarettes) has been completed since the moment of their entry into the state border of the Republic of Albania, avoiding the customs surveillance zone of the port of Durres on these goods in order to avoid customs duties. Consequently, after the commission of this criminal offense, no matter where they are stored or housed, the latter can in no case be considered a means of committing the offense. Consequently, these warehouses should be returned to defendant Fatmir Zotaj as their owner. "

Case Ilir Sinomati: Crime relates to the effective exercise of the function DECISION OF THE HIGH COURT

Decision no. 3, dated 10.01.2008 of the District Court of Tropoja, finding the guilty plea and the conviction of the defendant Ilir Sinomati for the criminal offense of smuggling by employees related to the customs activity and the decision no.200, dated 23.06.2008 The Shkodra Court of Appeal, which has upheld that decision, should be annulled and the case in custody of the defendant Ilir Sinomati be dismissed, because the fact is not foreseen as a criminal offense.

Approximately 20.00 near the customs point Haziz Kovacica and Azgan Selimaj approached their vehicles with their vehicles, the first loaded foodstuffs at a value of 142.959 leks and the second goods in the amount of 47.690 leks. Customs officer Dashmir Sadikaj, after finding that the value of goods on both vehicles exceeded 300 euros and that customs actions could not be



completed after 18.00, did not allow them to leave. After about 30 minutes, the deceased was returned to the customs office, which allowed the two vehicles to pass, but they were caught off the road by police officers and, with no clearance documents, their drivers were detained being charged with the criminal offense of smuggling with other goods, while the defendant Ilir Sinomati was accused and found guilty by the courts for the criminal offense of smuggling by employees related to customs activity, provided by Article 175 of the Criminal Code.

In the analysis of the detention and the actions conducted by the convicted Ilir Sinomati, the Criminal College of the High Court finds that the district and appeal court's decision was taken to improper application of the substantive law, since it did not take into account the role and the position of the district court. the defendant at the moment he is accused of committing smuggling. All the acts related to the case were not fulfilled by the defendant, but by the officer who was on the turn and who was in charge. The defendant had finished his turn at the customs point and there he did not go to work but to help socially the person who was on the turn and who was new to duty. The defendant Ilir Sinomati not only did not carry out actions related to the customs activity but was not entitled to carry out the actions and it was also proved that the defendant had no acquaintance with the drivers of the vehicles and there was no benefit to them. In the circumstances mentioned, the defendant is not subject to the criminal offense of smuggling by the customs officer, as he has not had that quality. Missing one of the elements of this criminal offense, the criminal case in custody of the defendant Ilir Sinomati must be dismissed.

Case Xhemil Manoku: Abuse or smuggling DECISION OF THE HIGH COURT

That the decision of the Gjirokastra Court of Appeal No. 20-2008-357, dated 16.07.2008, was taken in respect of procedural and criminal law and as such should be upheld. From the examination of the materials of the criminal record in charge of the convicted Xhemil Manoku resulted that the criminal proceeding against the defendant was registered on 04.03.2006, because on this date the citizen Feim Asimi passed through the "Three Bridges" customs point in Përmet two vans, mainly with spare parts used for vehicles, by partially avoiding customs duties at ALL 73906.11. The citizen Feim Asimi has presented at customs point, customs declaration no. 222 dated 04.03.2006 and after passing in the presence of the customs officer, the defendant Xhemil Manoku with the customs duty of physical control of the goods in the vehicle paid the value customs declaration according to the declaration made in the customs declaration.



After carrying out the customs operations and paying the value of the customs duty in the amount of 12412 ALL, traveling on the road from Carcarevo-Leskovic, by the road police of the Police Station of Kolonjë, were stopped the two vans carrying the above goods for the purpose of verification of their documentation. Based on suspicions arising during the control of the goods in relation to their type and quantity, the vehicles were banned and escorted at the premises of the Korça Customs Branch, where from the physical check carried out in the presence of the owner of the goods by SLKPr employees. P of Financial Economic Crime in the County of Korça D. Police and some employees of the Korça customs branch, resulted in the goods being undeclared goods both in kind and in quantity. As a consequence of the incorrect declaration, ie the differences in the goods, a deviation from the customs duty was created, which after the expert evaluation appointed by the court resulted in the amount of ALL 73906.11.

The indictment sentenced Judge Xhemil Manoku, charged with the criminal offense of "Abuse of Duty" provided by Article 248 of the Criminal Code, while defendant Feim Asimi, charged with the criminal offense of "Smuggling with other goods "Provided by Article 174 of the Criminal Code.¹⁷ The District Court of Përmet, by an interim decision, solved the criminal case against defendant Feim Asimi as the latter sought to be tried shortly and at the end of the trial he was found guilty and sentenced by decision of this court no. 29, dated 20.09.2006.

For Xhemil Manoku continued the trial by ordinary procedure and at the conclusion of the trial he was found guilty and convicted of the criminal offense provided by Article 248 of the Criminal Code by the Judicial District of Përmet, by decision no.59 / p- 12, dated 27.02.2008.

The Appellate Court of Gjirokastra, which has adjudicated the case on the basis of the appeal of the defendant, by decision no.20-2008-357, dated 16.07.2008, amended the above decision regarding the legal designation of the offense, declaring the guilty for the criminal offense of "Smuggling of employees related to customs activity" provided for in Article 175 of the Criminal Code, and leaving the sentence of 6 months in force, but has waived the fine, as this penalty was not foreseen by Article 175 of the Penal Code as the main punishment.

The Criminal College of the High Court finds that the decision of the Gjirokastra Court of Appeal, which has amended the decision on legal qualification, is a fair conclusion, as it was found by this Panel that it is the result of a logical analysis and in accordance with the requirements of law that has been fully taken into account in the circumstances and is only taken

¹⁷The Supreme Court's decision no. 720 (00-2009-440) defendant Xhemil Manoku



in the fair assessment of the evidence examined during the trial, by applying the requirements of Articles 152 and 380 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The appellate court has correctly assessed the existence of elements of the criminal offense provided by Article 175 of the Criminal Code, which as a crime is a form of abuse of office.

In this criminal offense, her feature is that her special subject is a customs officer, as well as a judge. The avoidance of customs duty has come as a direct consequence of actions that do not comply with the law of the defendant. This approach is in line with the conclusions reached in the decision of United Colleges of the Supreme Court No. 1, dated 26.03.2002.¹⁸

Results and Discussions

In completing all the analysis, we can say that the functioning of the customs service is one of the key points of state revenue. Also, in the context of the expansion of the phenomenon of globalization, the creation of the European Union and the adherence of many states to this union, the functioning of legislation involving customs matters is more important. In this context, the Kyoto Convention, the Kyoto 2000 Convention on the Harmonized Codification and Descriptions of Goods, etc., was also created, aiming to harmonize legislation in the customs field. In the context of the importance of the customs aspect to the state's economy, the criminal legitimacy plays a key role. As we have analyzed, this legislation is of great importance since the process of forecasting the respective sanctions has a preventative effect. In conclusion, I think that no matter how many practical cases we may have had until today, it is very clear that when classifying the crime as administrative offense by referring to the Customs Code or as a criminal offense also referring to criminal legislation. What remains important is that when we are in front of a case involving the commission of an unlawful act, by consuming the criminal offenses of smuggling, be judged objectively, taking into consideration the decisions of the High Court. 6. The Albanian legislation that provides for criminal offenses related to smuggling is complete and clear. Certainly, for the sake of creating mutual economic relations with other states, even having a strategic position, it is necessary that from time to time the domestic legislation should also be adapted, taking into consideration the development of the economy, the diversity of entry and

¹⁸Decision of United Colleges of High Court No. 1, dated 26.03.2002



exit mortgages and the tendency of "tax evasion", which always accompanies the economy of a country.

Conclusions

The functioning of the customs system remains one of the pillars of the functioning of a country. It is for the benefit of all to have a complete check on the border points, giving them the opportunity to enter the market in controlled manner, the respective taxes to be paid and to fulfill the obligation to be paid into the state budget. There can be no functioning criminal sanction. In this regard, the criminal offenses provided for in Articles 171-178 of the Criminal Code have an important role and go hand in hand with the country's economic development. Also, considering the continuity of economic developments, or the involvement in economic relations with the European Union, but also more broadly, we think that legislation should be adopted from time to time, and the courts should play a more objective role in enforcing law correctly.

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Legislative liberal reforms, social dialogue and youth expectations (European comparative study and trends)

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Abstract

A series of liberal legislative reforms have recently been undertaken in various European countries. The case of France is symbolic because these legislative reforms have often caused social unrest in recent years (El Khomri Law in 2016, ORE Law and Macron Bylaws in 2018). Similar reforms have been conducted in parallel in other European countries, supported by recommendations from the EU institutions.

With variants, the reforms have been transposed also in the Western Balkans countries. Here too, notable student demonstrations took place, including that of Albanian students in 2018. In this article, I try to investigate on the link between the motivations and ideological content of these reforms and those who carry them, and the motivations and alternative solutions of the protestants. I note that these reforms, mainly related to the economy and to the work regulation, are challenged by street demonstrations that mainly involve young generations, university and high school students. This contestation carried by a category of the population that is not directly concerned by the challenged measures (as is the case of students contesting measures liberalizing the rules of dismissal in the name of the fear of precariousness increased in the future) implies a high degree of political awareness and citizen mobilization. But different studies indicate exactly the opposite on younger generations. It is also this paradox that I try to clarify in this paper, based on the results of numerous empirical studies on European youth (eg. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Youth Study on Southeast Europe or World Bank Surveys).

Key words: *European integration, Liberalism, Social dialogue State reform, Youth values*

Introduction



A morose state of mind, frequently denounced in the economy as in the society all over Europe, has been a constant observation during the recent years. It is probably the ground of the rising protests, waves of exile, social upheavals and political ruptures such as the populist victories.

In some countries, especially in the Western Balkans, this moroseness is brandished as a fatality, both with the bitterness of the irreparable and the pride of the "unique phenomenon". But this phenomenon is far from being confined to one single country or region. Let us remember that the first findings of the *Commission for the Liberation of French Growth* (2008) were the blockages of French society attributed among others to the pessimism of the French society (Attali, 2008).

Neither historical fatality nor a capricious psychological mode, this collective gloom is the subjective face of a more deep and objective phenomena. It has been accentuated and made visible by the crisis but has more distant and structural roots.

Long before the crisis of 2008, since the beginning of the post-Fordism era (mid 1970), the world was experiencing a period of blockages and decline, which had been preceded by thirty years of prosperity. Along the years prior to the 2008 crisis, the amount of debt (especially private) increased dramatically and competent voices warned about the potentiality of a collapse. The subprime crisis declared in the US was the paroxysm of this long decline, consequence of a disproportion that had been growing for decades between the real economy and financial bubbles. It precluded and provoked the global crisis in the banking and financial sector of 2007-2008. This disproportion was especially that between consumption and credit which exploded while output and employment were declining.

Literature review

Even if the manifestations of the crisis had had the tragic clarity of the disaster, the analyzes of its causes and the means envisaged to remedy to its effects and prevent its return were not unanimous. For some lucid scholars, like Maurice Allais, the crisis was predictable because prepared for a long time. Unprecedented level of a multilayer debt created the potential for a global crisis, requiring only a trigger, which was the crisis of subprime (Allais, 1999). For some others, more pessimists, the crisis allow to predict the break-up of the euro zone, the bankruptcy of the State and economic catastrophes (Sapir, 2006; Todd, 2018). Some others, which were the



dominant voice, converged in the prescription of a diminished role and power of the State in favor of an active fraction of the society, especially entrepreneurs, who would ensure the well-being and succession of the rest of society. According to the optimists (Aghion, 2016), the outcome of the crisis was an opportunity for governments to consider undertaking substantive reforms, which had been postponed for a long time. For them, four pillars of reform were possible: competitiveness, tax reform, State reform and labor market reform. As the trend is to liberalize the State and promote the enterprise, these reforms can be described as liberal. This qualification is questionable when it is the State itself that weakens its own role by withdrawing or putting the power of its mechanisms and the benefits at its disposal to serve private or group interests. The analysis of the dominant voice of the doctrine just mentioned (predominantly Schumpeterian, according to which the bureaucracy and inefficiency of the State are responsible for the crisis) faces new criticism. A rising voice is recently but firmly, dismantling with arguments some myths like "the public debt provoked the crisis" or "only the private is able to bring innovation and growth", and reinventing an entrepreneurial vocation for the State of the 21st century, in a synthesis of Keynesian and Schumpeterian elements (Mazzicato, 2014).

Methodology

Neither the format nor the purpose of this article allows us to enter into the debate of the role of the State. We will try to relate the positions of the doctrine to the governing decisions, to identify the consequences of these decisions on the social dialogue through the compared analyzes of different reactions around Europe, and to read the expectations of the populations, specially the youth through these reactions and through surveys. The two first elements of this triptych are composed mostly of norms and facts, and our analyzes will consist in trying to connect them and to make sense of this relationship. For this, we will use sources of facts, reported through books, press, and also personal or first-hand testimony (during the period investigated, the author resided alternately in the West and in the Balkans). As for the third (expectation), it is less about facts than about perceptions and statements. We will here rely mainly on serious and recent investigations (such as Friedrich Ebert Stiftung or World Bank surveys, interpreted and enriched on the basis of personal experience. We will examine some specific cases of legislative reforms concerning access to the world of work (labor market, education), taking the particular case of



France. We will then examine the reactions that these reforms have provoked on the street, especially among young people. The results of surveys of young people's opinions, attitudes and expectations in a part of Europe (South East Europe, SEE), which is only partially part of the EU, will then be examined.

The data used to inform the facts come from field surveys performed by reliable organizations that we will quote as we go along.

Results and discussions

Reforms

Since 2008, the pace of reform has been accelerating in Western Europe. It affects mainly the labor market. In 2015, there have been 1,200 normative measures adopted since 2008 (compared to 700 between 2000 and 2007). They concern mainly the countries of Southern Europe, which have suffered a greater deterioration in the employment situation (Spain, Italy, Portugal, but also Ireland). In many cases, the reforms have often been made under pressure, particularly from the EU, as a counterpart to the payment of financial assistance (according to a report by the Employment Orientation Board, *La Tribune*, 2015).

Trend of reforms

The reforms aim at loosen restrictions contracts (liberalizing especially the permanent contracts, the dismissals, vacancies, weakening the labor law and lowering the cost of labor). The declared goal was to dynamize the world of work by favoring the enterprises and breaking the fixed statutes and protections. Some countries have given more margins to internal negotiations. The content of these reforms corresponds largely to the meaning of the "revolution" according to Emmanuel Macron (who is also the title of his book published before his election as President): according to his words, to refound the democracy and social and economic organization while remaining faithful to the western values, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The French Reform case

The Macron Law



In 2015, the case of the "Macron law" has kept the public opinion in suspense for long months. The Law No. 2015-990 of August 6, 2015 for *Growth, Activity and Equal Economic Opportunities*, known as "Macron Law" was passed under the Valls 2 Government. It is interesting to note the change in the title of the law compared to the version of origin, brought by Arnaud Montebourg, predecessor of Emmanuel Macron as Minister of Economy: "Law on Growth and Purchasing power".

This change illustrates two different economic and societal visions. The "growth" is in common, but if the initial version (that of Montebourg) puts the accent on the purchasing power (thus guaranteed rights of the "economic citizen"), that of the law carried by Macron puts forward "Equal economic opportunity, activity, enterprise". The protection of the law is now not so much on the buying employee as on the competitive entrepreneur who buys according to his talents and not according to his rights. It is therefore not surprising that in the next campaign, that of 2017, the candidate Montebourg spoke of "liberating the French", while the candidate Macron promised to "release the energies" and later to make a "Europe that liberates at the same time as it protects" (Hausalter, 2019; Sterdyniak, 2015).

The El Khomri Law

A second illustration of the same spirit of legislative reform in France is the El Khomri Law (Law n ° 2016-1088 of August 8th, 2016 relative to "*Work, Modernization of the Social Dialogue Security of the Professional Paths*"). Here too, it is interesting to note the evolution of the wording of the title of the Law. Originally named "*Law aiming to institute new freedoms and protections for businesses and actives*", then the title was changed to "*Law on Modernization of the Work Regulation*". This evolution is a prudent mode to manage the social dialogue, already manhandled by the passage in force of the Macron law. Although the Law claims to defend the rights of employees and facilitate the recruitment, it gives more leeway to the business negotiation. Its mode of adoption will be, once again and after heated debates in the Parliament and demonstrations in the street, a passage in force of the Executive in the National Assembly (Article 49-3 of the French Constitution allows this mechanism).

The most delicate innovation of this Law was the reversal of the hierarchy of norms: according to the modifications brought by this Law, an agreement concluded at the level of the company has more force than the collective agreement of branch and trumps the legal protections. The



contestation of this Law in the street was organized by the trade-unions but supported also by the high school and university students. The public opinion did not miss the overall spirit of these reforms, which was a more elitist and selective reorganization of the society.

Indeed, the train of the reforms was confirmed by the next one, the ORE Law (*Law of 8 March 2018 on the Orientation and the Success of the Students*). It modified the conditions of the access to university studies and introduced the *Student Plan*, which is supposed to remedy the draw (considered unfair and random). In fact, this new law introduces a selection. In reaction, protests erupt, the main argument of which concerns the breaking of the principle of equality in the choice of the field of study. The contestation is organized by leftist movements, with some blocked universities. But the movement remains isolated until the irruption of far-right hooded groups trying to dislodge protesters. The protest against this law then turns into a clash between the extremes (left and right).

Other European regions

Despite very different socio-political contexts, parallel phenomena are taking place in other parts of Europe. By the combined effect of the influence of the European orientations (through the integration instruments put in place in the EU's enlargement policy) and the correlative pressure of certain lobbies, an increase in inequalities in the economic life is noted. Reforms, inspired by Europe among others, aiming to bring more the private and diminish the role of the State in the economic game reach here such excesses that those who inspired them are obliged to criticize them (see for eg the findings of the World Bank on the excessive and risky use of PPPs in Albania and the reduction of the economic game to few privileged private actors, World Bank, 2019, p. 17).

This verticalization is accompanied by a liberalization of the education that has pushed students to the streets. December 2018, in Albania, they denounced the Government policy considering their interests sacrificed to rich segments of the society ("*...we are students, not customers*"). The protesters denounced difficult access to study, uncertain passage into the active life and criteria for selection not based on merit (*Deutsche Welle*, 2018).

Similitude in protests and social dialogue



Protests in different countries have of course specificities. The Saint-Simonian selection spirit that conducted technocratic reforms of modernization and optimization of the State in France have little to do with bold discrimination and pauperization of the youth in favor of some fast grown-up through easy benefit of corruptive public tendering groups in the Balkans.

Yet, some lines of similarity exist, due to the polarization and verticalization of the economic game on the one hand, and the claims and aspiration for a redistribution of chances from the protesters on the other hand. As a common point, we will observe that part of the European youth is worried about elitist developments seen as obstacles to access to the training and labor market for the most disadvantaged. Moreover, European youth feels that it is not listened to, that the social dialogue is broken, that other actors, intermediate bodies representing private interests have more the ears of the power. Before interpreting more in detail, the youth expectations, let us have an overview of the different protest movements in the SEE (South East Europe) and the WB (Western Balkans).

Examples of recent protest movements in the SEE

In addition to the motivations just cited, other movements were inspired by more specific problems in the SEE (see Table 1).

Table 1

Main movements of protest in the last eight years in the SEE

<i>Country</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Time, Occasion</i>
Serbia	Under the slogan "Against the dictatorship": anti-authoritarian movement against political violence and impunity or corruption	2017, during the parliamentary elections
Romania	Several protest movements since 2015 and the following years: against corruption and the neoliberal and anti-social policies of the former communist apparatchiks who became oligarchs in power	2015 seq.
Montenegro	Against corruption at the top of the state	2018
North Macedonia	- Protests of 2015 - Wiretapping scandal 2017 (fall of	2015, 2017



	Gruevski):against corruption, impunity and nationalist drift.	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movement "Justice for David":protestsdemanding neutral and effective justice. – - BiH, youthplayed a role in the emergence of grassrootspopularassemblies, plenumi (Radović, 2017). 	2018 2017
Kosovo	Vetevendosje (Self-determination) movement	2012 seq.
Slovenia	Legal protests	2012-13

These movements are predominantly leftist and pro-democratic in nature. But unlike *Syriza* or *Podemos*, they have generally claimed to be spontaneous movements of civil society and rarely formed political forces. Part of these demonstrations (liberal-democratic in nature) are strongly supported by European institutions and European public opinion. The protesters claim to be politically neutral and segments of civil society. A minority of the protesters in the SEE are in line with the trend of "millennial socialism" (FES, 2019, p. 3; *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2019). Others choose the path of nationalist protests (FES, 2019, p. 45). Another fraction (counting supporters of both the extremes) have a pronounced preference for the strong leader (trend noted since 2008, FES, 2019, p. 45). A more detailed analyzes of the data of the surveys on the SEE countries and their comparison with the movements of the occidental countries will allow us to construct meaningful comments.

Youth expectations

Youth and institutions: attitudes and preferences

The main features of the above-mentioned recent surveys are:

- Young people in the SEE have a strong distrust of State institutions.
- Meanwhile, they have generally great confidence in the European institutions. EU is seen as pillar of optimism and hope (FES, 2019, p. 39).

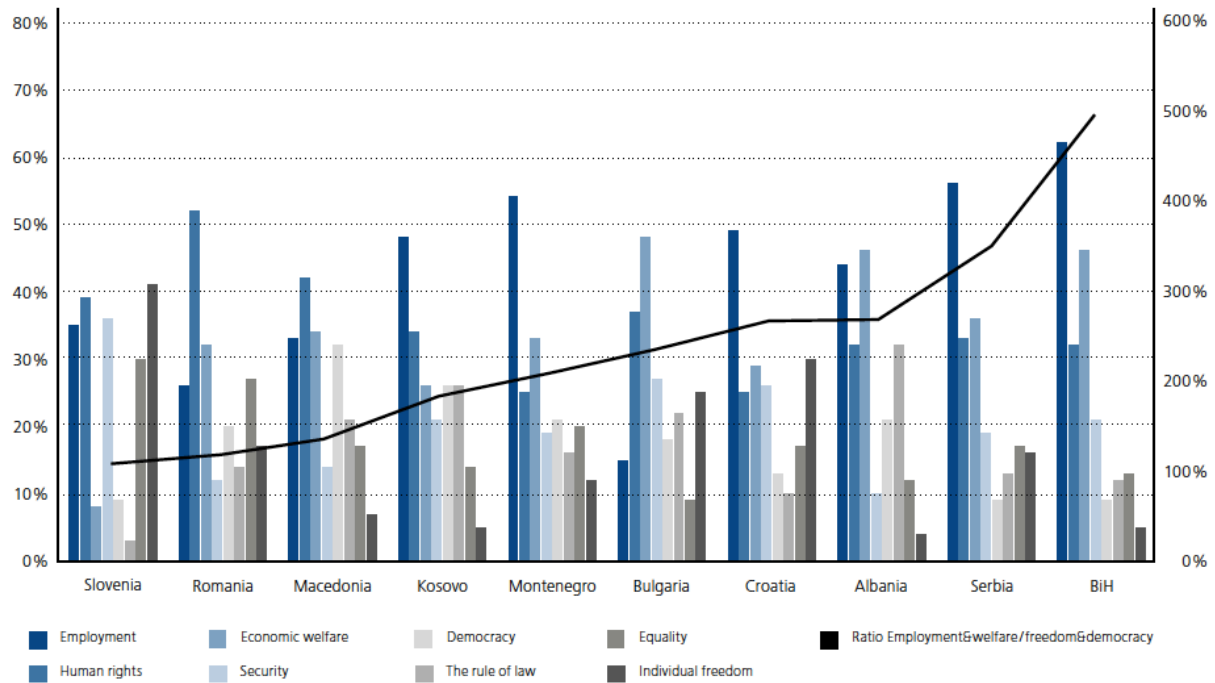


- At the same time, the surveys show a clear return of preference for the welfare state, considered as a provider of service and well-being (which explains the preference for public employment). Paradoxically, there has also been a growing attraction for the figure of the strong man leader, who is perceived as a guarantee of this welfare state, although not necessarily respectful of public liberties.

Opinions and values of youth public engagement

Before commenting, let us first observe that the surveys are often based on an epistemological optimism and believe in cultural determinism which consists in assuming that by knowing the motivations we can at least roughly predict future developments. This conceptualization of the values of a generation is indebted to authors like Mannheim (Mannheim, 1952, pp. 276-320), Inglehart, Norris, Welzel (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Inglehart & Norris, 2003) etc. We notice that this approach may have its limits, given that other categorizations than "generation" (for example social group) could have been used, giving most probably different results.

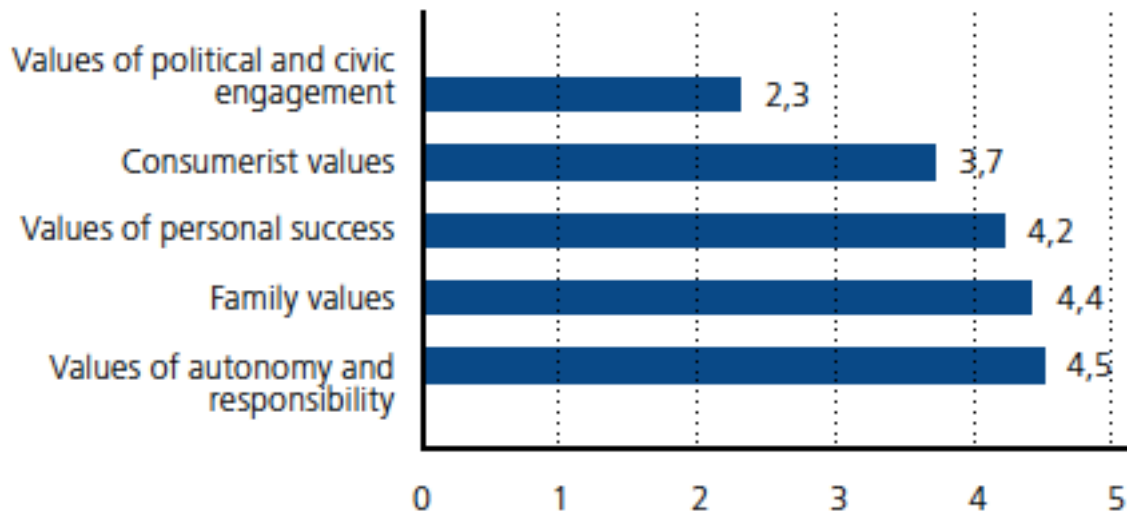
SEE youth values surveys show a lag between these values and their public engagement. Indeed, the main values are family, success and consumption, which means values belonging to the private sphere (Figure 1 and 2). Meanwhile, the problems from which the youth suffer mostly come from public dysfunctions (social injustice, poverty, corruption). Yet, there is a very low interest of young people in the public sphere. There is therefore an inconsistency between these two findings (FES, 2019, p. 42).



Note: Respondents were asked to rate their three most important socio-political values. The scores on the graph were computed as a weighted arithmetic mean, whereby the share of youth ranking a given value first was assigned a weight of 3, the share ranking a given value second was assigned a weight of 2, and the share ranking a given value 3rd was assigned a weight of 1.

Figure 1: The relative importance of eight major socio-political values, by country

Source: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Youth Studies South East Europe 2018-2019



Note: Values range from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

Figure 2: Importance of five basic value orientations



Source: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Youth Studies South East Europe 2018-2019

Political commitment and expression

The political commitment of young people in the SEE results to be low.

- Their interest in politics is rather low (lower than the previous FES Survey 2011-2015, FES, 2019, p. 69)
- Young people don't use the parties as their mode of engagement (FES, 2019, p. 70).
- The volunteering is very weak.

At the same time, the surveys show a tendency of young people to solve the employment problem through engaging in a political party. To qualify this tendency as innately "interested" or "materialistic" would however be too hasty. Indeed, the surveys also show that the candidates for immigration show a willingness to be good and productive citizen, once abroad. This is visible through the facility in learning the language, the readiness to accept jobs rejected by local population etc.

A third paradoxical observation is the incoherence between the knowledge of the political reality (many young people declare not to be interested and not to follow the current affairs), and the desire to be more listened to.

Factual situation that could shed light on these paradoxes

Concordant findings from the surveys show that among young people in the SEE there are:

- A high proportion of NEET (FES, 2019, p. 7, 66)
- High unemployment rate (World Bank, p. 61)

In this situation, surveys show that the main concerns of young people are economic welfare and security. The gravity of the situation pushes some authors to speak of a generation definitely excluded from productive employment.

Some phenomena that illustrate the seriousness of this situation:

- A high proportion of jobs not in line with the skills of the employee.



- A strong preference for the public sector.
- The indifference of merit ("job security first!") in recruitment.
- Youth tolerance for corruptive practices.
- The importance of belonging to a political party or not (FES, 2019, p. 32).

Faced with this twofold observation (disinterest in politics, still using the political means to solve the problem of employment), some authors speak of "youth early moral corruption and political immaturity". Similar remarks can be made concerning the education sector. Here, surveys show that:

- On the one hand, the perception of corruption (the phenomenon of "buying a diploma") has increased;
- But at the same time the satisfaction of young people in the education system has also increased everywhere in the SEE (except Kosovo, FES, 2019, p. 23).

The hypotheses explaining this situation can be:

Either this satisfaction would reflect a *laissez faire* and a moral degradation of the youth; either another effect offsets this deterioration of the education system (for example a possible increase in the placement rate, which is unlikely, given the gap between job profiles and skills). Another finding is the breaking of equality in access to education and jobs. Paradoxically it is more pronounced in the SEE countries already members of the EU (Croatia, Romania)

Personalization of the public engagement and democracy

Other findings from the surveys that complete this panorama are:

- A preference for the return to the nationalization of the means of production. It goes hand in hand with the preference already mentioned for the welfare state (present in both wings, left and right, of the political spectrum).
- A preference for a strong leader and the authoritarian trend (Figure 3):

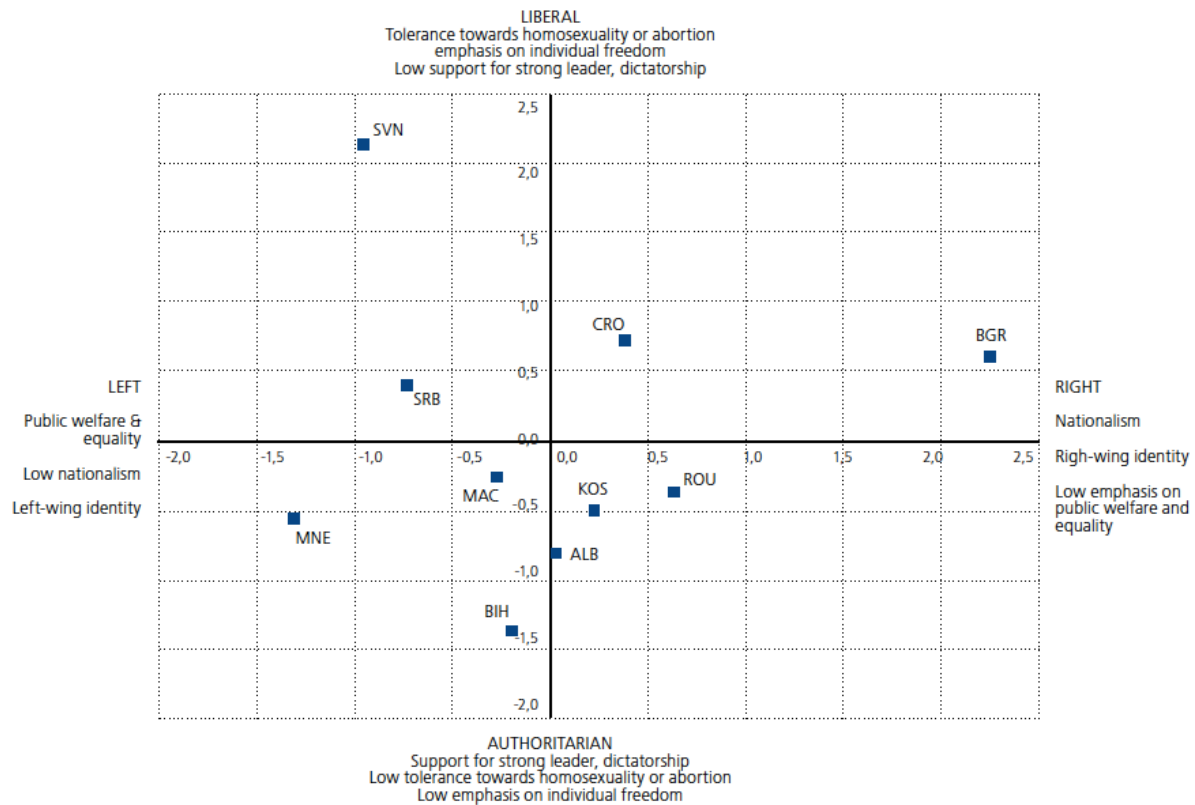


Figure 3: Cross national comparison of youth in SEE in two-dimensional space

Source: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Youth Studies South East Europe 2018-2019

This trend echoes what has already been noticed also in EU and US. The last report of Freedom House uses the expression “democracy in retreat”. In the same line, Foa and Monk (2017) talk about the "deconsolidation of democracy". However, for people in SEE, this phenomenon is perceived as "representative democracy". Confronted to these observations, some authors state that “youth in SEE is an unlikely agent for supporting democratization and EU integration” (Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, p.52).

Conclusions and implications

The preceding developments lead us to four major findings. Discrepancy between the people (specially youth) expectations, and policy or reform orientations. In general, there is a



deterioration of the social dialogue, illustrated by the loss of mutual trust. The masses lose trust in the rulers (who concentrate the legislative effort to heal the interests of the entrepreneurs rather than those of employees, consumers or voters). But governments, in turn, seem suspicious of the masses, whom they consider not mature enough to understand the necessities of reform and too prone to populism, and prefer to rely on privileged groups to gain the reforming impetus. In this cross-tabulation, the classic two-player game (governing / governed) is gradually replaced by four-party interactions (oligarch-rulers / people-tribunes). This leads to a deterioration of social dialogue and, in the most extreme cases, to social fractures. This evolution suggests a change in the political model of our societies. Representative democracy is evolving and sometimes taking on new faces, with interest groups becoming privileged, and the figure of the strong man leader who is seen as the guarantor of democracy. In this context, there is sometimes a deterioration in the attachment of the masses to values such as "individual freedom" or "equality" (see the case of Albania and Kosovo, FES, 2019, p. 57). Divergence between SEE and Occidental countries. These divergences are observable more in the form and the contents of contestation than in the policy reforms. The similarity in the reforms is due to the influence of EU choices in both sets of countries. But a difference is observable in the expectations of the youth. The Occidental youth is much less tempted to idolize the European perspective. The Balkan youth, whose daily life is made up of a reality of corruption and moroseness, need the hope that projects them towards salutary perspectives. This expectation is plenty of potential of deception. Indeed, the European preference is high in countries that are not yet members of the EU and aspire to join, especially at the lowest socio-economic level (Albania, Kosovo and BH, which show to have also the major discrepancy between their trust in local Governments and EU authorities (FES, 2019, p. 57). As can be seen from the examples taken from the French case, in some Western countries the so-called neo-liberal policies are rejected, considered to be of European (UE) inspiration. The egalitarian passions (specially in France) make that the authority of the strong man is rejected. This is claimed in the name of egalitarian passion and a spirit of freedom (classical political liberalism, including individual liberty). Protest Western movements (in France, but also in other countries) reject the European model, considered neoliberal and as harmful to equality, as well as the authority of a strong man, as contrary to freedom and freedom. democracy. In some SEE countries, on the other hand, they aspire to Europe as an opportunity of a much-needed welfare state as a factor of security and equality. And the strong man is



considered compatible with democracy and the welfare state. These paradoxes are heavy of future misunderstandings that are already beginning to materialize (see the decision of the Dutch Parliament on the possible imposition of visas for Albanians traveling in the Schengen area, April 2019). However, still common points between Occidental and SE Europe exist, especially if we consider the failure of the social dialogue and the political recuperation of some youth movements. Divergence between youth and themselves (insincerity of the motivations). The public-private motivations use and corrupt each-other without melting into this synthesis so difficult to realize and already so rare, called "the conscious citizen". Last point (and starting remark of this article): surely related to this fall in sincerity and believe, we observe also a low degree of optimism. The high rate of young people wishing to leave their country sadly illustrate this trend.

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Lectures and political identities in transition Albania

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Abstract

This work deals with some features of political discourse during the transition period in Albania. It is important to note the fact that in recent years, the media has become the center of social debate. Through the media, Albania appears as a special occasion in its long and infinite transition. For Albanians coming from an authoritarian regime in a democratic transition, many elements turned into a unlimited freedom. The leadership power of the elites becomes problematic for the state and society especially when democracy is in its fragile phase. This study aims to understand the best political discourse used over the years. It deals broadly with the political debates of key political actors in transition Albania, through analyzing their discussion of campaigns from 2001 to 2017. In addition to the in-depth analysis of the views of these politicians, it has also been analyzed the marketing strategy use by political elites as a key component of campaign activation. The study goes further, seeing not only on the qualitative side, but by measuring the perception of the electorate. Four hundred and eight participants have become part of the study both from rural and urban areas. Participants were selected in order to have access, both by age and gender. The questionnaire was composed of different sections, divided into sections, where respondents were asked to give their opinions on various issues related to the political discourse of the Albanian elite, marketing strategies, the role of these strategies, with the assessment that it becomes a marketing strategy by the electorate, the role of the media and how they perceive the media respondents in relation to the political discourse of the political parties in Albania. After collecting the data, their analysis was done through the statistical data analysis program called SPSS, from where we extracted results through tables and figures. Subsequently, any question analyzed with SPSS and presented with a chart or graph is inter-extracted to draw conclusions. Then the hypothesis and the discussion of all the results were made. In the end we have summarized all the results in the chapter of the conclusions.

Keywords: Media, political discourse, electorate, political parties



Introduction

The media has often been seen as one of the main players in the dissertation used by political parties. We have even seen playing various roles in support of various political parties, based on their political interests as well. However, in order to understand how the media role is perceived today in the discourse of political parties, we have compiled a questionnaire with 408 respondents, providing a section with 10 different questions aimed at understanding how media is viewed during speeches that use political parties. The first question in this section relates to the type of media that respondents use to get information about political parties, where they have been given a variety of alternatives, namely: television, internet, newspapers or radio. The majority of respondents, 195 respondents or 48.1% said that information about different political issues they receive through television, which makes television the most important source of information about politics. The second type of information the respondents use to get information about political issues is the Internet, a resource that does not take up a bit, but is almost equal to television. The Internet is used by 167 respondents or 41.9% of our respondents. While other media, such as newspapers or radio, are of little importance in obtaining information on political issues, from which more than just 28 respondents or 6.8% stated that they use the newspaper as source for information, while only 12 surveyed by a total of 408 or 3.2% agreed to use radio as a source to get information about Albanian political issues.

Table 1

Information about political issues, mainly about the political party I support, I always get through the media

	Frequency	Percentage
Top chanel	118	28.9
Klan	165	40.6
Tvsh	16	3.9
Ora news	19	4.5
News 24	90	22.1
Total	408	100.0

Regarding the TV channels they follow to get information for the Albanian politics, 4 alternatives were presented to respondents, considered as the most watched TV channels. The



most watched media channels from our survey respondents were "TV Klan", followed by 163 respondents or 40.6%, which necessarily makes this channel a good and reliable source for collecting information about parties and political issues. The second television channel followed by our respondents was "Top Channel", selected by 118 respondents or 28.9% of them. "News 24" has been ranked as the third most watched visual media by our respondents, with 89 respondents or 22.1%. While media like "Ora News" or Albanian National Television "Tvsh" have been selected as the least widely used visual media by respondents to obtain data on political issues, respectively 3.9% for TVSH and 4.5% for Ora News.

Table 2

Information about politics, mainly about the political party I support, I always get through online media

	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	255	62.3
Twitter	34	8.4
WEB	110	26.9
Another	9	2.3
Total	408	100.0

Table 3

Information about political issues, mainly about the political party I support, I always get through the media.

	Frequency	Percentage
Television	196	48.1
Internet	171	41.9
News paper	29	6.8
Radio	12	3.2

Apart from the visual media, respondents were also asked about the online media they use to get information. Among the media mentioned here were Facebook, Twitter, various web pages or other online media. Based on the responses of the respondents, we came to the following conclusions: More than half, 252 respondents or 62.3% said they use Facebook as a source to get data on political issues. Being one of the most widely used global networks today on the global



level, there was no such source to be informed about different political issues. Web, different pages were the second most used tool for respondents to get information. Being one of the most widely used global networks today on the global level, there was no such source to be informed about different political issues. Different websites were the second most used tool for respondents to get information about political issues, with 106 respondents or 26.9%. Twitter seemed to be a bit used by our respondents, with only 32 respondents or 8.4%, while a small share of respondents in this study, 8 respondents or 2.3% stated that they use other sources of information to obtain of the data.

Another question related to the role of the media in Albanian political discourse is to reveal how respondents assess the political messages that political parties mediate through the media. In this case, the respondents presented three alternatives, from where they could choose what they considered most appropriate. Given the data we collected, most respondents, 208 in a total of 408 respondents or 51% stated that they have no estimate of the messages that follow the political parties in Albania. Another, 126 respondents or 31.2% think that the messages that the political parties in Albania are conducting are positive, while the lowest percentage of respondents, 17.9% or 73 respondents think that the media convey a negative message. The results with regard to this question are somehow interesting, since as there are those who have no rating, on the other hand, we have those who have a positive.

Table 4

How do you assess the messages that political parties communicate through the media

	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	131	31.2
Negative	69	17.9
I have no rating		51.0
Total	408	100.0

The last question of this section is about the program on socio-economic issues by the parties and how clearly and properly the media reflect this program. Respondents are given a range of alternatives. In this case, the majority of respondents, 216 or 52.9%, think that the media clearly "clearly" reflects the program of political parties on socio-economic issues. 85 respondents or 21.4% stated that they did not know if the media clearly and correctly reflected the political party program on economic and social issues. According to 57 respondents or 18.5% of them, the media do not "clearly" clearly and correctly reflect the program of political parties on socio-



economic issues, while the smallest percentage, only 7.1%, stated that the media reflect "always "In a correct and correct manner the program on socio-economic issues.

Table 5

Do you think that the media correctly and clearly reflect the program on economic and social issues of political parties?

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	28	7.1
Rarely	220	52.9
Never	73	18.5
I do not know	87	21.4

Methodology

This study has utilized a mixed methodology. The study is based on quantitative methodology and qualitative methodology (to carry out the analysis of existing literature). The study methodology is in line with the objectives and goals set out at the beginning of the study. The methodology used in this paper combines primary and secondary data. Initially this study provided the necessary literature on the issue raised in the review, under which hypotheses and research questions were subsequently raised. The literature of this study has served as a primary source since the literature has helped us not only to raise research questions and hypotheses but, considering the issues addressed throughout the literature, we have also been able to compile the questions of the questionnaire for our study. Both data types have served in the analysis conducted in this study and have helped the methodology used to see how the political elite of the Albanian elite was built throughout the transition. The questionnaire is structured in nine different sections, each consisting of a number of questions. The primary data analysis is performed with the SPSS statistical package.

Conclusions

Study participants have stated that they have no estimate of how the media conveys messages of political parties. Given the data, it can be said that the interest of the electorate to be informed about the political parties through the media is low and that the electorate does not trust the media and why they follow it or use different sources to be informed about political parties. These results lead us to the conclusion that the media is not a reliable source of information for



the electorate and that the media have no influence on their selection. Regarding the data on the role of the media in the discourse of political parties, we came to the conclusion that the electorate has no confidence in the media and that the latter has no influence on the selection of the parties that they will vote for. Moreover, according to the data, the media are not correct in tracking the messages that political parties seek to convey and do not properly reflect party programs. The study showed that the electorate initially withdraws from the program of a political party, then by the party it self

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Strategic Issues in University Leadership and Global Cooperation

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Abstract

This paper establishes that public universities play an important role in shaping foreign policy, discover, create and disseminate knowledge. Public research universities have broadened their scope of operations ultimately and expanded international experiences and frontiers of knowledge for students, industry and campuses at large. This essay is based on two main pillars: it tackles the leadership challenges that public universities will face in the next decade according to Prof. Dr. C. D. (Dan) Mote, Jr.¹⁹, who addresses the Global Drivers of the University Vision and delves into understanding leadership responsibility; strategies in the promotion of Global Engineering Initiatives shaped by various higher education institutions across continents and illustrated with success stories on the cooperation between Industry, Academia and Government.

Keywords: *C. D. (Daniel) Mote, Jr., University Leadership, Engineering Education, Partnership and International Engagement.*

Introduction

Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States once stated: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." The paper aims to explore the strategic issues facing public universities as observed by Prof. Dr. C. Daniel Mote, Jr. and shares a few successful projects and international university partnerships implemented by various universities in the United States, Asia and Africa. Overtime, university responsibilities have steadily expanded on both new and old frontiers, subsequently guidance and services provided to

¹⁹ C. D. Mote, Jr. is President of the National Academy of Engineering; former President of the University of Maryland (1998-2010); and the Glen L. Martin Institute Professor of Engineering, University of Maryland – College Park, Maryland.



students, industry, communities, governments, the nation and international structures – including broad services to society – today rank alongside teaching and research as primary university responsibilities. Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, author of U. S. Declaration of Independence and the first advocate of the XVIII Century Education Reform, in a letter stated: “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be,” the Founding Father accurately ascertained that freedom depends on self-government: harnessing courage, self-reliance, preserving responsibility and moderation. Jefferson’s philosophy consisted that Education contributes to both knowledge and virtues that shape a self-governing citizen.²⁰

Furthermore, faithful to his Enlightenment values, Thomas Jefferson argued that an ignorant citizenry is bound to succumb to tyranny.²¹ In the very same wavelength, Dr. Mote explores certain strategic strands and delves into a paramount framework of Global Drivers of the University Vision, which consists in: Accelerating change; Accessibility and inexpensive global communication; Partnerships and engagement paradigm; Globalization; Expanding Access to Higher Education; Expanding opportunities for talent; Cost control; Innovation; Great Global Problems. All of these vital concepts in the application of leadership skills in a public university of the XXI century are followed by successful partnerships that are currently making a real impact in the globalization and glocalization of university campuses and improving performance of future engineers and professionals while tackling difficult issues with civility and focus on solutions and not doctrine.

Accelerating Change

On October 20-22, 2013 was organized at the Palmer House Hilton, the GEDC 2013 Chicago Conference in Chicago, Illinois (USA); under the main theme of “Online Digital Education and Transformed Faculty Roles”.²² In this prestigious global event participated over 250 deans of

²⁰<https://www.dailysignal.com/2013/04/14/18th-century-advice-thomas-jefferson-on-education-reform/>

²¹<https://www.libertarianism.org/publications/essays/excursions/thomas-jefferson-public-education-part-1>

²²<http://www.gedcouncil.org/sites/default/files/content/GEDC%202013%20Chicago%20Conference%20ReportFinal.pdf>



engineering colleges and a dozen of University Chancellors from over ninety countries across five continents. On the main plenary session of this conference, Dr. C. D. Mote Jr. was the keynote speaker and delivered a speech on Strategic Issues Facing Public Universities. The following is a summary and excerpt of Dr. Mote's relevant and ten break-through global thrusts that provide incredible value to public and private universities at large.

In his introductory remarks Dr. C. D. (Dan) Mote states: "With our world society experiencing waves of accelerating changes in many different arenas – information, economic, financial, environmental, security, energy, disease, food, and water to name a few – research universities find themselves standing on the curl of all these waves and trying to not get 'rolled' by them. The dynamism of this new environment necessitates a public university's strategic vision be re-framed frequently because its underpinning mission and service responsibilities, opportunities and challenges are changing continuously and often significantly. Change cannot be ignored. For instance none of the top-ten U. S. Employment opportunities in 2010 existed in 2004, and most of the key issues facing U. S. society today were not primary a decade earlier either. With increasing responsibilities to global societies comes the obligation to recognize and serve their rapidly changing realities. Today the ivory tower is not visible in the rear view mirror.

Accelerating change results in a shortening time horizon for response whether we speak of business decisions, product life cycles, employment opportunities, disasters, or research opportunities. The connectivity that links talent, markets, finance, manufacturing, research, development, service and education globally has expanded opportunities for industries, universities and individuals alike. There are diminishingly few national companies remaining. And where people earlier migrated at great personal risk to opportunities for a better life, today those with talent can often 'migrate through cyberspace' to opportunities. This globally connected society requires the higher education systems that serve it to be strategically global too. Universities are designed to not change rapidly. University cultures and governance processes slow response to change even while change is accelerating in surrounding society. This reality challenges university leadership to be prescient about change so that the university can be less buffered by it."



Dr. Mote's opening remarks were followed by strategic issues that are of paramount importance to university leadership and international academic cooperation.

Strategic Issue 1- The combination of global connectivity and accelerating change will increasingly create abrupt disruptions. Universities must develop the mindset and processes to respond to disruptive change.

Strategic Issue 2- More effective use of communication technologies in essentially every aspect of university operation is a primary university challenge and opportunity. Communications and networks position Universities to engage on a global footing and many do. But most have not taken full advantage of the available communication capabilities in part because they change so fast.

Strategic Issue 3- "Partnerships and engagement" on a global platform will be imbedded in the university vision and will characterize university operations for many if not most of its functions. Partnerships and engagement to accelerate innovation is the basis of relationships today whether we speak of countries, companies, universities or people. The assembly of talent, resources, and capabilities to accelerate 'getting things done' quickly and efficiently are the drivers. Universities must engage, must have impact, and must do it today. Today's students also want to 'do it themselves' or 'do it together' and to 'learn while doing.' Relevance and substance are tied together for them.

Strategic Issue 4- Universities must prepare students to prosper in global careers, responsibilities and understanding. "Working around the world" for them will be similar to "working around the country" was for students a generation earlier. Globalization connects people, industries, universities, and countries well beyond its initial association with business.

Strategic Issue 5- The footprint of research universities will enlarge to cover foreign governments, inter-governmental organizations and multi-national corporations for services, research and education both abroad and at home. As universities enlarge their responsibilities globally, they must ensure that their home bases understand the value of their global engagement. This understanding cannot be taken for granted.



Strategic Issue 6- Universities will create definite – term programs abroad, programs having a defined beginning, middle and end. Indefinite – term program commitments abroad will become unusual.

Strategic Issue 7- Universities will focus on serving defined higher educational niches because of the expanding range of possible missions.

Strategic Issue 8- Demand driven student expansions will create significant budgetary, facility and student qualification challenges for public universities if significant supplemental public support is not provided.

Strategic Issue 9- Talent, especially in-demand talent, is the coin of the global realm and a long term issue. Universities should ensure priority attention to nurturing this talent.

Strategic issue 10- Universities should nurture global talent in leadership, management and “current skills” for professionals across disciplines through targeted degree and certificate programs.

Research projects in Engineering Colleges across continents

a. Republic of Uganda – Makerere University (MU)

Prof. Dr. Henry Alinaitwe is the Principal of the College of Engineering Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) at Makerere University. Earlier, Prof. Henry Alinaitwe was the Deputy Principal, Dean, Deputy Dean, and program coordinator at Makerere University; a premier institution and the largest University in Uganda. Dr. Alinaitwe has helped shape programs that brought together College programs that combined academic training from the Faculties of Engineering and Fine Arts.

In an interview for the secretariat of Global Engineering Deans Council (GEDC) Henry Alinaitwe stated that: “The College of Engineering is one of the most active bodies at Makerere University. It has 3,300 students of whom 250 are graduate students and the remainder is undergraduates studying in various disciplines including engineering, design, art and



technology." Dr. Henry has spearheaded a regular review of Curriculum with a strong input from the industry stakeholders. Currently, the college has secured a grant of UK Pounds 140,000 from the Royal Academy of Engineering of United Kingdom that is being used for Enriching Engineering Education including review of the curriculum. The funding by the Royal Academy of Engineering is towards a partnership that has seven universities in the region. This project includes forging Higher Education Partnerships for the Sub Sahara Africa region. Dr. Henry Alinaitwe is the principal contact person of this partnership.

In 2014 – 2015, Henry Alinaitwe was chair of the regional collaboration for Engineering in Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. Under this collaboration, they organize engineering and technology conferences on a rotational basis. Henry has organized a number of Regional Collaboration conferences. Henry Alinaitwe has chaired the regional collaboration initiative for East Africa. He is the vice chairman (East Africa) of African Engineering Dean's Council as well as Africa Engineering Education Association. Dr. Alinaitwe's college won a World Bank grant and is hosting the Africa Centre of Excellence on materials product development and nanotechnology. The College is also hosting the East Africa centre for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Henry has attracted and maintained a presidential innovation fund where the president provides funds for innovation; there have been innovation projects in transport, energy and others.

b. United States of America - Michigan State University (MSU)

Trigger for Transformation

A persistent disinvestment in the College of Engineering over a period of time due to central administration's perception of poor performance and a lack of adequate ROI from the college, causing introspection among the faculty.

Transformation Steps

- Implemented a workload policy that recognized the tripartite mission of the college in supporting teaching, research and service, and the role and responsibility of each faculty member in delivering these services equitably and fairly.



- The Workload policy played a key role in contributing to a three-fold increase in research expenditures in eight years and significant improvements in teaching quality as measured through student evaluations.
- Elevation of a record number of MSU faculty members to professional fellow status.
- MSU launched a program that engaged over 2400 elementary, middle and high school students in on-Campus STEM related programs.
- Started a program for training middle and high school teachers in organizing STEM education and related programs in schools.
- Dr. Satish Udpa (MSU Executive Vice President for Administration) has launched a program called **CoRE** that brings community and corporate partners to bring real-world expertise and challenges into the classroom and residential environment, reinforcing the relevance of engineering in solving global challenges.
- MSU launched a backpack to briefcase career services program to assist students in transitioning to the workplace and advancing their professional opportunities.
- MSU started an early engineering student program that provides unmatched learning opportunities within a supportive community that encourages academic, professional and personal achievement.
- Started a program for increasing faculty and students from underrepresented groups.
- Launched high impact programs for improving retention of students from underserved communities.
- MSU executed a program to increase the number of traditionally underrepresented doctoral degree graduates for faculty positions.

c. United States of America - Marquette University (MU)

Dr. Kristina Ropella (Dean, Opus College of Engineering)²³, along with some incredible staff at Marquette University has created **E-Lead** (Engineers in the Lead), its undergraduate engineering leadership program to provide intentional leadership development for MU's future technical leaders. It is a three-year program that students complete above and beyond their regular engineering curriculum. The program has formal courses, field/industry experiences, and a capstone leadership experience. In this project, Marquette University also includes students from the college of business and college of communication in some of its curriculum. This is its

²³<https://mcw.marquette.edu/biomedical-engineering/kristina-ropella.php>



5th year of implementation and the transformation of Marquette University students has been remarkable as observed by fellow students, faculty, employers and parents. MU is also sharing its best practices with other academic institutions and industry.

One of the greatest results is that MU E-Lead program has triggered and heavily influenced new faculty leadership programs and new staff leadership development programs across campus. Intentional leadership development is now becoming a practice at MU where it has not happened in the past.

Dr. Ropella has helped lead the MU **KEEN program** (Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network). Through a large grant from the Kern Foundation, the university has joined forces with 23 other colleges of engineering across the country to share best practices and transform curriculum and co-curricular activity to develop an entrepreneurial mindset in both their students and faculty. These initiatives have also ignited a new Community of Practice among their engineering professors whereby 40-50% of the faculty meet for 6-8 weeks each semester to review scholarship in engineering education, try new teaching methods, share successes and failures and share best practices that improve student learning and engagement. MU's work with the KEEN program now includes faculty and staff from the 707 Hub (the new student innovation center on campus), the College of Communication and the College of Business.

Furthermore, Dr. Ropella is currently working with faculty and staff to explore and create new curriculum that develops an **Ignatian mindset** in MU students, such that they routinely reflect on and evaluate how their work as engineers is impacting humanity and the greater good. In an interview for GEDC quarterly journal, Dr. Kristina Ropella stated: "It is not just about ethics, but about a greater calling, about doing the right thing and about doing good for all of humanity. Whether it is the technology they are developing, the way they lead their companies, the way they behave as investors or stockholders, students are continually reflecting on their impact on humanity and are prepared to speak up or act for a more just world."

Dr. Ropella has helped to lead the creation of a joint work between the department of biomedical engineering and two private institutions – Marquette University and the Medical College of Wisconsin so that future engineers, scientists and physicians are working more collaboratively and closely in educating MU's biomedical engineers as well and physicians. Moreover, the



partnership should provide an easier pathway from bench top to bedside as our researchers translate new discoveries and knowledge into real solutions and improved patient care. Dr. Ropella is working closely with the dean of the College of Business to create Bridge to Business programs that will allow MU engineering students and early graduates to quickly come up to speed with their business acumen without having to pursue a full MBA. Marquette Engineering is also working on some new innovation spaces and programs that bridge manufacturing, supply chain, and data analytics to address challenges of Industry 4.0, the Digital Thread, automation and artificial intelligence.

d. United Arab Emirates - American University in Dubai (AUD)

American University in Dubai has introduced: a new process to encourage faculty research, by allowing faculty to buyout of teaching while incentivizing them to publish in top journals; a new blended learning course that all students have to take in their third year, the course involves a combination of lecturing, hands-on activities, and practical experience on site; an initiative titled "software across the curriculum" where AUD made software integration and programming an essential part of all design courses.

e. United States of America - University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM)

UWM has an access mission, which is meant to ensure that a wide range of potential students have an opportunity to get a college education. This presents two challenges for engineering: (1) makes it difficult to recruit top students, (2) UWM has many students that struggle with the rigors of the engineering curriculum. To address these challenges, UWM has established two relevant initiatives.

Offer scholarships to top students. While scholarships are not unique, the College of Engineering structures them in two helpful ways. First, the scholarships get progressively larger if the students do well at UWM. Thus, the College of Engineering encourages and rewards success, and encourages students to remain at UWM instead of transferring to other schools.

The College of Engineering couples the scholarship with an undergraduate research stipend. In this way the students get more money, and they have an enriching experience that has been shown to improve student success and also gets them connected to our faculty, and thus, more



likely to stay, and graduate from UWM. This has helped UWM Engineering attract, retain, and graduate more top students in its program.

According to Dean Brett A. Peters²⁴; "UWM has developed a Student Success Center (SSC) to support early-stage students. This Center will provide academic support, but it will also be a general resource for students on a wide range of issues: help transitioning to college life, time management, financial management, career planning, academic planning, etc. Many of UWM students are first generation, from low-income backgrounds, are working part (or full) time, or even have families of their own to manage and support."

The UWM - SSC is a helpful resource to support these students and ensure they have the best opportunity for success. Part of the academic planning process is the incorporation of a meta-major concept, which some schools are adopting. This concept allows students to more easily change majors to related areas if their first choice seems unattainable for academic or other reasons. The SSC works closely with the UWM students to ensure that they are following a successful path and not just delaying the inevitable change that is required (and incurring more student debt all the while).

f. Republic of India - Chitkara University (CU)

In a publication for GEDC in December, 2017, Dean Rajnish Sharma of Chitkara University shared the following academic cooperation within his College. Through its Research and Innovation Network (CURIN), Chitkara University has made significant transformations in the last 5 years to meet the challenges faced by the Indian University Education System.

CU has embraced active collaborations with various industries such as ARM, Texas Instruments, Mitsubishi, Schneider, nVidia, nXP Semiconductors and many others. A large number of awareness seminars were conducted to involve CU students at their first year to invoke a spirit of innovation. As a result, more than 125 patents have been filed in the last 3 years.

²⁴ Dean, UWM College of Engineering and Applied Science; Dr. Peters has received a Ph.D., Industrial and Systems Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology (1992). <https://uwm.edu/engineering/people/peters-ph-d-brett/>



Engineering schools particularly at Chitkara University are extremely pro-active in organizing various activities by professional societies like IEEE, ACM and IUCEE. In the recent years, Electrical Engineering school connected with IEEE to organize an International conference (WECON 2016) on CU campus. Similarly, the edition of ACM COMPUTE conference was organized at Chitkara University campus.

Chitkara University has been observing an excellent practice of inviting and hosting Faculty members of institutions from across the globe for a dedicated week. 9th Global week was observed from October 30th, 2017 to November 4th, 2017.

As part of this activity, Faculty member from a partner institution teaches a fully fledged course in one week of duration. Chitkara University covers all local hospitality expenses, during Faculty member's stay in Chandigarh. In the last 9 editions of Global Week, Chitkara University has hosted over 200 Faculty members from all regions of the world.

Dean Sharma states: "We as a country are really struggling with high quality Faculty members. To meet that challenge, Chitkara University has been inviting a large number of professional trainers from various industries and other expert training agencies. Owing to short fall of good quality trainers, CU has been spending heavily on bringing top leadership training experts on campus so as to make sure that students are able to draw maximum benefit of their core expertise."

g. Republic of Turkey - Anadolu University (AU)

In late 2017, Dr. Tuncay DÖĞEROĞLU, Dean of Engineering at the Anadolu University, shared some of her successful experiences at this university within the venue of WEEF-GEDC 2018 in Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA).²⁵

Anadolu University has led the Establishment of a Process Governance Model in the Faculty of Engineering. Under this concept it was decided in May 2011 to prepare a two years long project that would implement the principles of management skills at AU. Furthermore, the Faculty of Engineering at Anadolu University was honored with the prize of EFQM Excellency Award of

²⁵<http://gedcouncil.org/weef-gedc-2018-albuquerque>



Turkey that was launched in 1992 by KalDer, The Turkish Quality Association. This prize is given only to organizations that exceed a certain minimum level and have applied the EFQM Excellency Model at best. Anadolu University's Faculty of Engineering succeeded in getting this invaluable prize on its first application in the field of the Educational Sector. Dr. DÖĞEROĞLU stated that: "Indeed, this award is the result of 10 years continuing efforts and the integration of several processes including the Strategic Planning Process, the MUDEK Accreditation Process, the Risk Management Process, and the Internal Control Process. Expressed within the terms of the EFQM model, successful applications in the input criteria of the model including Leadership, Employees, Strategies, and Collaborations & Resources and the successful governance of education, research, social employment and other administrative processes based on these applications, the positive reflections of the students, learning environment enabled the Faculty of Engineering at Anadolu University to get this important prize."

Conclusions

In his keynote address at the University of Southern California - Viterbi School of Engineering²⁶, Dr. C. D. Mote stated: "Engineering is particularly full of various leadership models. Before you take on a leadership role, you have to understand leadership responsibility." On the same event in California, Dr. Mote argued that "managers are responsible for the tactical executions necessary to achieve a certain goal while leaders rather determine the overall strategic vision and set those goals. But first, they must know who they are leading." These people fall into what Mote refers to as the "cone of responsibility," inside of which all team members reside. Dr. Mote continued: "Execution requires vision; "a plan to bring everyone within the cone of responsibility to accept, or better yet, adopt the vision as their own. This is where the fun actually starts, getting everyone on the same team." Moreover, an overwhelming future trend is that Universities will be challenged to make adjustments in many sectors (faculty, programs, academic degrees, locations, facilities, methods, expectations, and gender ratio and student ethnic diversity) to satisfy the access-demand pressure. Four year, two year, accelerated, on-

²⁶<https://viterbischool.usc.edu/news/2017/09/nae-president-c-d-mote-jr-on-understanding-and-executing-leadership-dorman-lecture/>



line, in-person, mixed on-line and in-person, on demand, self-paced, “degree credit for life skills,” and plans of “two degrees for the price of one”, a growth of programs with higher student convenience and access, will become more common. In conclusion, Dr. Mote’s strategic thrusts are in concert with the vision, aspirations and mission of Luarasi University, as Chancellor Et’hemRuka²⁷ stated: “we aspire to bring a higher value on the professional lives of every graduate. Five years of study are culminated extraordinarily fast and our students will become attorneys and economists in Albania’s labor market, as a result our commitment is ever more pertinent to embrace European trends in university leadership and in the promotion of cutting-edge academic programs.”

²⁷<https://balkanweb.com/cel-vitin-e-ri-akademik-rektori-ruka-luarasi-zgjedhja-me-e-mire/>



Evaluation of teaching quality at universities based on statistical methods the case of the "Luarasi" University College

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Abstract

The assessment of the quality of teaching at universities is today a very important topic, especially when the significant growth of student's number was followed by more and more institutions of higher education. In other side, the evaluation of teaching standards in higher education, is a very complex and complicated process, because it is related with that type of knowledge that higher education institutions offer. In this point of view, there are different models and procedures which are focused on how this process can be realized. Among these models, the main idea of the paper is processing of a database in order to obtain aggregate indicators, which can be used for a comprehensive assessment of teaching in universities. Concerning the presented model, the experience of the University College "Luarasi" (LUC) in Tirana is considered. The proposed model is based in two type set of data: (a). student assessment and (b). indicators that reflect the results of the scientific research work of the departments and special faculties of LUC. In this aspect, the specific criteria considered as indicators of the quality of teaching are grouped into 5 groups: 1. Teaching; 2. Assessment of the lecturers; 3. Academic counseling of students; 4. The quality of curricula and programs; 5. The performance of scientific-research work. For each of these groups an aggregate indicator is calculated. Using different specific weights by groups, a general indicator for the University and for each Faculty has been calculated. Furthermore, the paper continues with the statistical analysis of these indicators aiming to present the strengths and weaknesses of a comprehensive process such as the process of teaching. The model used shows that evaluation of teaching process in general in LUC is high; however, evaluation of criteria "research performance and scientific activity" is low. Furthermore, the results showed that in general, evaluation is higher for professors in Bachelor than professors of Master programs, and in same time, full time professors have higher score than part time professors.

Key words: *higher education; quality assurance; teaching assessment*



Introduction

In the recent years, the growing interest of society in higher education has undoubtedly raised the number of students seeking to attend high schools and universities. However, the increase of this number has led and is accompanied by a considerable increase of the number of public or private higher education institutions. This phenomenon, which has been emphasized in the West, (USA and Europe), since the 1980s, has affected the Albanian society especially after 2003 with the native private higher education institutions. This situation has logically caused more attention in the evaluation of quality in higher education. First, this is reflected in the society, where state institutions and agencies should guarantee to the public a qualitative investment in university education. On the other hand, the quality of higher education is increasingly being considered by the higher education institutions themselves, which in terms of competition require the continuous increase of the quality of education they offer to attract as many students as possible. In this regard, today in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) there are standardized procedures which aim at a more complete and dynamic assessment of quality in higher education. In Albania, a considerable work from this point of view has been achieved by the "Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education" (QAAHE). However, despite the formulation of standard procedures, it should be noted that quality assessment in higher education is often not easy. First, this is related to its multidimensional character; the quality of higher education is related to a variety of characteristics that this process presupposes to meet the "declared", or often even implied, needs of society (UNESCO, 1998). According to article 11 of the "World Higher Education Declaration" published by the United Nations, the quality of higher education is considered as a multi-dimensional concept associated with functions such as teaching, academic programs, research and scholarships, academics and students, buildings and infrastructure (UNESCO, 1998).

In this sense, the quality assessment in higher education is necessary to be performed in different forms and methods, such as the internal and external evaluation, in the view of institutional and academic profile, performed by national and international agencies, etc., attempted in this way to achieve a more complex and objective evaluation. Following what is clear, that assessment of higher education institution will be accompanied by a set of realized standards that will evaluate



different aspects of the teaching process. In this regard, it is necessary also to build an overall indicator that would aggregate all considered standards in a process of evaluation. Such indicator can be concretized, for example, in the ranking of higher education institutions, usually carried out by specialized agencies, accreditation for a period, depending on the level of standards met, etc.

Looking at the complexity of the problem, this paper tries to present a specific method of quality assessment of higher education institutions based on statistical data processing. One of the advantages of the presented model is that the evaluation can be performed not only according to specific characteristics of the assessment test, but also through one indicator, we may have a synthesis summary for the teaching process in general. On the other hand, these methods may be more flexible, as the characteristics taken in the assessment may be different by being determined by educational institutions themselves. Considering their content, these methods serve more to the internal quality assessment process, when higher education institutions themselves are interested to recognize their level of teaching quality.

Literature review

The process of teaching evaluation in higher education institutions, both theoretically and practically, is reflected in many studies from different researches and authors (Nutsche, 2008). In general, these studies evaluate the quality of the teaching process mainly in two points of view:

a. How high school study programs match the needs of the labor market. This way of assessing the quality of higher education is very significant and meaningful because it is based on the bond between the Universities and the final goal of higher education: student employment in the labor market, (Corominas, Saurina&Villar, 2010). On the other hand, this approach of assessment involves difficulties mainly related to the quantitative and qualitative determination of the data taken into consideration in the study, as well as the cost of conducting such study projects.

b. How higher education institutions meet the required standards. This evaluation approach is related to the quality assessment of the curriculum by evaluating its components such as curriculum, staff academic level, infrastructure, etc. (QAA, 2012). Such practices conclude in building a set of standards that characterize the quality of teaching and which should be



evaluated. These standards are approved and checked by a legal assurance agency and are included in a Quality Code. This code is the main document for all processes and procedures of quality assurance in higher education. It sets out state quality standards, mandatory for implementation by higher education institutions (QAAHE, 2019).

As far as statistical methods are concerned, in the literature these methods mainly deal with the analysis of dependents of higher education quality from the factors that impact this process. From this point of view, we can mention the work of M. Attanasio and V. Capursi, "Statistical Methods for Evaluation of Undergraduate Systems" (Attanasio, M. & Capursi, V. 2012). The philosophy of building statistical models has to do with two main issues: first obtaining information, namely its measurement and second processing of data, namely the evaluation of the results (Astin, 2012).

While statistical models for assessing the quality of teaching can be found in many works, it should be said that statistical processing for aggregating the results of teaching aspects into a single indicator is not very well known. In this respect it can be mention the statistical model used by Murtadh M. Hamad and Shumos T. Hammadi (Hamad, M. & Hammadi, Sh. 2011)

Methodology

The methodology used in this work is based on the idea of building a single indicator for assessing the quality process of teaching, which can merge its different aspects into one, using a statistical model. Concretization of the model is done in case of valuation of teaching process at "Luarasi" University College. Research approach is based mainly on descriptive and statistical methods. The data base taken in analyze used mainly the student assessment about the level of teaching process in this institution in the first semester of the academic year 2018 – 2019, in both degree's level: bachelor and master, as well as for all three Faculties: Law; Economic; Information Technology and Innovation. Student evaluation are based on 15 characters, which are grouped into 4 main groups (criteria): 1. teaching (7 characteristic); 2. evaluation of knowledge (3 characteristics), 3. curriculum evaluation (3 characteristics); 4. academic advising (2 characteristics).



Given the total number of students in KUL (1035) and the teaching subjects, (about 4 per student in one semester), the population on this research was about 4.140. The total number of students' evaluations was 2826, it means that the sample of research was more as 68%.

For each of the 15 characteristics in data base, students gave an estimate from 1 to 5, where 1 means "less satisfied" and 5 means "very satisfied". Calculating the "satisfaction" level for the entire group of criteria is based on the average assessment of the characteristics included in the respective group. In addition to above 4 criteria, in the quality assessment the criterion of research performance and scientific activity of the academic staff was also considered. Considering the subjective difficulties to evaluate "research" criterion, we were based on quotations of publishing activity of academic staff based on "h-index and "g-index", calculated on-line by "Publish or Perish 6.45" software²⁸.

In this way, here the 5 criteria for assessing the quality of the teaching process would be:

1. Teaching
2. Knowledge evaluation
3. Academic advising
4. The curriculum
5. Research performance and scientific activity

In the statistic model, the above factors have been taken in consideration with different weight, in order to obtain much more objective assessment of all the criteria taken together. Thus, "Teaching" is considered to have a weight of 40%; "Evaluation of knowledge" 10%; "Academic advising" 10%, "Curricula" 30%, and "Scientific Research" 10%.

Results and discussions

Luarasi and Faculties in general

Based on the methodology described above, for the three Faculties of "Luarasi" and for University College as a whole, the results of assessment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

²⁸The content of these indexes is provided in: <https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>.(Source: Google Scholar)



Evaluation results

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	4.61	4.61	4.56	4.55	0.73	4.20
Economic	4.56	4.59	4.53	4.49	0.79	4.16
Information Technologies & Innovation	4.41	4.44	4.42	4.35	0.85	4.04
Luarasi UC	4.51	4.56	4.52	4.45	0.78	4.13

Apart from "scientific research", the results of all other criteria can be considered quite positive: their level is over 4 (5 max.). For the University these results vary from 4.45 (Curricula) to 4.56 (Knowledge evaluation); while the overall score for "Luarasi" is 4.13.

Table 1 shows that index of "research performance" is very low: from 0,73 to 0,85 and 0,78 for Luarasi as a whole. It should be noted that this indicator is not calculated based on student evaluation but based on another criterion ("Perish or Publish" on-line software).

According to Faculties, except "scientific research", data show no significant differences between different criteria. However, Faculty of Law seems to be better in first two criteria, "teaching" and "valuation of knowledge" (4.61), while Faculty of Economic and Faculty of Information Technologies & Innovation are better in "valuation of knowledge" (respectively 4.59 and 4.44).

In statistical terms, the distribution of data should be analyzed. For this purpose, it is used the coefficient of variation (CV). This coefficient shows the percentage of standard deviation from the average survey result. The smaller this indicator, the closer is the average deviation of the data to the average value for the whole observation, (table 1), or said otherwise, the presented average indexes in Table 1 are more reliable. Coefficient of Variation (CV) results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Coefficient of Variation (CV)

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	0.16	0.17	0.19	0.18	1.56	0.31
Economic	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.18	1.87	0.35
Information Technologies & Innovation	0.20	0.19	0.20	0.21	1.42	0.32
Luarasi UC	0.19	0.19	0.20	0.19	1.65	0.34



Data show that the standard deviation for the first four characteristics (besides scientific research) varies from 16% to 20%. While for "research performance" the value of CV is greater than 1. This is not normal; however, it can be explained by the fact that the average value for this characteristic is very close to 1 (see table 1). For "Luarasi" in total Coefficient of Variation (CV) is about 34%, which is confederated significant.

Regarding the reliability of data base, is analyzed the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, the closer to 1 is the coefficient, the more reliable is the data base. The value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in our case is shown in the table 3:

Table 3
Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.978	0.979	15

The value of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.978, very close to number 1, which means that the data base is very reliable.

Another indicator that can be considered in statistical analyses is the first quartile. The value of this indicator means, that 25% of participant valuated the characteristic less than a calculated value, (first quartile), while 75% of observation have valuated the characteristic more as the value of first quartile. This indicator is calculated only for student estimates, because for "research" it is quite small. For this reason, the weight of this characteristic, (10%), is divided between "evaluation" and "academic advising" (which weight in table 4 is considerate respectively 15% and 15%).

Table 4
First quartile

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	LUC (total)
Law	4.50	4.67	4.50	4.33	4.54
Economic	4.50	4.33	4.50	4.00	4.47
Information Technologies & Innovation	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.67	4.10
Luarasi UC	4.50	4.33	4.00	4.00	4.39



The results can be considered positive. At University level first quartiles shows that 75% of the estimates are above 4.39 and only 25% are under this level. Here the most positive is the teaching indicator where 75% of students have a rating of 4.5 (out of maximum). However, the value of “research” index is low. Since the value of 1-st quartile for this indicator is very close to 0, we have calculated the value of 3-rd quartile, which means that only 25% of estimates are above the calculated value and other 75% are below of this.

Table 5
Third quartile

Faculty	Research
Law	1
Economic	1
Information Technologies & Innovation	1
Luarsasi UC	1

The table 5 shows that for all three faculties as well for University as whole, only 25% of the evaluating are above 1, (very low), other 75% are even below this value.

“Bachelor” and “Master” Programs

Further analyze was conducted by study programs: bachelor and master. These results are presented respectively in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6
Assessment results in bachelor’s Programs

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	4.60	4.60	4.55	4.55	0.13	4.13
Economic	4.59	4.61	4.55	4.51	0.36	4.14
Information Technologies & Innovation	4.46	4.49	4.45	4.40	0.01	4.00
Luarsasi UC	4.53	4.58	4.53	4.47	0.21	4.09

Table 7



Assessment results in master's Programs

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	4.62	4.61	4.59	4.55	1.14	4.25
Economic Information Technologies & Innovation	4.47	4.52	4.49	4.44	1.04	4.12
Luarasi UC	4.22	4.23	4.30	4.14	1.39	3.92
Luarasi UC	4.46	4.50	4.49	4.38	1.16	4.11

The comparison of two tables shows that student ratings for LUC in the bachelor's programs are something better than those in the master's programs, however only 1-2%. While scientific research is better in the second level of degree, 1.16, compared to the 0.21 in bachelor. This is normal since in master's programs the academic staff is more qualified. According to the methodology used, overall for LUC valuating in both programs are approximately: 4.09 in bachelor and 4.11 in master. If we analyze results by faculties, the conclusions are different: In Law Faculty, master's programs have a better evaluation as bachelor's programs, while in Economic and Information Technologies & Innovation the situation is the opposite. In these two faculties this can be explained by the higher students' expectation in the master's degree.

"Full time" and "Part time" staff

In these analyze "full time" or "part time" status of academic staff is taken also into account. Results by five characteristics and specific weights are shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8
Results of evaluation for "full " - time staff

Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	4.74	4.73	4.68	4.67	0.35	4.27
Economic Information Technologies & Innovation	4.61	4.61	4.55	4.52	0.93	4.21
Luarasi UC	4.42	4.46	4.41	4.35	0.68	4.03
Luarasi UC	4.58	4.63	4.57	4.51	0.65	4.17

Table 9
Results of evaluation for "part"-time staff



Faculty	Teaching	Knowledge Evaluation	Academic advising	Curricula	Research	LUC (total)
Law	4.41	4.42	4.37	4.36	1.10	4.04
Economic	4.50	4.57	4.52	4.45	1.10	4.15
Information Technologies & Innovation	4.40	4.41	4.44	4.34	1.05	4.06
Luarasi UC	4.42	4.47	4.44	4.36	1.10	4.07

In this point of view, according to the first four characters, we see that evaluating for “full time” staff is better compare with “part time” staff. In view of LUC the result of evaluations is 4.17 to 4.07. Conclusion is different if we analyze “research” indicator: here “part time” staff is in better position, particularly in the Faculty of Law. Regarding "research activity", the analysis of staff quality by "full" or "part" status can be more detailed, taking into account the quartile indicators. Since the value of 1-st quartile is very close to 0, we have calculated the value of 3-rd quartile of research activity by faculties (Table 10)

Table 10
3-rd quartile of “research activity”

Faculty	Full Time	Part Time	Total
Law	0.5	2.0	1.0
Economic	1.0	0.5	1.0
Information Technologies & Innovation	0.5	2.0	1.0
Luarasi UC	1.0	1.0	1.0

Beside the very low value of 3-rd quartile, (0.5 – 2.0), the data show that in two Faculties, Law and Information Technologies & Innovation, the value of “part time” staff” is better compare to “full - time” staff, (2.0 to 0.5). Otherwise, in Economic Faculty the value of third quartile of “full - time” staff is slightly higher compare to “part time” staff, (1.0 to 0.5), it means that only 25% of full-time academic staff have a index more as 1.0 (while this indicator for “part time” staff is 0.5)

Conclusions and Recommendations



In this paper has been shown a simple methodology to calculate statistically an aggregate index for evaluating of assessment teaching in higher education. The methodology is based in different criteria taken from diverse sources.

The proposed method is concretized in case of "Luarasi" University College, for the whole University as well as for its three Faculties. The data show that evaluation of teaching process in LUC, is high -only 18% below to maximum evaluation (4.13 to max. 5.00).

The assessments are very good for first four criteria analyzed: teaching; evaluation of knowledge; academic advising; and curriculum (4.45 to 4.51). However, the evaluation of "research performance and scientific activity", fifth criterion, is very low (0.78). This significant difference can explain, among others, with two data based used in this method: student evaluation (teaching; evaluation of knowledge; academic advising; curriculum); and staff's citation of its research publications. Beside "research" index, there is no significant difference among other criteria. However, we can note the evaluation of curricula is lower compare with others.

The other topic of the study is the comparison of teaching at Bachelor programs and teaching at Master programs of study. The results showed that in general (except to the "scientific research") evaluation is higher for professors in Bachelor than professors of Master programs. Knowing that academic staff in Master programs are more qualified, this result could explain with more expectation of students in Master studies

The analysis has considered the comparison of "full time" professors and "part time" professors. It is found in general that full time professors have higher score than part time professors. However, the situation is opposite with respect to "scientific research" where part time staff have a better score.

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Factors Affecting Banks Profitability in Albania

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Abstract

Banking sector is one of the most important sectors in Albania, for this reason analysing the factors that affect its profitability is of a great importance. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact that various factors (both internal and external) influence on bank's profitability in Albania. The methodology used is a combination of secondary sources; reviewing the literature, which serves as a basis for problem-solving; building and evaluating the multiple model, through the Eviews program. Some of the most important findings of this paper are: Not always the banks with the highest profit offer higher returns for investors; the relationship between size, deposit level, real economic growth, capital ratio and profitability is a positive one, but not always statistically significant. Increasing the cost ratio, credit risk and inflation causes a decrease in profitability.

Key words: *Bank, Correlation, Profitability, ROA, ROE*

Introduction

Why some banks have a higher level of profitability than others? Over the past few years banking sector in Albania has undergone some fundamental changes. Internal and external factors have affected its structure and profitability. A healthy and useful banking sector (with a higher profitability) is better able to withstand the economic shocks and also to contribute to the financial system stability. For these reasons, factors affecting bank's profitability take an important consideration from academic researches, bank's managers and supervisory authorities. This paper is divided into three parts: first is the literature review where are included other papers that have treated the same subject and the conclusions; second is the methodology, where is explained the data and the model used; the last part is the conclusions from the model.



Literature Review

In the literature bank's profitability is measured through ROA and ROE and it is often in the context of internal and external factors. Internal factors are influenced by bank's politics and decisions undertaken by bank's managers. Among the internal factors affecting bank's profitability can be mentioned: liquidity level, provisioning policies, capital requirements, costs management, loans and deposits level and bank's size:

- a) The capital – this is a very important factor, because as it is known banks can't operate under a required level of capital. It can be increased by decreasing the total of loans disbursed by the banks. In order to cope with the risk of default, banks are required to maintain high investment ratios, as they serve as a buffer against insolvency
- b) Capital-to-total assets ratio – in the line with the above logic it is important also to consider the capital as a percentage of assets, in order to compare different banks. Banks with a higher capital ratio are considered safer than those with a lower ratio. A low capital ratio means that the bank has a higher risk and logically we expect a higher profitability. On the other hand, banks with a high capitalisation ratio are safer and remain at a high profitability even during economic shocks. Also when this ratio is high the bank needs for external funding are reduced and this has a positive effect on profitability. So, this ratio needs to be seen in two angles, for this reason it is important to study the correlation between capital and profitability in our country
- c) Credit risk – this risk measures the probability that loans given to debtors will not return on time. Banks are exposed by this risk when the loan beneficiary is not able to repay the loan on the due date, because of the insolvency. In calculating the credit risk, banks use provision-to-total loans ratio, doubtful receivables-to-total receivables ratio, overdue receivables-to-total receivables etc.
- d) Liquidity – expresses the bank's ability to have enough cash or equivalents to meet all the obligation against third parties. Banks must have sufficient liquidity to meet the requirements of depositors and borrowers, providing security for both parties. Managers should be very careful with liquidity in order to have the required level of liquidity because it is positively correlated to profitability.



- e) Costs management – This report is used to measure the impact of bank efficiency on profitability. Thus, a high ratio is expected to have a negative impact on the bank's profitability.
- f) Bank's deposit – in our study the factor is total deposit's annual growth. Their growth can drive the bank to increase the revenue. However, this depends on several factors: first, on bank's ability to convert the deposits into revenue-generating assets; second, bank's ability to maintain a high level of lending quality, because otherwise it will reduce the profitability. As a delicate factor, which has both positive and negative impact on profitability, should be taken under consideration for further analysis
- g) Provisions-to-total loans ratio – lending is the main activity and the most important source of income for a bank. This ratio is a measure of the quality of the loan portfolio. A high level of this ratio is associated with a low portfolio quality level and consequently with a lower profitability level. Thus, it is expected that the relationship between this report and profitability will be negative
- h) Interest income ratio – as the main revenue comes from lending activity, this ratio reaches high values. Over the years this ratio has been declining as banks have expanded their activity and income from commissions and exchange rate occupy a higher weight in the total revenue
- i) Personnel – recently managers have come to the conclusion that staff should take a special attention, as it has a direct impact on the level of profitability and this can be reached by improving the knowledge of the staff through courses and trainings
- j) Bank size – one of the questions raised by different literature is whether there is any optimal size for banks that maximizes profitability. Numerous studies have concluded that the correlation between size and profitability is positive.
- k) Ownership – for the relationship between ownership and profitability some studies suggest that foreign-owned banks have the highest profitability, and according to some other studies this relationship is negligible.

Meanwhile, external factors are factors outside the control of the bank, depended by industry and macroeconomic situation of the country, and affect the profitability and bank operations. These factors include effective tax rates, annual change of local population, real GDP growth, Libor's 6-month rate, inflation, etc.

- a) The effective tax rate – taxes have a high impact on profitability, high levels of taxation cause a decrease in profitability. Thus, it is expected a negatively correlation between tax rates and profitability
- b) The annual population growth – an increase of the population causes a growth of the market and in this way the bank is more likely to increase its market share. If banks are able to increase market share they will generate higher margins and profitability will be positively affected. However, increasing opportunities to expand the market is not always associated with a higher level of profitability, because the margin of incomes from additional activities does not always increase, sometimes it causes even quite the opposite. This factor may have a positive or negative impact on profitability, and should therefore be considered during the study.
- c) Real GDP growth according to various studies, GDP growth is positively correlated to profitability. When GDP is increasing, deposits are increasing, credit demand is increasing and in this way the profitability of banks is expected to increase.
- d) Six month Libor rate – this rate is often taken as a reference rate for calculating a range of loan products. A high Libor rate causes a rise in the interest rate, which also causes increase in profitability, as income from loan interest occupy the largest share of revenue for a bank. Thus, it is expected a positively correlation between Six month Libor rate and profitability.
- e) Inflation rate – interest rate increases as the inflation increases, for this reason is stands the same logic as the six month Libor rate, so it is expected a positive correlation between inflation and profitability.

Studies related to this subject are numerous. Different authors use different factors and different methods to validate the factors affecting the bank's profitability. In most of these papers, variables such as bank size, risk, capital ratio, and general expenses are used as internal factors that affect banks' profitability.

Fotios and Pasiouras (2007) prove that there is a positive correlation between the size of the bank and its profitability. Other authors who have verified this correlation are: Aper and Anbar (2011), Gur, Irshad and Zaman (2011), Sufian (2011), Sasrosuwito dan Suzuki (2011), Akhavein et al. (1997) and Smirlock (1985). Demirguc-Kunt and Maksimovic (1998) suggest that the level of



influence on the profitability of financial, legal and other factors is strongly correlated to the bank size.

Short (1979) argues that size is strongly correlated to capital requirements, as relatively large banks tend to raise capital in a less expensive way and consequently these banks have a higher profitability. Continuing with the same reasoning, Haslem (1968), Bourke (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992) Bikker and Hu (2002), Goddard et al. (2004), etc. all associate the size of banks with capital ratios, where according to these authors these reports are positively related to the size, that is, if the size increases (especially for small and medium banks), profitability also increases.

Gallick (1976) studied US banks for the period 1954-1974 and concluded that smaller banks had lower return rates, the opposite happens with large banks. According to a study conducted by Yilmaz (2013), for 195 banks from some countries and for the period 2005-2010, the size of banks is in proportion to the ROA coefficient and the largest banks tend to have a higher profitability.

Other authors, such as Berger (1987), provide evidence that costs are reduced slightly with the size of the bank and that large banks often "suffer" from inefficiencies. Micco (2007) conclude that there is no correlation between the size of the bank and the ROA, the correlation coefficient is always positive but is not statistically significant.

Khrawish (2011) studied the factors affecting banks' profitability in Jordan for the period 2000-2010 and came to some conclusions: there is a positive and important correlation between ROA and the banks size, total liabilities to total assets, total equity to total assets, net interest margin. Also, there is a negative and important correlation between ROA and economic growth and the inflation rate. Dietrich and Wanzenrid (2009) analysed the banks' profitability in Switzerland for the period 1999-2006 and established that GDP growth has a positive impact on profitability and the effective tax rate and bank concentration rate are factors that have a negative impact on profitability.

Mac (2011) investigated the internal and external factors affecting the profitability of banks in Turkey and concluded that the bad debt-to-total loans ratio has a negative and significant impact on profitability. Riaz (2013) considered the impact of domestic and macroeconomic factors on the profitability of banks in Pakistan during 2006-2010. According to his study, credit risk and interest rate are factors with an influence on the banks' profitability.



Evidence from various authors such as Demircuc-Kunt and Huizinga (1998), Armeu (2013), Goddard (2004), Naceur and Goaid (2001, 2005), etc., show that banks with a high equity-to-total assets ratio, also have a higher profitability. Ben Naceur and Goaid (2008) concluded the same. They studied the banking sector in Tunisia for a period of 1980-2000, in addition they proved that the size has a negative impact on profitability.

Hong and John (2010) studied the same issue for banks in Japan from 2000-2007 and found a positive relationship between the equity ratio and profitability. In addition to the internal factors affecting the profitability of banks, literature suggests the influence of external factors. Banks' profitability is sensitive to macroeconomic conditions, so overall, larger economic growth encourages banks to lend more money and improve the quality of their portfolio, thus expecting an increase in profitability. Almost all the studied literature has taken under consideration both group-factors. Following the conclusions drawn by Hong and John, they proved that the real growth of GDP and the development of stock exchanges have a negative impact on profitability.

Samy and Mahammad (2008) studied the banking system in Tunisia and concluded that macroeconomic indicators have no impact on profitability and the development of stock market has a positive impact.

Toni (2009), in his paper for banks in Tunisia, for the period 1996-2000, concluded that the level of corruption has a positive impact on profitability. Fadzlan (2010) studied banks in Thailand during 1999-2005 and concluded that economic growth and inflation have a positive impact on banks' profitability. One factor widely used as one of the representatives of the macroeconomic environment is inflation. Revell (1979) introduced the issue by noting that the effect of inflation is noticed when the increase in wages and operating costs is greater than the rise in inflation. The problem lies in the fact that how mature is an economy so that inflation can be precisely predicted and banks can manage their operating expenses. As long as there are difficulties in forecasting inflation, the relationship that exists between it and profitability remains unclear. An accurately predicted inflation rate implies that banks are able to adjust interest rates so that earnings grow more than costs and increase the profitability rate. On the other hand, an unpredictable inflation leads managers to impose inaccurate rates, and thus increases the possibility for spending to grow more than revenue. Most studies eg. Bourke (1989), Molyneux and Thornton (1992), prove that there is a positive relationship between inflation and profitability.

Athanasoglou and Staikouras (2006), in their paper for some South East European countries (including Albania) and for the period 1998-2002, concluded that changes in the macroeconomic situation have a positive impact on the profitability of banks. Concentration is positively correlated with profitability, inflation has a high impact on profitability, but profitability is not affected by economic growth, perhaps due to the fact that the selected study period is short.

Methodology

To study the impact of internal and external factors on profitability, are taken into consideration all the banks in our country. In line with what is discussed in the chapter above, it is important to address some hypotheses that need to be verified.

Hypothesis that need to be verified

1. There is a positive correlation between bank size and profitability

Theoretically a large bank should benefit from the economies of scale, meaning that lower unit costs have a positive impact on profitability. On the other hand, a large bank gets more difficult to manage and increases the bureaucracy rate, thus increasing costs and lowering the level of profitability. As this connection is complicated and different authors suggest different conclusions, it is important to consider the case of Albania.

2. There is a positive correlation between loan disbursed and profitability

One of the main activities of banks is the collection of funds from the deposits and turn them into disbursed loans. From this activity banks benefit the most important income. The higher the level of loans, the higher the net interest margin and consequently the profitability is higher.

3. There is a positive relationship between banks' capital ratio and profitability

The equity ratio is calculated as the ratio of its capital to total assets, it is capital adequacy ratio and serves as a measure of the security and health of banks. So it shows the bank's ability to absorb unexpected losses. Banks with a high level of capital have a low capital cost since they do not have to pay interest on debts owed and this increases the profitability. As explained above, many authors have discovered a positive relationship between the equity ratio and profitability.

4. There is a negative relationship between credit risk and profitability

Credit risk is the risk of financial losses due to the failure of borrowers to settle their obligations. In essence, credit risk may arise from bank lending activity, from other trading activities and



from capital market activities. The ratio of provisions to total loans is usually used as a measure of credit risk. The expansion of lending activity, which is the highest risk activity for a bank, will increase the banking risk and consequently will decrease the level of profitability. The ratio of provisions to total loans is a measure of lending quality. When the ratio is high, this indicates a poor quality of loans, increases costs for the bank and consequently reduces profitability.

5. There is a positive correlation between interest income and profitability

The traditional functions of a bank, as is known, are the deposits and the lending activity. Consequently, the most important source of income for a bank is interest income. The increase in these revenues means that the bank has increased the level of loans disbursed, so the profitability is expected to be higher.

6. There is a positive relationship between deposit level and profitability

Following the above logic, when the deposits level increase, there are added opportunities for this bank to increase lending. However, as explained above, this will depend on the bank's ability to lend. If the bank does not have the capability or is unable to profit in deposit-raising situations, then the costs will increase, thus the profitability will decrease. Theoretically, both explanations are acceptable, and the relation between deposit and profitability is unclear, so further consideration is required.

7. There is a positive relationship between non-interest income and profitability

A source of income for banks, other than interest income, is also non-interest income. In these revenues are included income from commissions, fees, exchange rate and securities that the bank owns. Increasing this kind of income, means that the bank has expanded its activity and is not relying solely on traditional activity. Theoretically, it is expected that the largest non-interest income will be, the higher the level of profitability

8. There is a negative relationship between the cost ratio and profitability

Bank revenue can also be improved by using new technology in communication and information. Using this technology will improve the efficiency of banking operations. As a result, the cost-to-income ratio, as a measure of efficiency of operations, has a negative impact on profitability. Many authors have studied such a connection and discovered a negative correlation between them.

9. There is a positive relationship between economic growth and profitability



A country's economic growth reflects economic activity and revenue growth within the country. A high economic growth also reflects good prospects for businesses, including banks. Therefore, economic growth is expected to cause an increase in profitability, so it is expected a positive relationship between them.

10. There is a positive relationship between inflation and profitability

Inflation is an important macroeconomic indicator that can be used as an indicator of business risk, so a high inflation rate implies a high business risk. If the inflation rate increases, Libor's rate will increase. The increase in Libor's rate will be accompanied by an increase in the lending interest rate, which will also lead to increased profitability. But if the inflation rate is too high, the interest rate on lending is also high. This means that people are going to be saving money and reducing the borrowing level. In this way, bank profitability decreases. Some empirical studies prove that there is a positive relationship between inflation and profitability, but from the above logic, this relation should be negative. Therefore, this hypothesis should be studied in our country.

In accordance with the above hypotheses, eleven factors have been taken under consideration, of which nine are internal and two external. There are two sources used for the data: Bank of Albania and INSTAT. There are used quarterly data and the number of surveys is forty-four, from 2006 to 2016. The method used to prove the impact of the factors on profitability is that of economics, through the Eviews program. The results of the Hausman test show that the fixed effect model is superior to the random effects model in both cases (when the variable used is ROE and ROA), as the results of both tests are statistically significant. Thus, the following analysis will use regression with fixed-effect panel data.

The econometric model used in this case takes the below form, where as a dependent variable is profitability, which is expressed through ROE and ROA.

$$P = \alpha + \beta^1 AKT + \beta^2 DEP + \beta^3 GDP + \beta^4 INFL + \beta^5 KAP + \beta^6 PROV_{HUA} + \beta^7 RAR_{KAPI} + \beta^8 RAR_{KOSTO} + \beta^9 TOT_{HUA} + \beta^{10} TR_{INT_{TR}} + \beta^{11} TR_{JOINT} + \varepsilon$$

Factors undertaken in this paper are:

- Total assets used to indicate bank size (ASSETS)
- Total deposits (DEP)
- Capital (CAP)
- Capital-to-total assets ratio (CAP_RATIO)



- Costs-to-total revenue ratio (COST_RATIO)
- Total loans (TOT_LOAN)
- Interest income-to-total income ratio (INT_INC)
- Non-interest income ratio (NON_INT_INC)
- Provisions-to-total loans ratio (PROV_LOAN)
- Annual economic growth (GDP)
- Inflation rate (INFL)

Table 1

Model findings

	Assets	Cap	Cap Ratio	Tot Loan	Cost Ratio	Deposits	Non-interest income	Prov loan	Interest income	R OE	RO A	Inf l	G DP
Assets	1												
Cap	0,98	1											
Cap Ratio	0,84	0,91	1										
Tot Loan	0,99	0,99	0,90	1									
Cost Ratio	0,83	0,88	0,84	0,87	1								
Deposits	0,99	0,97	0,80	0,97	0,81	1							
Non-interest income	0,85	0,88	0,78	0,86	0,89	0,84	1						
Prov loan	-0,85	-0,88	-0,57	-0,80	-0,80	-0,87	-0,84	1					
Interest income	0,85	0,88	0,78	0,86	-0,90	-0,84	-0,65	-0,84	1				
ROE	0,67	0,68	0,60	0,683	-0,74	0,66	0,73	-0,61	0,73	1			
ROA	0,54	0,57	0,48	0,564	-0,76	0,53	0,66	-0,64	0,66	0,90	1		
Infl	-0,30	-0,2	-0,19	-0,264	-0,06	-0,31	-0,54	-0,005	0,54	-0,14	-0,17	1	
GDP	-0,55	-0,5	-0,39	-0,54	-0,53	-0,55	-0,62	0,65	0,62	0,43	0,41	-0,06	1

The above table presents the results of the correlations that exist between the factors. The correlation matrix is used to see in more detail the relationship between the variables. The



importance of this paper is how the factors are correlated with ROE and ROA. From this analysis, we see that there is a positive and significant correlation between profitability and size, equity, equity ratio, total loans, deposits, non-interest income ratio, and interest income. This means that an increase in each factor increases profitability. On the other hand, there is a negative correlation between inflation, cost ratio, provision ratio with ROE and ROA.

Dependent Variable: ROE				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 05/26/17 Time: 14:57				
Sample: 2006Q1 2016Q4				
Included observations: 44				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
AKT	-4.13E-06	2.21E-06	-1.871828	0.0701
DEP	1.44E-06	1.94E-06	0.741759	0.4635
GDP	0.000711	0.007391	0.096164	0.9240
INFL	-0.066235	0.032428	-2.042540	0.0492
KAP	1.28E-05	2.36E-05	0.543545	0.5904
PROV_HUA	-4.003983	2.445637	-1.637194	0.1111
RAP_KAPI	6.737221	16.48971	0.408571	0.6855
RAP_KOSTO	-2.234813	0.884721	-2.526010	0.0165
TOT_HUA	2.27E-06	2.07E-06	1.097003	0.2806
TR_INT_TR	2.544134	1.193951	2.130853	0.0406
TR_JOINT	1.600110	1.264113	1.265796	0.2144
R-squared	0.712321	Mean dependent var		0.168857
Adjusted R-squared	0.625145	S.D. dependent var		0.152971
S.E. of regression	0.093657	Akaike info criterion		-1.68603
Sum squared resid	0.289464	Schëarz criterion		-1.23999
Log likelihood	48.09281	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-1.5206
Durbin-Watson stat	2.177499			

Figure 1: Factors impact on ROE.

Source: Data processing from the author

Dependent Variable: ROA		
Method: Least Squares		

Date: 05/26/17 Time: 15:02				
Sample: 2006Q1 2016Q4				
Included observations: 44				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
AKT	-1.11E-07	1.07E-07	-1.032547	0.3093
DEP	4.59E-08	9.43E-08	0.486503	0.6298
GDP	0.000190	0.000359	-0.528217	0.6009
INFL	-0.003345	0.001577	-2.121326	0.0415
KAP	4.81E-07	1.15E-06	0.418756	0.6781
PROV_HUA	-0.062716	0.118938	-0.527300	0.6015
RAP_KAPI	0.428024	0.801939	0.533737	0.5971
RAP_KOSTO	-0.128466	0.043026	-2.985752	0.0053
TOT_HUA	4.06E-08	1.01E-07	0.403659	0.6891
TR_INT_TR	0.113317	0.058065	1.951554	0.0595
TR_JOINT	0.091033	0.061477	1.480765	0.1482
R-squared	0.724928	Mean dependent var		0.009284
Adjusted R-squared	0.641573	S.D. dependent var		0.007608
S.E. of regression	0.004555	Akaike info criterion		-7.732957
Sum squared resid	0.000685	Schëarz criterion		-7.286909
Log likelihood	181.1250	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-7.567541
Durbin-Watson stat	2.504742			

Figure 2: Factors impact on ROA.

Source: Data processing from the author

The first variable taken under consideration is the total level of assets, which is used to express the size of banks. Apparently from the above data, the relationship between the size of banks and profitability (expressed by ROE and ROA) is a negative correlation. Thus, the above hypothesis (No. 1) is false, as an increase in bank size causes a decrease in profitability. This result is consistent with other studies, discussed in the above section of the literature review. According to the data in the above tables, we see that there is a positive relationship between capital, equity ratio and profitability. This means that a rise in capital causes an increase in profitability. The positive correlation between these variables is in harmony with the explanation given above, so the hypothesis No. 3 is valid. As expected, the credit risk (expressed through the ratio of



provisions to total loans) has a negative impact on both ROE and ROA. Thus, an increase in provisions and, consequently, credit risk, indicates that the bank has reduced lending quality, which means increased costs and lower profitability.

Deposit and loan have a positive impact on ROE and ROA. An increase in these two factors causes an increase in profitability, which means that banks have the capacities and opportunities to convert deposits into disbursed loans. The above result proves a significant negative correlation between the cost ratio and ROA and a negligible negative correlation between this ratio and ROE. This means that an increase in costs that is not accompanied by an increase in profitability indicates a poor management for the bank. This negative correlation is expected and consistent with many other studies. The increase in interest income and non-interest income also increases ROE and ROA. Thus, there is a positive and significant correlation between these factors and profitability, which is also consistent with what the literature suggests.

Unlike what was expected, an increase in the inflation rate causes a decrease in profitability. The correlation between this variable and profitability is a negative and statistically significant one. This means that an increase in inflation, bank revenues grow at lower rates than its costs. As explained above, this result indirectly shows the fact that the Albanian economy is not yet in those development stages where inflation is predicted correctly. As a result of this fact, managers are not able to accurately determine the interest rate, hence the increase in inflation leads to lower profitability. The last variable undertaken is the economic growth, expressed through GDP. Consistent with the reviewed literature, economic growth also increases the profitability, although this correlation is not statistically important.

Conclusions

As explained during the paper, due to the importance of the banking sector's profitability, studying the factors that affect its profitability becomes indispensable. On this paper, the profitability and impact of internal and external factors was studied using regression with fixed-effect panel data. Sixteen second-tier banks operating in the country were taken into consideration and the factors were analysed for a 10-year period, from 2006 to 2016. The results showed that there is a positive relationship between the equity ratio, the deposits, the loans, the interest income ratio, non-interest income ratio, economic growth and profitability coefficients



(ROE and ROA). The correlation between interest income and profitability is statistically significant. The correlation between bank size, cost ratio, credit risk and inflation is negative and statistically significant for the cost ratio and inflation. These conclusions suggest that the banks have to pay a careful attention to the interest rates, so they should focus on finding optimal interest rates in order to receive the highest benefits. Also, the cost ratio needs to be improved, in order to have higher efficiency and benefits.

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Changing mindsets: Innovative techniques for building tax compliance

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Abstract

This paper aims to reflect some innovative techniques for building up a fiscal culture in Albania, which will account for a higher tax compliance, translated into higher revenues in the state budget, therefore into more possibilities for the executive power to invest in public goods. This will ensure later a growing trust of citizens towards the state, but also a greater sense of respect for the society in general and consequently for the common goods in particular. The best practices from other countries will be reviewed regarding this topic and the country's current efforts towards it will be further elaborated by highlighting the benefits but also the weaknesses of the current system as well as by emphasizing how it can be achieved a higher taxpayer's loyalty. These techniques range from introducing tax education at all levels of the education system, to a range of approaches such as the greater involvement of new technologies, to more innovative approaches such as integration of fiscal themes in playgrounds or theatrical and television shows etc.

Keywords: *Fiscal culture, innovative techniques, public goods, tax awareness, tax compliance.*

Introduction

Often, small and troubled economies face economic difficulties because of their conservative way of thinking. They fall into a vicious circle by comparing themselves to more developed countries. Trying to go beyond their capacities, governments cannot fulfill reforms and consequently they lose their self-confidence. By taking concrete examples in their final and very complex stage, they commonly forget that all these developed countries have a common foundation at the bottom of their achievements, which is the long and laborious work of qualifying and preparing generations throughout the centuries about common values on justice and public goods that keep community united and make it go forward.

Since in such cases small but safe steps are more effective, it would be better to initially have a look at less developed countries, on their positive examples of an industrial and technological era



closer to ours, namely on how they have embarked on this tedious but necessary process of changing mindsets towards an open market economy but also an increased social responsibility for everyone.

There is a need to project and undertake further innovative steps towards the development of an adequate fiscal culture, in order to achieve higher tax compliance in Albania. The expectations are that this will bring higher revenues in the state budget, and indirectly more possibilities for the executive power to invest in public goods. The aim is to ensure a greater trust from citizens towards the state, a greater sense of respect for the society in general and as a result for the common goods.

The best practices from other countries will be reviewed with regards to this topic by highlighting the efforts, benefits and weaknesses of the current system and by emphasizing the way to achieve a higher taxpayer's loyalty. These techniques range from the introduction of tax related subjects at all levels of the education system, to a range of approaches such as a greater involvement of new technologies in the education and information throughout the country, playgrounds, theatrical or television broadcasts on tax issues and integrate importance of tax loyalty in the cultural aspects of a country. All these efforts aimed to increase the public awareness towards fiscal culture and have developed a new citizen's mentality regarding the importance of taking responsibility of their freedom and actions or omissions towards the community and public goods.

Methodology

The methodology used to write this paper was the inclusion of the analysis of the secondary research about the Albanian fiscal legislation, problems faced by the economic actors, the efficiency of tax collection from Tax Authorities and the willingness of taxpayers to pay taxes. Furthermore, reports from other countries, which have faced similar economic problems during the last decades, were analyzed in order to compare and assess the possibilities of implementing these solutions even in our country. The sources vary, from government analysis and reports, to different publications of the General Directorate of Taxation, OECD, IMF, EU Commission etc. A questionnaire with questions about different tax related problematics in our country was also formulated. Even though the paper analyzes tax compliance for individuals and businesses, the questionnaire was distributed only to 50 businesses (as the most affected by informality



compared to individuals), such as bakeries, coffee shops, markets and small boutiques around the Municipality Unit no. 5, the most populated zone of Tirana.

Results

1. Overview of the Albanian Tax System

The Albanian fiscal administration is made up by the General Directorate of Taxation (GDT), fourteen Regional Tax Directorates including the Directorate for VIP Taxpayers (GDT data, 2019). Other offices in service of taxpayers are the Tax Administration Call Center and the Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services in Albania, offering integrated public services for taxpayers.

The internet website e-Albania can issue different Tax Certificates, by facilitating the bureaucracies associated with taxpayers' transactions. Since January 2015 a network application with a central platform operates in the whole tax administration, but according to EU Commission interconnection and interoperability with the EU systems is not yet provided by the actual IT department. Taxes are divided in different groups, depending on their source and function, the position of the state towards different economic actors, tax collection intervals, reversibility of taxes, their purpose and form of collection. Nevertheless, the purpose of their use is one important characteristic which divides them into two big groups, namely taxes as compulsory payment without reward paid mainly based on consumption or on earned income and taxes paid after exercising special rights or services.

Taxes are compulsory, unrequited payments to general government, where normally the benefits to taxpayers from the government are not in proportion to their payments (OECD, 1996). These taxes are: The Value Added Tax or VAT, Personal income tax, tax on personal income from employment, Tax on profit for businesses, Custom duties, Excise tax and Health and Social Security Contributions. While Taxes pursuant to the Law No. 9975, date 28.07.2008 "On Taxes in the Republic of Albania" constitute the compulsory and irrevocable payment in the State Budget paid by any person or through an agent exercising a public right or benefiting from a public service in the territory of the Republic of Albania. Under this category fall National and Local Taxes as well as Service Fees, which are payments that an individual, a natural or legal person, makes directly or through an agent to the central tax administration in exchange for a specific public good, specific public service used or granted right.



2. Tax evasion as an "enemy" or a "consequence"?

It is widely accepted that taxpayer compliance is where the taxpayer meets his tax obligations and implements taxation rights properly and correctly in accordance with applicable tax laws and regulations (Awaluddin & Tamburaka, 2017). Failing tax compliance means not only breaking applicable laws, but it leads also to less revenues for the state. This can be seen at the debt to tax ratio for Albania which in 2016 was 300 %, much higher than the Debt Sustainability Analysis debt threshold of 70 % for emerging markets, which shows a low level of tax revenues (IMF Country Report, 2017).

To understand Tax Evasion first of all there should be given a look at the term "Shadow Economy", which is more common in Southern Europe than in other OECD countries (Hart, 1994). As it relates to economic actors who try to remain undetected, it is not easy to measure shadow economy, but it includes all economic activities which are hidden from official authorities for monetary, regulatory, and institutional reasons (Medina, Schneider, 2018). Shadow economy refers to different activities ranging, from tax evasion which means legally performed activities that are not paid, to illegally performed legal activities (black economy), or criminal activities. Nevertheless, the focus of this study will be more on unrecorded legal activities and the black economy.

Firstly, it is important to analyze the actual situation regarding revenues and expenditures in the state budget. According to the GDT data for 2018 the programmed gross tax revenues for 2018 were approx. 247 Billion ALL, and the achieved ones were approx. 246.6 Billion ALL, or 0.18 % less than the prediction, but still 7.87 % more than the year before, due to the continuous fight against the informal economy lately as well as due to its undertaken awareness- raising campaigns. Special units of tax administration are the Tax Control Directorate, Tax Assessment Directorate, the Directorate of Tax Appeal and the Directorate of Tax Investigation. The later has the objective of taking measures to prevent, combat and detect criminal offenses related to taxes, precisely tax evasion, which means concealing tax liabilities in the framework of a legal economic activity, according to Art. 116 par. 2 of the Law on Tax Procedures and Art. 180-182/a of the Criminal Code. Despite the afore mentioned efforts, the Directorate of Tax Investigation has identified many cases of administrative and criminal offenses during 2018. There were



referred 308 cases to the Prosecution Office during 2018, the majority of which for concealment of income (115 cases), followed by 76 referrals of illegal employment and 73 tax delinquency cases.

Table 1

Referrals for Criminal Offenses 2018

January – December 2018			
Nr.	Referrals according to the Criminal Code	No. of referrals	Damage value
1	Creating fraudulent VAT schemes	12	4,151,078,470
2	Concealment of income	115	6,520,506,123
3	Tax delinquency	73	5,497,703,617
4	Organization of unauthorized Lotteries	6	
5	Illegal employment	76	
6	Dismissing signs of blocking or suspension of trade activity	21	
7	Other	5	
Sum		308	16,169,288,210

Source: GDT Report 2018

Tax revenues are composed by tax income such as the VAT, Income Tax, Personal Income Tax, National Taxes, Tax on Fuel, Gambling Tax, other taxes and revenues from administrative offenses as well as and Health and Social Security Contributions. Net Tax Revenues for 2018 were 143,401,879,000 ALL. This is an increase compared to 2017 (131,869,319,000 ALL), which came mainly due to increases in revenues from Personal Income Taxes (+13.78%), Fuel Tax (21.06%) and administrative offenses (83.97%) because of the increased audits and fines. Nonetheless there is a slight reduction in the Net Tax Revenue compared to the planned net Tax Revenues for 2018 (- 0,49%).

Table 2

GDT 12 months 2018 (000 ALL)

	Plan	Difference Fact- Plan 2018 (%)	Difference 2017-2018 Fact-Plan (%)
GDT (Gross)	247,013,000	-0,18%	7.87



I	Total Tax Revenue	159,113,000	-0.83%	8.26
1	VAT (Gross)	53,160,000	-4.24	4.02
2	Corporate Profit Tax	33,823,000	1.75	8.91
3	Personal Income Tax	36,800,000	-0.61	13.78
4	National Taxes	13,080,000	-3.26	1.90
5	Fuel Tax	16,450,000	11.53	21.06
6	Gambling Tax	5,800,000	-20.44	-13.75
7	Other	0		0.00
8	Administrative Offenses	0		83.97
II	Net Tax Revenues	144,113,000	-0.49	8.75
III	Social & Health Security Contributions	87,900,000	1.00	7.20
IV	GDT Total (Net)	232,013,000	0.07	8.15

Source: GTD Report 2018

3. Factors of informal economy in Albania and different approaches to tax loyalty

During the last legislative period, there were undertaken some major reforms in Albania towards sharpening of penalties against tax evaders and informal economy, mainly regarding incorrect filing of tax declarations, undeclared employees and wages, cash payments over 150.000 ALL, goods not accompanied with tax documents, administrative offenses in the use of fiscal devices, for issuing fiscal receipts or tickets etc. (according to the Law No. 9920, date 19.5.2008 "On Tax Procedures in the Republic of Albania").

Despite their purpose of increasing tax compliance, they could not provide for an elevated confidence of citizens towards the system. This can be seen for eg. at the National Plan for Risk Management of the GDT this year in the sector of bars and restaurants aiming to make taxpayers aware of the correct self-declaration (ATA, 2019).

Most efforts undertaken by the Government to improve this situation were focused towards the effects of detection and punishment of tax evaders as well as the level of tax rates among different economic actors. While the complexity of tax regulations, frequent changes in tax legislation (Albania Investment Council, 2015) or the role of government expenditures in taxpayer's loyalty have shown limited attention.

a) Role of government expenditures

Despite the fact that National Taxes are paid when exercising a right or benefitting a public service, and fees are paid in exchange for a specific public good, specific public service used or granted right, in other words a kind of reimbursement carried out to taxpayers, they may not always relate to a specific benefited service for the individual or business that pays them and almost all revenues go in the state and local budgets. They serve not just the purpose of the name they carry, but also other needs according to the state budget. Taxpayers cannot seek a special favor from tax authorities for paying taxes.

They cannot even know the exact plan of expenditure previously. As taxes make up most of the public revenue (Rrumbullaku, 2015), it is important to know how those are spent. There are very few provisions in the tax legislation that stipulate the specified use of specific taxes and fees, like for e.g. Court Fees 10 % of which go to the Court Budget itself, the Annual Tax on Used Vehicles 18 % of which go to the respective Local budgets, or the Temporary Local Tax on Educational Infrastructure etc.

Some argue that the quality of services financed mainly by tax revenues, affects tax payer's loyalty (Awaluddin, Tamburaka, 2017). It is also known to exist a link between the purpose of expenditures and level of tax compliance, eg. it decreased in the US during the Vietnam War (Alms, Jackson, McKee, 1992). The efficient the utilization of the public expenditure in terms of better service quality, the greater will be the will of tax payers to pay taxes, even if those are increased. According to the Law no. 9936, date 26.6.2008 “On the Management of the Budgetary System in the Republic of Albania”, as amended, "Budget" means the sum of the revenues, expenditures and financing of central and local government as well as special funds,



which are adopted by law by the Albanian Parliament, or by a decision of the Councils of the respective Local Governments. Consultative meetings on policy objectives of each central government office are priority organized with representatives of civil society. But public participation needs to be further enhanced (EU Commission, 2018). Article 151 of the Albanian Constitution stipulates *inter alia* that matters regarding the State Budget, taxes and financial duties of the state cannot be subject to any referendum. Maybe the time has come to overcome this Constitutional restraint when it comes to budget expenditures of economic and social aspects of major importance to the public interest. Experimental studies (Alm, Jackson, McKee, 1993) have shown that individuals are more likely to *increase tax compliance* when they can *select themselves the expenditure program and have more control over tax expenditures knowing that they enjoy widespread approval by the majority of voters*, compared to when the public goods paid by their taxes are not that popular or when citizens are unaware of the support towards the government program.

In our Albanian case approx. 80 % of the persons who completed the questionnaire were in favor of a fiscal exchange equity, which refers to what taxpayers receive from the government in exchange of paid taxes. They valued the role of government expenditures toward better public goods and services, mainly focused on health care, infrastructure and education. Ninety percent of them were in favor of a right to vote for special uses of tax revenues and for the amount of tax revenues received by the state or local budget to be used for specific public services and goods.

Reward theory

There are different examples of rewards for voluntary tax compliance, from tax incentives, tax amnesty, rebate etc. to the more effective ones such as privilege cards for compliant taxpayers, lotteries for submitting tax returns electronically or gratitude messages by public authorities for contributing to the common good etc. (Bornman & Stack, 2015). According to Ryan and Deci (2000) the more internal the reason of tax compliance will be, the more intrinsically motivated the behavior will be. Internal reasons are ethical values, social norms, satisfaction, challenge, believing in its importance for the public good etc. They are driven by the psychological need for autonomy and competence. At the other hand according to the cognitive evaluation theory rewards which are perceived as controlling such as avoiding punishments or getting benefits are more extrinsically motivated will be the action (Bornman & Stack, 2015).



Positive affirmation to regular tax payers which emphasize their importance and role in the society make tax taxpayers feel appreciated for their contribution for the public good, for their country. Given the fact that despite fines and possible audits and the idea that many people still pay their taxes, we should accept the concept of tax morale too, as an intrinsic motivation (Vythelingum, Soondram, Jugurnath, 2016). Same concept uses also OECD for Latin America, as it emphasizes the need of raising public service quality and citizen's education on tax matters in order to increase tax morale (OECD, 2012). 40 % of the respondents saw the better use of public expenditure as an incentive to tax compliance, followed by 20 % satisfaction and trust in the importance of tax compliance for public good and 20 % avoiding punishments/ tax amnesty. Getting benefits and taking part at a lottery got 10 % each, because of lack of trust on the fairness in the lottery process. The survey shows that public good awareness has begun to increase and that steps towards encouraging this phenomenon need to be taken.

b) Corruption

Nonetheless among different factors of informality in Albania, worth mentioning are gifts exchanged in meeting with tax officials, which still constitute a high risk of corruption for businesses and tax administration. The Directorate of Internal Investigation (Anticorruption) has increased audits and inspections in order to prevent and combat corruption cases. The latter still needs to step forward. Efforts against corruption are seen in the restructuring of the GDT and of the General Directorate of Customs (European Commission, 2018). Despite this, from the verification and investigation of 63 denounced cases from January - December 2018, 28 cases were registered and investigated; other 3 cases involving 7 inspectors were referred to the Prosecutor Office pursuant to Article 248 of the Criminal Code for "Abuse of office" and 49 employees were found to have violated the law and were referred to the Disciplinary Commission (GTD, 2018). Given the fact that these were only the detected cases, it remains the risk of a higher number of corruption cases in the Tax Administration.

Corruption can be seen also in other forms such as giving gifts to get things done, or to get an operating or import license, as well as secure government contracts. This puts economic actors in financial difficulties and leads to market distortion which does not create a favourable climate for tax compliance. Almost 70 % of the respondents think that corruption is crucial when it comes to tax compliance.

c) Tax system and common goods



Another reason behind informality is the complexity of the tax system itself as well as the large number and different types of taxes to be paid which are not always understood by business owners and professionals, not to mention by citizens that possess insufficient knowledge regarding taxes. It is the responsibility of the central authorities to facilitate access to information on taxes and tax procedures, find other forms of making it easier for taxpayers to pay taxes, as well as provide for more stability in the fiscal environment by avoiding very frequent changes of the fiscal legislation. Linked with this phenomenon is the inherited fiscal culture of the population and its approach towards common goods. The higher the community's awareness towards common goods is, the higher will be its efforts to protect and develop it in the interest of everyone. This will diminish free-riders in the society, as more individuals and businesses will be willing to pay taxes (Investopedia, 2018).

Tax Payer's Education Era

In order to establish a new culture, one should begin by its roots, by the youngest generation. For eg. these long – term cultural shifts were implemented successfully in Jamaica through the Schools Tax Education Program – STEP, which aimed to develop the culture of voluntary tax compliance by targeting all school levels including the primary level of school children (OECD, 2015). Through STEP students should become pioneers in tax compliance at work and business environment and good examples to be followed by their parents. Whether in the primary level children play with puzzle booklets, watch a short video ("Why Tax") and are encouraged to create tax jingles or poems etc. Another example of this long term strategy is Kenya's Taxpayer Education Unit (as well as Rwanda, Mauritius and Tanzania) (Mascagni, Santoro, 2018), whose core activity is the creation of tax clubs in schools as forums for discussions about taxes, as well as by organizing competitions between schools. University of Mauritius's sponsoring of research and writing of tax articles for well-known press and sponsoring one student for a PhD in a tax related research topic (OECD, 2015) is also an incentive to develop a taxpayer research background to serve as the basis for a new tax compliance culture. Also teachers have been target to tax specialisation, such as in El Salvador, where mid-level college teachers learned how to integrate tax lessons into all subjects they teach, based on citizenship, values and fiscal culture (Eurosocial, 2015).



Universities should be targeted as well. Tax education should not be the only privilege of Economic or Law fields, but of all faculties, because ex - students from all areas of expertise will become the future entrepreneurs. More than 70 % of the respondents were in favor of developing and introducing in the society community related games focused on the development of the social memory and altruism among children. "Sharing is caring" concept is seen as related to the beginning of a culture of respect towards public good and of being responsible not only for yourself but for the whole community. The majority were also in favor of introducing tax education in all fields of study. Having a background on fiscal information, will set the basis for their future careers as entrepreneurs or managers. A major role on this can play the interaction between academia and lower levels of education system, especially Gymnasiums.

Education beyond Universities

Despite the different possibilities for small businesses to take informative sessions and courses on fiscal practice offered by the Chambers of Commerce and the Tax Directorates, a wider campaign should be undertaken in order to involve normal citizens of all social and economic status. The "Judicial Support for the Less Favoured" clinics, established in universities of Brazil have shown to be real-life "laboratory" for students and a good help in tax issues for people with low access of information to the complex tax system (OECD, 2015).

Another target group on this matter should be the penitentiary institutions. The way back to the society goes through common values and respect for the freedom and contributions of each other. The majority of the respondents thought that learning about taxes and their importance will increase this sense of being part of the society and will contribute to a better future behavior of convicts. According to a study conducted in 2013 by the RAND Corporation, correctional education like vocational education in prisons is much more cost-effective compared with the cost of reincarceration (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, Miles, 2013).

4. Change the conservative thinking patterns

As seen above, it takes a long time and a lot of innovative work to establish a new fiscal culture. Our efforts to follow the examples of developed countries at their final and complex stage can lead to even more confusion among taxpayers and to difficulties in their implementation. To achieve the outcome of achieving more tax compliance in Albania, it may be worth it to take



some useful examples from countries which has faced major difficulties in implementing it through the last decades and have taken some useful lessons from their experience in dealing with them, like Brazil, Bangladesh, Chile, Costa Rica, El-Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica etc. (OECD, 2015).

5. Tax in Cyberspace

New technologies can be used to improve access to information about taxes without discrimination among the population, to facilitate communication to the targeted audience and to optimize resources. Good examples are El Salvador's On-Line Tax Education Diploma (Eurosocial, 2015), Chile's SIIEduca web portal for teachers and tutors and PlanetaSII for primary schoolchildren presenting in an entertaining manner solidarity and teamwork (OECD, 2015).; Uruguay's Plan Ceibal which aims to provide every child with a laptop loaded with tax-related activities (UNESCO, 2011); Colombia's use of digital signature system for online tax declarations (OECD, 2015) ect. Social networks are not left behind in their role on marketing tax compliance, such as Facebook and Twitter like Tax Administration Jamaica's facebook profile.

6. Paying taxes as Entertainment!

As already mentioned, people tend to behave positively if they are intrinsically motivated, for example if they feel, they are in control of the situation or if they are satisfied. Therefore, trying to make education entertaining, would not only be a motivation to follow fiscal rules but also to build an alternative way of thinking and driving people's attention towards tax related issues by making them accept them more easily as well as include all social "classes" in this "learning by having fun" process. Some entertaining ways could be for eg. integration of tax related topics in interactive play spaces such as video games, soap operas, theaters etc. like Costa Rica's project "Tribute to My Country" with game rooms in the Museum of children (IDB, 2013). Other entertaining possibilities are:

- Chile's Ivo the Chinchilla, a children's cartoon series, focused on concepts of citizenship and social co-existence (Masud, Pfeil, Agarwal, Briseno, 2017);
- Nigeria has taken things further with– "Binding Duty" – a Nigerian television soap-opera with a relaxed and non-confrontational way to remind citizens of their tax duties (OECD, 2015) and "Tax Matters", a 30-minute television show available to view freely on YouTube (Mascagni, Santoro, 2018).



Over 90 % of the respondents were in favor of introducing entertaining tax related activities in their life.

7. Celebrating Tax

People in different countries celebrate different aspects of their lives, such as their Mother's Day, their Nation, their jobs etc. Taxes have also a potential for being celebrated. People pay taxes with money earned mostly by their work, which takes up a lot of their daily lifetime, enough to be a celebration worthy. Setting a date as a holiday for celebrating a special tax of primary importance, may be a way of increasing tax awareness (OECD, 2015), eg. National Income Tax Day in Bangladesh, celebrated every year on 15th of September, 15 days before formal submission, when more than 80% of tax returns are filed; Rwanda's Taxpayer's Day etc. Another innovative way of promoting tax compliance by emphasizing the commitment on taxes and providing information on them, is also the organization of festivals about these topics throughout the country, eg. the annual citizen culture festival "Strength Lies in Numbers" of Guatemala (Masud, Pfeil, Agarwal, Briseno, 2017), which through musical events, plays and talent shows, it shows citizens that taxes have not only an economic but also a social importance.

Conclusions

While the shadow economy may initially aid the rapid economic growth in developing countries, later on it may be an obstacle to their movement towards a next level of development. The same can be said regarding Albania, where the informal economy can endanger EU membership negotiations. Investing in ways to encourage tax compliance, helps both the financial situation of the state and the society as a whole. Fighting corruption, integrate tax education in all levels of school education, include public to tax revenue expenditure projects can be very effective. Innovative techniques such as use of more technology and entertaining programs on tax related topics or even celebrate tax have also shown to be very effective in implementing a new fiscal culture in different countries around the world.

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The impact of tourism on the economy

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Abstract

Albania due to its favorable geographical position, rich natural resources, property, cultural heritage it possesses, is considered as an attractive tourist destination. In this context it is preferable to be visited by fascinated visitors of culture and history. Moreover, the presence of many attractive landscapes, national parks such as Llogara, Butrint, and Blue Eye, various water resources and coastal tourism combined with the cultural one, give a wide variety to the tourist season and increase significantly the tourist potential. Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in different places from their usual resident place for a period not longer than a calendar year. Experts are of the opinion that because of Albania's favorable resources, wealth and cultural history, and nonetheless its low prices of food and accommodation compared to other countries, attract many tourists who choose our country to spend their holidays. The price should justify at its best the conditions offered to the tourists. The question arises: which are some of the main factors which greatly influence on the increasing number of vacationers? What effect will the number of visitors have on the income increase from tourism, thus turning tourism into the leading supplier of the economy's income? The price of the package is one of the main factors that will influence in selecting bids, increasing the number of vacationers who will attend a particular destination. In many cases, volatility of the exchange rate is crucial when choosing the destination, because in most cases vacationers tend to turn to cheaper destinations. Both these items have contributed substantially to improve the situation. In recent years, revenues from tourism have been growing. It is one of the sectors where the economic growth of our country will be focused in the future.

Keywords: Business, developments, analyzing, opportunities, tourists.



Introduction

Albania due to its favorable geographical position, rich natural resources, property, cultural heritage it possesses, is considered as an attractive tourist destination. In this context it is definitely preferable to be visited by fascinated visitors of culture and history. Moreover, the presence of many attractive landscapes, national parks such as Llogara, Butrint, and Blue Eye, various water resources and coastal tourism combined with the cultural one, give a wide variety to the tourist season and increase significantly the tourist potential. What make Albania unique are the large variety of attractive sites and the relative proximity of these attractions in a unique cultural context.

Tourism comprises the activities of people travelling to and staying in different places from their usual resident place for a period not longer than a calendar year.

Ways through which tourists arrive in the Albanian territory are:

- By land
- By sea
- By air

According to the data declared by INSTAT concerning years 1998-2008, it is clearly revealed that tourists prefer crossing the border by land, since a significant proportion of them are our neighbors.

Experts are of the opinion that because of Albania's favorable resources, wealth and cultural history, and furthermore its low prices of food and accommodation compared to other countries, many tourists choose our country to spend their holidays. The price should justify at its best the conditions offered to the tourists.

Initially, this study aims at explaining the reason why economic policymakers have considered tourism as an important economic and social trend in our country and secondly it is also connected with the great importance that this element has had during the transition years.

Literature review and Methodology



The methodology and documentation is the main support for selecting those information that needs to be faced with infinity of information. Thus, given the context of the scientific work, the methodology used by us is qualitative in terms of information gathering and contains five models, part of the qualitative method. The methodology used has passed in these phases:

First, research problem has been identified and research questions and hypotheses have been raised; Secondly, the title of the paper is defined and the research plan is elaborated. So the literature is collected and the bibliography that will be used applying the comparative and deductive method is defined. Finally, the structure of the work has been built up with its component parts; the topic work has been developed according to the defined structure, based on the acquired knowledge, as well as on the qualitative data obtained mainly in books, various articles, newspapers, magazines, internet resources, etc.

1. Research questions

The question that arise str: which are some of the main factors that greatly influence the increasing number of vacationers? The question arises: which are some of the main factors which greatly influence on the increasing number of vacationers? What effect will the number of visitors have on the income increase from tourism, thus turning tourism into the leading supplier of the economy's income?

4. Hypotheses

The number of visitors has an irrefutable effect on the growth of tourism revenues, and tourism has no impact on the country's economy in revenue generation.

- *Which are some of the main factors which greatly influence on the increasing number of vacationers?*

Some of the the most important factors are:

- The price of the package is one of the main factors that will influence in selecting bids, increasing the number of vacationers who will attend a particular destination. This price should justify the best conditions that will be offered to the tourists. The increased number of tourists will lead to revenue growth of accommodated units, and hotels in general (ancillary services). This sector has increased its share of contribution to the national economy as well as the value in employment, agriculture, livestock, food



processing factories, transport, etc. Above all, this will be accompanied by an increased number of working places, then somehow this whole chain reaction will affect to some extent the poverty alleviation.

Remittances and tourism are the ones that have had a positive impact on the economy until now. The arrival of immigrants and foreign vacationers has directly reflected in the Albanian economy with higher flows in the foreign currency.

- In many cases, volatility of the exchange rate is crucial to choosing the destination, because in most cases vacationers tend to turn to cheaper destinations.

Both these items have contributed substantially to improve the situation.

Tourism has had a significant economic development in recent years. So, what are the objectives to be achieved by increasing the tourist development of our country? Among the main objectives stated are:

- to generate jobs and income,
- to accelerate economic and social development throughout the country,
- to improve living conditions in Albania,
- to initiate economic activities,
- to create a positive image of the country internationally as a tourist attraction and destination,
- to increase state profits in foreign currencies as well as by entrance fees,
- to develop a timely sustainable tourism and environmentally friendly.

But however these objectives can be realized if the success of this strategy is based on the partnership of stakeholders of the tourism sector. Tourist partners' mission is described as follows:

- It welcomes tourists and therefore hospitality and high quality service are better understood as one of the important elements within tourist product;
- Protects and develops the environment in a very productive way
- Supports cultural heritage

In recent years, revenues from tourism have been growing. It is one of the sectors where the economic growth of our country will be focused in the future. Economic factors are among the most important ones affecting the growth or decline of tourism demand, as they are crucial in choosing or not a tourist destination.



- **The most important factors contributing to the development of tourism.**

The most important factors are:

- **Legal Politico:** These factors define the governmental and legal framework within which business organizations have been operating. Government with its legislation, especially in the field of taxation and fiscal policy exercises a great impact not only in the sphere of business but also in other areas of social life activity. Government intervenes in economic life, among other things, to make the distribution of resources in society, so as to ensure an optimal structure of the product produced. Legislation enacted by the government acts as inhibitors or stimulators of business activity"²⁹, to fight the corruptive acts.

It is important to analyze such elements as: the corruptive acts, plus other factors and the way how these factors influence the increase of the pressure of the public against the corruptive acts in different countries and more concretely in Albania.

How we understand the term corruption? Corruption is a complex and old phenomenon. The term corruption derives from the Latin word "Corruption" that means "moral degradation". The concept of corruption in general changes depending on the context and is quite difficult to define it in a single coherent term even because of its multiple dimensions. Usually in the public context, corruption is defined as an illegal act that is connected to the abuse of the power and public trust for personal benefits. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) connects corruption in correlation through concepts like: power, responsibility, freedom of action, integrity and transparency.

"There is a wide public perception that the system of justice is affected from the phenomenon of corruption and external influence in giving justice. Today the judiciary power is considered from the assessing reports of the domestic and foreign organisations, public complaints or

²⁹ "Management", Shyqyri Llaci, Tirana Alb 2002, ISBN 99927-771-33, pg. 50, 51, 52,



denouncements done on the green lines (numbers) that are installed on every institution, as one of the fields with the highest level of corruption".³⁰

The Institute for Researches on the Development Alternatives, through a questionnaire titled "Corruption in Albania: the perceptions and experiences" done in 2009, noticed that Albanians believed that Courts are mostly affected by monetary interests, connections to the business, personal connections of the Judges and political considerations. These questionnaires have showed Albanians believe that Judiciary is one the three institutions that has the lowest contribution on fighting corruption.³¹ Nowadays exist three concepts that treat the way how corruption affects the human rights. They are direct corruption, indirect corruption and remote corruption.³² Corruption is a global problem. In many cases the complexity of corruption in different sectors needs deep analyses for understanding better the reasons and the consequences, but even to learn and explore new solutions.

- **Economic:** In this grouping, a set of factors have been included. Among the most important, we can mention economic growth, the size of interest, inflation, unemployment, industrial investments, money market and capital, the nature of competition, the industrial structure.
- **Socio-cultural:** Socio-cultural environment consists of norms, principles, attitudes and behavior which are characteristics of a group of people or of a particular society. These elements vary for people living in different geographical areas, for poor and rich people, workers and employers, the educated and those with lower education, for different age groups.

³⁰PM Decision no..519, date 20.7.2011 "For the approval of the Inter Sectorial Strategy of Justice and its plan of action"

³¹Corruption in Albania, Perceptions and Experiences, The institute for Development, Researches and Alternatives, Pg. 22-24 (2009).

³²United Nations Development Program (2004), Anti-Corruption Practice Note, UNDP
http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/AC_PN_English.pdf Udhëzuesadministrativ



- **Technological:** They reflect current products' knowledge on production and services. The impact of technology is reflected in new products, machinery and modern equipment and new services. The benefits of technology are numerous; but in short, they have productivity and higher living standards, more leisure time and higher variety of products and services.
- **International:** International environment includes developments in countries where the organization conducts business activities that exert a certain impact on it.

In recent years, Albanian tourism developments are to be evaluated."³³

Referring to the National Strategy for Development and Integration "With all the great potential, development of the tourism sector is conditioned by poor infrastructure in some tourist areas, the lack of efficient systems for treating solid waste treatment, the lack of a strict control by local governments for the informal constructions, low funding to protect and maintain areas of natural and cultural interest, untrained human resources in public and private sector, ambiguous rights on property and failure of legal framework in general and normative acts regulations for constructions in particular, the lack of cooperation between the public and private sector and an umbrella association of the private sector itself.

The vision of the tourism strategy for Albania is to be considered as a safe tourist destination, with high-value, characterized by a unique variety of natural and cultural world class, in a small geographic area, managed in a responsible environmental and social, easily reached by European tourism markets.

- Specialized tourism products should be developed under a general umbrella where the following types of tourism should be integrated, trying to balance the geographical distribution of tourism activities across the country:
- Sun and beach tourism in the long run.
- Special interest tourism (such as ecotourism, rural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism and hiking), in the short term and medium term.
- Business and conference tourism in the short and medium term.

³³ "Management", Shyqyri Llaci, Tirana Alb 2002, ISBN 99927-771-33, pg. 50, 51, 52,

The sector's strategic priorities

The sector's strategic priorities are:

Awareness and marketing in Albania will be achieved by working on many levels to develop domestic tourism, to consolidate and unify country's tourism products with international ones, to create a compelling image for the leaders of the market opinion, for the country's values through specialized travel companies, local tourism companies and internet, active participation in international tourism fairs, as well as inviting foreign media to visit Albania.

Development and diversification of the tourist product will be focused on the discovery of Albania through its nature and culture. This will be achieved and depend on the ability of local areas to be effectively organized, to transform their natural and cultural viable tourism product, completed with recommended sites and activities, information and interpretation, lodging, food, guide services and a variety of other features that determine the value of a destination.

Investments in natural areas and culture will be achieved particularly through the establishment of financial mechanisms and long-term development and approval of tourism plans, which encourage investors by giving them the main directions of development and implementing a policy of incentives for investments in tourism potential.

Human resource management including the creation of an elite tour guides, training managers of tourist sites, professionals and staff hospitality, building language skills; these will be available through enriching curricula with courses tourism professional, especially in higher education.

Business climate: Business sectors grow more successfully with a regulatory framework that is clear and ensures that all stakeholders play by the same rules. This will be achieved through a close partnership with the public sector, the calibration of international tourism standards and developing a common platform for the development of tourism.

Data management and information is essential to tourism planning, marketing and monitoring. This will help the Tourist Information Offices in districts.

Territorial planning will widely support the development of tourism through regulatory plans, urban studies, and infrastructure investments such as ports or waste management.³⁴

³⁴Referring to the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2009-2013, pg. 88,



This approach has already been implemented through integrated project management in coastal zone of southern Albania, as well as the adoption of the Law "On Territorial Planning".

In relation with the territorial planning, management of environmental development, constructions in accordance with the programs of socio-economic development is extremely necessary to avoid a chaotic self-regulation, which would result in significant costs incidental to tourism, as well as an energy system that does not consider the environment. The whole program of public investment in infrastructure and related services target easily and comfortable access to tourists in touristic areas, creating better conditions to stay in these areas, as well as facilitating the supply of these goods areas and services. Factors that influence the supply and demand for tourism are:

- **Accommodation:** Attention should be paid to provide additional services, more facilities, and entertainment options. Accommodation includes: The number of beds, food or other activities aiming the entertainment, which makes it possible.
- **Investments in infrastructure:** It is one of the key elements that have an impact on the development of tourism. The same services such as water, roads, facilities, travelling, waste disposal, energy, etc, are required. Airports, ports, and roads support and identify country's economic growth; they are a key factor to reduce movement costs and increase tourist offers. Tourists are demanding more and more adventures during their holidays and are reducing more and more traditional holidays.
- **Promotion:** Serves as a strategy or rather as the beginning of a strategy to make customers aware, to stimulate their interest, curiosity and furthermore they are an important awareness factor. "Promotion is a marketing tool that includes different actions to stimulate demand. In fact promoting sales such as tourist packages involves entire actions that push product towards the purchaser. Consequently, it intervenes as an accelerator in the sales process.
- **Sales promotion** consists in the use of some short-term incentive means that are used to promote rapid acquisition and/or greater particular products by consumers. While advertising offers a reason to buy, sales promotion offers an incentive to purchase. Sales promotion includes tools for consumer promotion (for example, coupons, cash refund offers, discounts, gifts, warranty, demonstrations etc., promotion of trade (ex-discounts,



free goods, etc.) and that of sales force (ex-bonuses)³⁵. Marketing strategy varies depending on the destination, in the sense that if it is known or unknown. When the destination is known, recognition steps are not realized, but it is possible to pass on to next steps, which consist in creating a supporting strategy, and mitigating, which relies on the definition of the image, and website development

- **Seasonality:** One of the main goals of the tourism development strategy is our country.
- **Demographic factors:** Includes age, income level, family size, nation, employment, movement of people within and outside the country, lifestyle etc.

The impact of these factors in support of tourism development is particularly noticeable in trips organized during free time. The reason why economic policymakers have considered tourism as an important economic and social trend in our country is also connected with the great importance this element has had during the transition years. Moreover, it is seen as one of the most important sources of income, employment opportunities, economic diversification, environmental protection and the promotion of intercultural exchanges.

Our country offers potentials for dozens of different tourism activities in dozens of destinations. "If we refer to INSTAT data, in January-December 2011, 430,751 foreign visitors entered more than in 2010. During this period, the number of nonresident visitors has increased by 18.7% compared to 2010. The largest number of visitors is Kosovo, with 46%, followed by Macedonians 12%, Montenegrin and Greeks 6%, Italians 5% and Germans, 3% English. Table nr.1.

Table 1

Entries of foreign nationals by way of arrival (in thousands)- 2013-2017

<i>Description</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
INITIATIVES OF FOREIGN CITIZENS	3.256	3.673	4.131	4.736	5118

³⁵"Marketing bases" pg. 157, 158, Bardhyl Çeku, Arjan Abazi, Liljana Elmazi, Tirana 2001, first publishing.



By air	314	337	401	457	578
By sea	187	202	215	279	396
By land	2.755	3.515	3.134	3.999	4.144
Total 6512	Total 6512	Total 7346	Total 8262	Total 9471	Total 10236

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs

According to INSTAT data, we note that the inflows of foreign nationals for the period 2013-2017 have increased on average by 12.0%, while the expenses of foreign tourists (non-residents) in our country have increased on average 8.5% the same period. Table nr.2.

In the period 2013-2017, the number of Albanian citizens has increased by an average of 7.2%, while the expenses of Albanian citizens (resident) abroad have increased by an average of 2.2%.

In the period 2013-2017, the number of visitors who visited the forts and monuments was 621,061 persons, with the largest increase during the period under review, averaging 51.5%.

In the period 2013-2017, the inflows of foreign nationals coming to Albania have been approximately 21 million people. At this time, the inflows of foreign nationals have tended to increase by an average of 12.0% per annum. Entrants from Europe's region occupy the largest share of foreign nationals' inflows by 92.4% and have grown on average by 12.3% over the period 2013-2017. In 2017, arrivals from the European region increased by 4.5% compared to the previous year. Foreign nationals entering Albania come mainly from: Kosovo (34%), Macedonia (13%), Greece (10%), Montenegro and Italy (7% each). "Albania is a tourist attraction mainly for the 25-44 age group. Referring to the data of 2017, for the inflows of foreign nationals, we can say that they are at 9%, age 15-24, compared to the age of under 15, who are at 6% ”³⁶.

“Referring to the data of 2017, the inflows of foreign nationals for both personal and business purposes are dominated by men. In the period 2013-2017, the number of foreign visitors staying nights (including visitors staying at least one night in the hotel or other accommodation facilities, relatives, homes, etc.) constitutes an average of 89.4% of total inflows, increasing by 13.0%. Personal Travels are trips that usually take place for holidays or visits to friends and relatives.

³⁶www.instat.gov.al



Business trips are trips that take place for professional or study purposes (seminars, business meetings, participation in professional sports or cultural meetings, etc.). Foreigners, referring to data of 2017, spent on average 4.2 nights staying in Albania, spending an average of 63 euros a day. Foreign citizens (non-residents) for 2017, stayed mostly at the hotel (79%) and came with private cars (75%). Foreign nationals who prefer to visit Albania for 2017 are citizens from Kosovo.

Kosovars: Average stay nights: 3.8 days, 83% staying at the hotel, 87% for vacation, average daily expenses per person: 55 Euro.

Macedonians, average stay nights: 3.6 days, 74% staying at the hotel, 78% on vacation average daily expenses per person: 55 Euro

Montenegro, average stay nights: 2.7 days, 93% staying at the hotel, 67% on vacation, average daily expenses per person: 105 Euro

Greeks, average stay nights: 3.7 days, 78% staying at the hotel, 63% for vacation average daily expenses per person: 78 Euro

Italians, average stay nights: 6.2 days, 78% staying at the hotel, 75% for vacation, average daily expenses per person: 92 Euro”³⁷

- ***How important is tourism in the economy?***

“In the period 2013-2017, the expenditures of foreign tourists (non-residents) in our country to GDP are on average 13.3%, while the expenditures of Albanian citizens (resident) abroad to GDP are 11.2% on average. In 2017, the cost of foreign tourists (non-residents) in our country to GDP is 14.9%, while the expenses of Albanian citizens (resident) abroad to GDP are 11.0%. Directly related tourism activities generated about 39 billion ALL in value added in 2017, contributing around 2.5% to GDP. Considering the indirect effects of tourist spending on other

³⁷www.instat.gov.al



economic activities, this contribution is even higher"³⁸. The above-mentioned statistics show an increase in the number of visitors and we conclude that: "Statistics published on tourism and economic trends make it possible to identify links between the nature of the revenue with the volume of travel and expenses incurred on them".³⁹

Conclusions and recommendations

The above: Always relying on statistics, evidencing an increase in the number of visitors arriving in Albania, and considering that: "Tourism published statistics and economic trends make it possible to find the links between the nature of revenues with the volume of the travels and expenses incurred in them ", we note that: Increasing the number of vacationers makes tourism one of the leading providers of revenue-generating businesses. Moreover, we can say: It is incumbent on us not only to identify the factors that really contribute to the development of tourism, but everyone should pay more attention to environmental factors and issues in Albania, as an element with a very important impact and one of the main factors for developing and generating income from tourism.

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Using only hydropower and no solar power or other renewables is bringing a considerable damage to the Albanian economy

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Abstract

Through this work, we intend to highlight the grave and considerable damage that the use of only hydropower and no solar power or other renewable energies is doing to the Albanian economy. The increasing tendency to make investments in hydropower, such as investments in a considerable number of small and mid-sized hydropower plants and investments in replacing old technologies with new technologies, has led to a lack of attention towards solar power and other renewable energies. The fact rivers are located in the northern part of Albania comprises another disadvantage that shows that energy sources must be diversified since under these conditions, the entire energy source is located in north Albania. The need for other renewable energies is great not only because the central and the southern part of Albania are uncovered but also because when there is drought and no rains, which lead to a hydropower in crisis, we have the solar power, which is not only present in the center and in the south but it is also at its maximal capacity in hot and dry season, due to the geographical position of Albania. The increasing use of hydropower also influences the destruction of protected environmental areas, damaging the environment, the flora and fauna., but the use of solar power and other renewable energies brings about fewer damages. There is also the European Commission directive which foresees that 38% of the total energy needs should be fulfilled with renewables, including the energy for transport, heating and electric power.

Keywords: *electricity; hydropower; parks; solar power; renewables.*

Introduction

Albania is one of the few countries in the world that has a favorable geographical position which enables solar radiation nearly at optimal parameters. We are a Mediterranean country where



temperatures are appropriate and not too high. We have a geographical spread of electricity generation sources that sustains the fact that we should have an increase of electricity generation from solar power, mostly in the south of the country. We are at the right time and moment to maximally intensify efforts, so that more and more have electricity that is generated from the solar power. The presence of many hilly and mountainous terrains and salty lands, which are considered non-productive by law, is one more important reason that reinforces the idea of using the solar power as soon as possible. Even though the present global economy is characterized of chances of cooperation amid countries that have nearly organic ties, having independence as regards energy generation is a very valuable asset. The increasing speed of tourism development, which is expected to significantly increase, serves as another ringing bell in reminding us about the importance of the energy, especially the solar power. The large number of tourists during the summer season favors investments in parks where electricity is generated from solar power since tourism is at high levels in summer, when the amount of electricity generated in solar power parks may be higher. Raising the research and development in relation to the solar power and other renewable powers to a higher level and applying at a high rate parks of solar energy and wind power as well as other renewable energies not only has increased the efficiency of this industry but also has drastically reduced the cost of solar panels, wind turbines etc.

Literature review

Hydropower can not be the only solution to the Albanian economy or any other world economy. In our country, hydropower consists more than 99% of the overall energy generation.

In the last few years, the electricity produced in Albania has reached 70% of the overall energy consumption. Around 30% has been imported, thus being bought from abroad.

But 2017 was a year with a high significance to the Albanian economy, since 50% of the needed energy was imported, which means that half of the overall electricity consumption was met by imports. If we analyze it from a financial standpoint, an amount of 200 million euros was spent to purchase electricity during 2017. Having into account that 1MW costs 1 million euros on sale, if we invest, it costs: 1MW in an energy park with photovoltaic panels is worth 800000 euros.

1000 W x 800 Euros = 800000 euros, and taking into account the fact that only for 2017, the Albanian government spent 200 million euros. If we make a simple calculation with the amount



spent in year 2017, it results that: 200 million / 800 thousand euros = 250 MW capacity of a possible energy park, either eolic or hydroelectric, thus a hydropower station.

But if we take into consideration the expenses paid during 2016 and 2018, which amount to around 240 million euros both, the amount spent for these two years is equal to 240 million / 800 thousand euros = 300 MW. Thus the total amount that was spent to purchase electricity for the said two years – 2016 and 2017 – is equal to an energy park of 300 MW, which can be a photovoltaic, eolic or a hydropower park.

If we consider years 2016, 2017 and 2018 altogether, we can then say that the money spent to purchase electricity during these three years could be used to set up a hydropower station at a nameplate capacity of 550 MW, which is larger and more powerful than the hydropower station of Fierza that has an installed capacity of 500 MW.

200 million + 240 million = 440 million euros

440 million / 800 thousand euros = 550 MW of installed capacity.

It would be a hydropower station with a greater installed capacity than that of Fierza, which totals to 500 MW . Therefore, if we had used the sum spent for the aforesaid three years, which amounts to 440 million euros, we would be able to solve the problem once and forever, investing in a hydropower station with an installed capacity of 550 MW, which is 50 MW larger than the installed capacity of Fierza hydropower plant and which would supply electric power to the entire population, needing no imports from abroad.

Thus not only we have lost the chance to build a hydropower station with the abovementioned installed capacity, but we also would not have to spend as much as we have spent to purchase electricity during the said three years and in the future. The average expenses paid by the Albanian government in this context are about 130 million euros per year. The study has been ready for more than 30 years now and it is about Skavica Hydropower Station, which would be set up on the waters of Drini i Zi (Black Drin), in-between Kukes and Peshkopi, with an installed capacity of 450 MW, to become the third biggest hydropower station in the country after the hydropower plant of Koman and that of Fierza. The project of Skavica Hydropower Station is ready and it may very well be a final solution.



Figure 1. Koman hydropower station

Thus the hydropower station of Skavica, which is envisaged to have an installed capacity of 450 MW, would save the state budget a considerable amount, averagely 130 million euros, and we would have a final solution, having no need to be dependent on the foreign market, where, as it is known from the energy stock market, prices continuously fluctuate, especially when there is a high demand for electricity, like during on-peak time periods.

Methodology

In order to explain and sustain the need for using solar power to generate electricity, but also the damage that is more and more being done due to the fact it is not being used, I have calculated the extraordinary expenses the public finances have made to purchase electricity.

High expenses on electricity are most usual on-peak time, when electricity is worth the most, thus during summer, when there is drought, and when electricity generation from solar power would be at its peak time.



Referring to the values of generations in years and the amount of exports, I have also proved that if solar energy parks are implemented, we will drastically reduce expenses even since there will be a decrease in the (financial) losses resulting from the electricity transmission.

The electricity transmission is carried out in long distances, such as from the north to the south, which leads to high losses in the grid. Diversification of electricity generation sources is another factor that leads to the need for the electricity from solar power. Environmental pollution is another element that needs to be addressed through electricity generation from solar power.

Thus, this entire way of considering electricity generation sources and their efficiency as well as their side effects, shows not only the need to generate electricity from the sun but also the need to drastically reduce unnecessary expenses made in relation to electricity.

Results and discussions

But the solution is not only dependent on the hydropower station of Skavica, but also on the generation of electricity from other hydropower stations. According to the National Agency of Natural Resources, there have been granted concessionary permits to build 523 hydropower stations, 177 of which are actually active, 43 are under construction and 364 plants have not been built yet. The installed capacity of all hydropower stations that are planned to be established will be 2165 MW, of which 1785 MW belong to the hydropower stations that have not been built, yet, or that are not at a state of generation. It is clear that an extremely powerful and considerable electric potential, which has an installed capacity 3.5 times higher than the hydropower station of Fierza, is still to be put into operation.

But on the other side, if these hydropower stations had been built, we would then have an installed power surpassing 3000 MW. Up to year 2002, the installed power capacity was 1440 MW, hydropower stations alone. And with this installed capacity of more than 3000 MW not only we would definitely solve the problem of domestic electricity production, having no dependence on the market, but we would also have the opportunity to sell electricity on the international market, conducting a good management of such a sale on-peak time and when the electricity price is higher on the international market.

Investment in all these hydropower stations must be carried out in accordance with periods foreseen by a given concessionary contract. In consequence of this contract, there has been



received a concessionary permit and according to it, it is the obligation of the Albanian government not only to monitor the progress of concessionary contracts but also to create facilities and to give the right support in line with the commitments and obligations that derive from the concessionary contract, till the investment is complete. But investment in hydropower stations creates a serious environmental problem, affecting the ecosystem, the flora and fauna.

For this reason, there have been canceled many hydropower plant investments in the region and beyond, such as the one that would be built in Mavrovo in the Republic of North Macedonia, or those in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries. Activists of EcoAlbania, Riveria Hatch from Austria, Euronatur from Germany have openly opposed construction of hydropower stations, suing the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Environment and the National Environmental Agency for the construction of Poçem Hydropower station on Vjosa River, because, amid other things, it is about setting up a dam that will be 25 meters high.

Professor Fritz Schriemer from the University of Vienna came to Albania with the purpose to prevent construction of hydropower stations on Vjosa River. In the speech delivered in relation to this problem, amid other things, he said, "If the hydropower station will be established here, all will lose. The ecological damages will be serious. It is not only about the damages to occur in the flora and fauna, which will be destroyed by floods, but it is also about the level of the underground waters that will decrease."

Vjosa is the last natural wild river in Europe. If a hydropower station is built on it, entire future generations would be affected by the loss caused due to such a construction.

Vjosa is 270⁴⁰ kilometers long. Its head water is in Pindus mountain range in Greece and it ends up in the Albanian part of Adriatic Sea. But Vjosa is not the only threatened river in Albania. There are many other rivers that risk to be exposed to ecological change and to the destruction of their flora and fauna etc. Let us mention Valbona River that flows through a tourist area with a rare beautiful landscape. Works on construction of a hydropower station on Valbona waters are going on, even though the area's residents have protested and raised their voice against such a project.

But on the other side, we also have the permanent problem that is related to the high cost of purchasing electricity in the regional market and elsewhere.

⁴⁰<https://www.albinfo.ch/riverwatch-kunder-ndertimit-te-digave-ne-shqiperi/>



As mentioned above, the amount used for purchasing electricity for 2017, was 200 million euros, a considerable figure, taking into account that half of the needed electricity was domestically generated, and the other half was provided through importation. The huge amount of expenses for purchasing electric power is not the only significant problem. Another problem is the fact that in years characterized by a low generation of electricity, importation of electricity occurs especially during summer which is hot and dry. So in summer, the electricity demand should be met using other alternative sources, such as natural gas, coal or the solar power that is generated by photovoltaic panels and that is the most appropriate alternative of all. Other alternatives of generating electricity are the eolic plants which generate electricity by utilising the kinetic energy of the wind.

We have areas that favor the use of wind energy, such as Karaburun penninsula, an area in Rubik and in Lezha. We also have the energy that is obtained from the biomass and the geothermal energy which is obtained due to the use of the difference in temperature between the earth and the external environment temperature. If all the above mentioned technologies and plants had been applied in limited quantities and spaces in sites that would be appropriate for them, we would have a diversification of electric power generation, which if applied, even though in a low level, would guarantee a very good usage of all resources our country offers and the use of these resources in line with the need and demand for electric power. Generation of electric power from the burning of natural gas and coal as raw materials remains a traditional alternative.

Both these raw materials for thermal power stations are domestically provided, thus there have been natural reserves of natural gas and coal. According to the data reflected on the national energy strategy, the reserves of natural gas have decreased since year 1990, because there have not been carried out other investments to find and exploit underground reserves, which studies show that are located in our country.



Figure 2. Natural gas thermal power plant

In year 1990⁴¹, there was used a quantity of 206 ktoe of natural gas for electricity generation. Given such figure, it can be said that electricity generation from thermal power plants, which used natural gas as fuel, consisted 10% of the country's general electricity production. In 2001, the quantity of natural gas used as a raw material in thermal power plants was 7,8 ktoe and the output consisted 0.43 % of the general electric power production. Thus, the fall in natural gas extraction is considerable, but if we consider the fact that we will have a sufficient and continuous supply with natural gas, and the fact that natural gas pollutes the atmosphere at a level that is 60% lower than the pollution caused by coal, when used as a fuel in thermal power plants, we can consider it as an alternative. But once again, natural gas is a pollutant and it is not the best alternative to electricity generation. Electric power generation from burning coal in thermal power plants is another alternative to electricity generation. The supply with coal, which was used as a raw material in electricity generation, was 644.5⁴² ktoe in year 1990, or 22 % of the entire quantity of raw materials that were used for electricity generation. In year 2001, the

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http://www.akbn.gov.al/images/pdf/energji-te-rinovueshme/Stategjia_Kombetare_e_Energiise.pdf

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http://www.akbn.gov.al/images/pdf/energji-te-rinovueshme/Stategjia_Kombetare_e_Energiise.pdf

production of coal that used to serve as a raw material in electricity generation was 20,7 ktoe, or 1,11 % of the entire quantity of raw materials that were used for electricity generation. Such a situation was due to the fall in the use of coal for electric power production. The coal that is extracted in Albania is too poor. It is of lignite type and it has a low calorific value. The coal is extracted from great depths and this is the reason why the cost of its extraction is too high. Besides the fact it contains carbon, a characteristic for the coal found in Albania is the fact it also possesses high values of sulfur and ash, so its use would require extra systems and plants in order to diminish its negative impact on environment.



Figure 3. Coal thermal power plant

In order to reduce the cost of electricity generation and to have another alternative that is different from electricity generation from hydropower plants, the option of putting the thermal power plant of Fier into operation has always been considered. The World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank are investing in building a new thermal power plant in Fier that will have an installed capacity of 135 MW and an investment value of 110 million dollars. Nevertheless, coal thermal power plants are the main pollutants of environment and as such, they can only have a temporary role in the Albanian energy market. The solar power is an energy attracting more and more interest due to the fact that it is a renewable green energy and prices of solar panels, which are called photovoltaic panels, keep falling every month.

As we know, Albania is a country with a warm climate and it has minimally 265 sunny days per year, which gives our country an important advantage to invest more in solar power parks that comprise photovoltaic panels and systems for electricity self-generation, as are called those systems that generate electricity at an installed capacity up to 500 W. The law on renewable energy resources, dated February 2017⁴³, foresees two forms of investments in solar power, and in consequence, two forms of generation, basing on the way the electric power generated from the sun is sold.

1. The first form is investing in energy parks and selling electricity on market the same way other products are sold, which is also supported by the energy market liberalization. This form is the same with the construction of hydropower and thermal power plants etc.



Figure 4. Solar power park

2. The second form is that of electricity auto-generation from solar power. Such a form presumes that every household or business invests in establishment of systems of photovoltaic panels up to a capacity of 500 W. But in the second case, the producer has only the option to use the generated energy and to feed back the remaining part into the grid up at a quantity that would be equal to the quantity the producer has received from the grid.



Figure 5. Auto-generating photovoltaic system

This form is enabled due to installation of systems on rooftops of dwellings, on different sheds of buildings that can be garages, public parking lots etc. If we install an auto-generating photovoltaic system, it will also need an electric meter with two switches that will guarantee the feed back of surplus electricity into the main grid. The law foresees that an energy park investment can be carried out only on non-productive lands and not on arable fields that serve the production of agricultural products. A similar case is the energy park that is to be established in Akërne of Vlora that will have an installed capacity of 50 MW.

According to the contract, the state will guarantee purchases from this park for a period of 15 years at a value of 100 euros per megawat. The solar power and investments in solar energy parks pave the way for more investments to be made in the southern part of Albania, since hydropower investments are more concentrated in the northern part of the country. Such a distribution also enables coverage in a nearly balanced way since great hydropower investments, like Koman Hydropower Station, the hydropower stations of Fierza, Ulza, Shkopet etc., are situated in the north. But on the other side, the south is the most sunny part of our country. Thus we can say that even as regards solar radiation, the south offers maximal parameters for investments in energy parks. An important element is also the fact that electricity suffers fluctuations in its price in different periods of time.

Under conditions of a normal purchase at the most opportune time and moment, it is bought at 35-40 euros/Mwh. Whereas under conditions of a high market demand, especially in the regional



market, its price increases much more than the values it has under normal conditions. We are talking about 100-200 euros/Mwh. Such prices are characteristic of periods with weather extreme occurrences, such as cold winter or dry summer. Besides the drought, tourism is a factor influencing the rise of prices during summer, which makes electricity a much demanded good. Considered from this standpoint, we can mention the World Energy Council that classifies countries basing on energy security and equality. The World Energy Council has ranked our country respectively the 75th and the 95th⁴⁴.

Albania has a very big cost not only of electricity generation but also of its distribution through the electric power transmission network. As regards investments in photovoltaic energy parks that generate electric power, we would like to stress that these investments must be made in the south due to the high demand that part of the country has for such a product during summer but also due to the fact that there are high losses in the grid during the transmission of energy from the existing hydropower stations, which are mostly situated in the north. There are many salty lands in the south of Albania that can not be used as productive lands. Thus they better serve as lands for carrying out investments of solar power parks. Through the law of renewable energies' resources, Albania has paved the way for conduct of investments in photovoltaic parks up to an installed capacity of 2 MW without needing to be called investments carried out by concessionary contracts. Such a facility enables an obvious increase of investments in energy parks at a capacity of 2 MW.

Conclusions and recommendations

The geographical position of Albania makes it easier to invest in photovoltaic parks for electric power generation. The geography of distribution of hydropower investments is situated mostly in the north of the country, and this is an important reason why there should be carried out investments of photovoltaic parks in the southern part of Albania, where the sun is more present. The continuous fall in prices of photovoltaic panels is an important element that generates the need for photovoltaic investments. The criterion set by the European Union to fulfill 38% of total energy needs with renewables. The costs of electricity transmission are an important reason for

⁴⁴<https://adviser.albaniaenergy.org/en/2018/07/11/advlorencgordani/challenges-on-build-up-a-sustainable-energy-sector-in-albania-2/>



encouraging photovoltaic investments. Having a neighboring country like Greece, which is continuously in need for electric power during summer season. Establishment of the energy stock market favors a better energy management from the financial standpoint. I recommend creation of practical and transparent procedures – which I consider necessary – for promoting investments in solar energy parks and electricity auto-generation out of the solar power. At the same time, there should be exploited all possible projects that can be carried out on hills' sides and tablelands that are positioned in a way they face south and on non-productive lands, such as salty lands and lands that are certified as infertile. Businesses should create facilities to invest in solar power generation, by easing the tax burden or giving them some incentives by purchasing the electricity they generated out of sun or wind. There should be enabled proper procedures to allow installation of the an electric meter with two switches that will guarantee the electricity auto-generation from the solar power not only at businesses but also at south facing flats

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electricity that is generated from solar power. <http://www.ere.gov.al/doc/ligj-nr.-7-dt.-2.2.2017- RES.pdf>

River Watch (30 Mars 2014) against the construction of dams in Albania.

<https://www.alinfo.ch/riverwatch-kunder-ndertimit-te-digave-ne-shqiperi/>



Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills as a predictor of effective teaching and learning of students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between information and communication technology skills and effective teaching and learning of students at university, as well as the effect of information and communication technology skills on effective teaching and learning. Correlational research design and a structured questionnaire were used in the study. A random cluster sample of students from the bachelor's degree program was taken. The study demonstrated that a positive correlation exists between information and communication technology skills and effective learning of students. It can be concluded that the information and communication technology skills impact effective teaching and learning. The findings of this study enhanced theoretical and practical understanding as information and communication technology skills is an important variable that impacts effective teaching and learning. It is one of a very small number of studies in information and communication technology skills to provide such results.

Keywords: *information and communication technology skills, effective teaching, effective learning.*



Introduction

The ubiquity of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have considerably transformed the higher educational landscape and are now providing an increasing number of novel and dynamic pathways for education delivery. The steady growth of flexible and affordable ICTs is impacting upon the higher education domain resulting in a departure from traditional education systems to more technologically driven forms of pedagogy. The concept of digital and information communication technology (ICT) literacy is receiving renewed empirical attention. This focus is attributed to the changing nature of society and the move towards the ideals of the knowledge-based economy. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a diverse set of technological tools and resources used for creating, storing, managing and communicating information. For educational purposes, ICTs can be used to support teaching and learning as well as research activities including collaborative learning and inquiring. One of the main applications of the ICTs in higher education is teaching and learning based on these new technologies. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) to academic staff and university students is critical to offer them more effective learning environments.

As educational institutions and other training facilities search for more economical ways to deliver education and training, the Internet has become the main mode of choice for its reach is farther and wider than any major educational marketing initiative. With the development of technology in the 21st Century, education systems attempt to integrate technology-based tools to improve experiences in pedagogy and administration. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become commonplace entities in all aspects of life. The use of ICT has fundamentally changed the practices and procedures of nearly all forms of endeavor within business and governance. Within education, ICT has begun to have a presence, but the impact has not been as extensive as in other fields. The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning settings and often this creates some tensions for some instructors and students. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between information and communication technology skills and effective teaching and learning of students at university, as well as the effect of information and communication technology skills on effective teaching and

learning. Research questions include: Is information and communication technology skills a predictor of effective teaching of students at university? Is information and communication technology skills a predictor of effective learning of students at university?

Literature review and hypothesis development

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this paper was built based on research about existing evidence of the relationships between ICT skills and teaching and learning at university students. Research focusing on ICT skills, teaching, and learning keywords were made through Sage, EBSCO, and ERIC databases. The diagram built based on these constructs was used as a conceptual framework for this study.

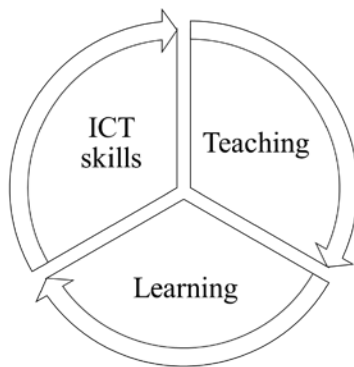


Figure: Conceptual framework

The importance and challenges of ICT use in teaching and learning

Vajargah, Jahani, &Azadmanesh (2010) pointed out that there are obstacles of using ICT at the university level; meanwhile, Dintoe (2018) found that the majority of faculty use specific compatible technologies relevant to their teaching experiences in response to the university systems mandates. ICT based learning practices had positive effects on ICT self-efficacy perceptions as well as students and lecturers who are conversant with a plethora of ICTs that can be adopted and customized to create a digital university (Pilten, Pilten, &Sahinkaya, 2017; Zozie, &Chawinga, 2018). The source of resistance in using technology as part of teaching and learning emanated from technology viewed as a fad with little impact on actual learning, and



challenges concerning institutional technology support (Chinyamurindi& Dlaza, 2018), meanwhile factors that have prevented the instructors and students from using ICT in teaching and learning are lack of proper access to ICT resources, overcrowded-classrooms, lack of technical and pedagogical support (Alemu, 2015). Ahmad et al. (2016) pointed out that teaching profession of today has demanded teachers to acquire certain ICT skills as a way of exploring, discovering and accessing information besides applying such knowledge for teaching purpose in the classroom; and Byungura, Hansson, Masengesho, and Karunaratne (2016) found that although there is some translation of ICT capacity building strategies, planning for motivation and provision of incentives to innovators is not stated in any of the institutional policies and this is a key to effective technology integration.

The material and technical as well as complicated political and economic conditions of higher institutions are established as the most significant factors that influence ICTs application, and the more lecturers use ICT tools to teach, the more students learn to use ICT tools in their own teaching (Manyuk, &Kuchumova, 2018; Jita, 2016). The university lecturers are knowledgeable about the importance of common tools of ICT (Gumbo, 2018); but the majority of universities lacked senate approved e-learning policies, a few lecturers (32%) and students (35%) used e-learning and few courses (10%) were offered online, and the majority of online uploaded modules (87%) were simply lecture notes and not interactive (Makokha, &Mutisya, 2016). Choeda, Dupka, & Zander (2016) found that the status of ICT-integrated pedagogy in higher education is at an early stage and is affected by low-speed Internet connectivity and a lack of adequate resources as well as training in ICT-integrated pedagogy.

Relationships between ICT and teaching

There were statistical differences between ICT self-efficacy beliefs and ICT level in certain common programs in terms of different independent variables, such as the length of ICT-use, the place of ICT-access, the frequency of ICT-use, the type of the course they were attending, and gender (Turel, Calik, &Doganer, 2015); meanwhile the adapting of young adults to the challenges of the digitization and new training practices requires the determining of more effective ways to attract, encourage and motivate students towards the utilization of quality theoretical and applied knowledge and skills in ICT (Apostolov, &Milenkova, 2018). The most



first-year students have difficulty in downloading and uploading course materials using the Learning Management Systems platforms, as well as although Diigo is helpful for data collection and sharing among students, students prefer Google Drive, an online file storage and synchronization service, for data analysis and elaboration (Umunnakwe, &Sello, 2016; Chan, Lau, Li, Pow, Lai, & Wong, 2017).

Hue and Jalil (2013) identified a slightly moderate positive relationship between lecturers' attitudes towards ICT integration into the curriculum and their ICT use in the classroom; but Barbosa, Sergio, Amariles, and Marilly(2019) pointed out that no significant differences among the learning styles or in the frequency of ICT use in students with competency-based training, as well as a gender gap were showed. Student experience with online education variables had significant and positive relationships with teaching, and comfort with ICT, psychoanalytical and psychosocial aid, task enabler, interdependence with ICT and learning collaboration impacts in teaching (Alzahrani, 2017; Adedokun-Shittu, & Shittu, 2014). The use of Information and Communications Technology, and the development of lecturers' competence with ICT has an impact on teaching and in problem-solving at the University (Masino, 2013; Fuglestad, 2009), meanwhile there was a significant relationship between Information Communication Technology utilization and self-regulated learning (Onivehu, Adegunju, Ohawuiro, &Oyeniran, 2018). Therefore, based on previous research it is hypothesized that:

H # 1: Teaching at university students has been explained partly by ICT skills.

Relationships between ICT and teaching and learning

Adedokun-Shittu, and Shittu (2014) found that comfort with ICT, psychoanalytical and psychosocial aid, task enabler, interdependence with ICT and learning collaboration impacts in learning; and Verhoeven, Heerwegh, and De Wit (2016) concluded that there is a relationship between the ICT learning experience and their command of ICT skills and the frequency of use of computers, ICT instruments, and ICT programs. The Usefulness of ICT and Ease of use of ICT factors, as well as peer learning, are the key dimensions of undergraduates' attitudes towards ICT, and irrespective of ICT adoption profiles, their gender or population groups the



learning value of an online simulation was more beneficial than traditional teaching methods (Meerza, & Beauchamp, 2017; Beukes, Kirstein, Kunz, & Nagel, 2018).

ICTs support innovative learning encourages independent learning and promotes participatory and collaborative learning (Eligi, & Mwantimwa, 2017); and accessibility to ICTs and requisite ICTs skills has significant impacts on e-readiness indicators (Chipembele, & Bwalya, 2016). Masino (2013) pointed out that the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has impact in e-learning at the University, meanwhile student experience with online education variables had significant and positive relationships with learning practice and the development of teachers' competence with ICT impacts improving learning, and problem-solving with ICT (Alzahrani, 2017; Fuglestad, 2009). Teaching and learning through ICT is an interactive process for second-year university students and has a positive effect on learning solid concepts (Zaranis & Exarchakos, 2018), meanwhile there was a significant relationship between ICT utilization, self-regulation, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, metacognition, and academic performance of prospective teachers (Onivehu, Adegunju, Ohawuiro, & Oyeniran, 2018).

Alzahrani (2017) indicate that the learning style, the dominance of traditional learning, and the universal pedagogical demand are likely to be some of the reasons behind the need for blended learning, and Muianga, Klomsri, Tedre, and Mutimucuo (2018) showed that collaborative E-learning supported the development of students' information management and problem-solving skills as well as their metacognitive strategies for self-regulated learning. Apeanti (2016) revealed that, pre-service teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, (mean = 3.76, SD = 0.53), perception of the effectiveness of ICT in teaching and learning (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.38), perception of the barriers in ICT integration (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.38) contributes 42.1%, 11.3% and 9.9% to the variances in the e-readiness of pre-service teachers (mean = 3.63, SD = 0.40). Therefore, based on previous research it is hypothesized that:

H # 2: Learning at university students has been explained partly by ICT skills.

Methodology

Method



A quantitative approach was the method used in the research. A correlational research design was used. Sophomore students of a large university were selected to be used in the study.

Sample and data collection

A structured questionnaire to sample of students selected was used to gather primary data in the research. Structured interviews are designed, piloted and applied by the researcher. A random cluster sample of the students (N=244) was used in the study. A breakdown of the cluster random sample of students included 151 females (61.8 percent) and 93 males (38.2 percent).

Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between information and communication technology skills and effective teaching and learning. Linear multivariate regression was used to assess the ability of one control measure to predict effective teaching and learning levels as well by information and communication technology skills. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity.

Results and discussions

Descriptive statistics

Table 1
Frequencies of *access to a computer at home* variable

Access to a computer at home				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 Yes	214	87.7	87.7	87.7
Valid 2 No	30	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	244	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 1, 87.7% of students claim that they have access to a computer at home, meanwhile, 12.3 % of them claim they do not have access to a computer at home. Referring to



descriptive statistics ($M= 1.12$, $SD= .329$), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 1 to 2. This result means that most respondents have access to a computer at home.

Table 2

Frequencies of internet *access at home* variable

Internet access at home					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1 Yes	141	57.8	57.8	57.8
Valid	2 No	103	42.2	42.2	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 2, 57.8% of students claim that they have internet access at home, meanwhile, 42.2 % of them claim they do not have internet access at home. Referring to descriptive statistics ($M= 1.42$, $SD= .495$), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 1 to 2. This result means that more than half of respondents have internet access at home.

Table 3

Frequencies of *use of internet access at home* variable

Use of the Internet from home					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	2 Rarely	117	48.0	48.0	48.0
	3 Regularly	26	10.7	10.7	58.6
Valid	4 Often	4	1.6	1.6	60.2
	5 Daily	97	39.8	39.8	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 3, 58.7% of students claim that they use rarely or regularly internet from home, meanwhile, 41.4 % of them claim that they use often or daily internet from home. Referring to descriptive statistics ($M= 3.33$, $SD= 1.409$), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 2 to 5. This result means that less than half of respondents use often or daily internet from home.



Table 4

Frequencies of *use a computer as part of my studies* variable

Use a computer as part of my studies				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	2 Rarely	49	20.1	20.1
	3 Regularly	4	1.6	21.7
Valid	4 Often	169	69.3	91.0
	5 Daily	22	9.0	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0

As shown in table 4, 21.7% of students claim that they use rarely or regularly a computer as part of their studies, meanwhile 78.3 % of them claim that they use often or daily a computer as part of their studies. Referring to descriptive statistics (M= 3.67, SD= .898), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 2 to 5. This result means that the two- thirds of respondents use often or daily a computer as part of their studies.

Table 5

Frequencies of *the effective teaching* variable

The effective teaching				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	2 Low	103	42.2	42.2
Valid	4 High	111	45.5	87.7
	5 Very high	30	12.3	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0

As shown in table 5, 42.2% of students claim that there is a low effective teaching, 45.5% high effective teaching, and 12.3% very high effective teaching. Referring to descriptive statistics (M= 3.28, SD= 1.139), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 2 to 5. This result means that more than half of respondents claim that there is a high or very high effective teaching.



Table 6

Frequencies of *the effective learning* variable

The effective learning					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 Low	103	42.2	42.2	42.2
	3 Medium	18	7.4	7.4	49.6
	5 Very high	123	50.4	50.4	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 6, 42.2% of students claim that there is a low effective learning, 7.4% high effective learning, and 50.4% very high effective learning. Referring to descriptive statistics (M= 3.28, SD= 1.139), 244 respondents ranging in levels from 2 to 5. This result means that more than half of respondents claim that there is a high or very high effective learning.

Inferential statistics: Test of hypothesis

As indicated by Pearson correlation outputs, there is a medium positive correlation between ICT skills and effective teaching variables, $r = .397$, $n = 244$, $p < .005$, where increases in ICT skills values were associated with increases in effective teaching values.

Table 7

Regression outputs of relationships between ICT skills and effective teaching

Model Summary^b												
Mod	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson		
					R Change	R Square Change	F	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F	Watson
1	.658 ^a	.432	.418	.778	.432	30.101	6	237	.000		1.687	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information and Communication Technology skills



b. Dependent Variable: The effective teaching

As shown in Table 7, the total variance of effective teaching levels explained by information and communication technology skills (the model) is 41.8%, $F(3, 30.101)$, $p < .005$, the other variance may be explained by other variables. This indicates that information and communication technology skills influence strongly effective teaching. The result was consistent with previously reported works, who argued that information and communication technology skills predict effective teaching (Hue & Jalil, 2013; Barbosa, Sergio, Amariles&Marlly, 2019; Alzahrani, 2017; Adedokun-Shittu, & Shittu, 2014; Masino, 2013; Fuglestad; 2009; Onivehu, Adegunju, Ohawuiro, &Oyeniran, 2018). In conclusion *hypothesis # 1: Effective teaching of students at university has been explained by information and communication technology skills*, is been supported.

As indicated by Pearson correlation outputs, there is a relatively medium positive correlation between ICT skills and effective learning variables, $r = .665$, $n = 244$, $p < .005$, where increases in ICT skills values were associated with increases in effective learning values.

Table 8

Regression outputs of relationships between ICT skills and effective learning

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Change	R Square Change	F	df1	df2	
1	.740 ^a	.547	.541	.500	.547	301.483	6	237	.000	2.296

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information and Communication Technology skills

b. Dependent Variable: The effective learning

As shown in Table 8, the total variance of effective learning levels explained by ICT skills (the model) is 54.7%, $F(3, 301.403)$, $p < .005$, the other variance may be explained by other variables. This indicates that information and communication technology skills influence strongly effective learning. The result was consistent with previously reported works, who argued that information and communication technology skills predict effective teaching (Adedokun-Shittu, & Shittu, 2014); Verhoeven, Heerwegh, & De Wit, 2016; Meerza, &



Beauchamp, 2017; Eligi, &Mwantimwa, 2017; Chipembele, & Bwalya, 2016; Masino, 2013; Alzahrani, 2017; Zaranis, &Exarchakos, 2018; Onivehu, Adegunju, Ohawuiro, &Oyeniran, 2018; Alzahrani, 2017; Muianga, Klomsri, Tedre, &Mutimucuo, 2018). In conclusion *hypothesis # 2: Effective learning of students at university has been explained by information and communication technology skills*, is been supported.

Conclusions and implications

One main limitation of the study should be acknowledged as part of the conclusions. The measurement of the information and communication technology skills, effective teaching, and effective learning is made based on self- reported instruments. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between information and communication technology skills and effective teaching and learning of students at university, as well as the effect of information and communication technology skills on effective teaching and learning. The prior assumption was that the information and communication technology skills impact the effective teaching and learning of students at university.

The results showed that most of the students have access to a computer at home. It is found that more than half of the students have internet access at home. The results showed that less than half of the students use often or daily internet from home. The results showed that the two- thirds of students use often or daily a computer as part of their studies. The results showed that more than half of students claim that there is a high or very high effective teaching. It is found that more than half of students claim that there is a high or very high effective learning. Therefore, universities and faculties should support lecturers and students to promote information and communication technology skills to influence the effective teaching and learning of students at university.

It is found that there is a medium positive correlation ($r= .397$) between information and communication technology skills and effective teaching. It is found that the total variance of effective teaching levels explained by information and communication technology skills is 41.8%, the other variance may be explained by other variables. This indicates that information



and communication technology skills influence strongly effective teaching. It is found that there is a relatively high positive correlation ($r = .665$) between information and communication technology skills and effective learning. It is found that the total variance of effective learning levels explained by information and communication technology skills is 54.7%, the other variance may be explained by other variables. This indicates that information and communication technology skills influence strongly effective learning.

The results of the study supported by other researchers about the influence of information and communication technology skills on effective teaching and learning have important implications for future research. Such research should investigate the relationships between information and communication technology skills and other variables. The results of this study also have important implications for practice. The important programs and other interventions should be designed to develop and to support students because it is confirmed by this study that information and communication technology skills influence strongly effective teaching and learning. Overall the findings of this study enhanced theoretical and practical understanding as information and communication technology skills is an important variable that impacts effective teaching and learning.

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The Importance of Applying an Online Library Management System at Luarasi University

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Abstract

The fast-technological developments have led to a wide use of web in various areas of life.

The purpose of this study is to explore the importance of a library enriched with books and the development of an on-line library management system for Luarasi University. A mixed method was used in the study. A structured questionnaire, as well as a semi-structured interview was used to collect the primary data. A non- random sample of students as well as the lecturers were selected to be used in the study. The study found that currently all the procedure of borrowing a book and searching, recording, and data deleting is saved in a note book. The scope of this system is to register a new book, to search and borrow a book much faster than the traditional method and minimize the margin of human errors as well.

Key words: *On-line Library, Library Management System, e-Library*

Introduction

Nowadays, the fast-technological developments have led to a wide use of web in various areas of life. A very effective usage of web technology is when universities provide online library, offering better management of its resources and time to students, professors and library administrative staff.

The current traditional system to manage library books at Luarasi University consists of registration or cancelation from a notebook when a new book is inserted or when a book is no longer available in the library and should be taken note of the borrower. The traditional procedure does not offer efficient time management to students and library staff on searching registering, books borrowing and cancelation. The research questions for this study are: (1)



Question 1: Do the users of Luarasi University meet Library services, including book collection, online services and book borrowing? (2) Question 2: Do online library services affect the time spent on searching and borrowing a book?

Research Hypothesis are as follows:

- *Hypothesis 1_a: Users of Luarasi University spent a lot of time meeting library services, including book collection, online services and book borrowing.*
- *Hypothesis 1₀: Users of Luarasi University do not spent a lot of time meeting library services, including book collection, online services and book borrowing.*
- *Hypothesis 2_a: Library online services save a lot of time spending on searching and borrowing a book.*
- *Hypothesis 2₀: Library online services do not save a lot of time spending on searching and borrowing a book.*

The aim of this study is to understand the importance of having an online library management system at Luarasi University, provide and implement those in the future. This system would help to solve the problems mentioned above, about the traditional procedure of library. The books, magazines, newspapers and records of the borrowers will be stored in an electronic database. This will enable searching, registering or borrowing a book to be much faster compared to the traditional method.

Literature Review

Sinanaj, Osmanaj, & Brahusi, (2016) referred to the library applications, it is usually spoken about the automation of library, showing what procedures or services intend to automate by placing the emphasis on the technology used and how to apply it. Often, it is avoided a fundamental question: Why do we automate? In answering this question, every automation process should first be compared to the objectives of the library and fits within a strategic plan that sees automation as part of more complex procedures. These are oriented to the user and can be considered as structured in several levels, based on the type of service involved. Moreover, in carrying out these functions, a library can create contacts with various stakeholders, such as material suppliers (books, software), libraries (interlibrary loans as cooperative), administrative centres (university departments, ministries).



In this context, we can define an automation system as a management information system that supports the information system of the library, as a set of related functions that collect or require, process, record and distribute information to support management activities, the decision-making and control library by producing the desired information to the user (Crupi& Guerrini, 2007).

The main reasons that may lead to a library automation are to (Haravu, 2004):

- increase operational efficiency;
- eliminate the tasks that the staff handles manually, to help them focus on other tasks and services towards users;
- improve the quality, speed and service efficiency;
- increase the possibilities of access by remote users;
- improve access to remote resources;
- offer new services;
- improve the management of physical and financial resources;
- facilitate access to information for their users;
- facilitate the delivery of library information services;
- make possible, the cooperation networks between libraries;
- increase the communication speed with other libraries or similar institutions.

Some Anglo-Saxon researchers have agreed that historical evolution of library automation can be divided into three main phases, during which were focused mainly on the following objectives: optimizing operations of the internal work, providing access to the local resources and providing access to external resources (Borgman, 1997), (Lynch, 2000).

Electronic data management has become an important part in the library activity. Currently to manage them Electronic Resource Management Systems (ERMS) are developed. These applications, which can be integrated within the ILS or not, on the one hand provide functionality for managing electronic resources staff (licenses, e-journal subscriptions), on the other hand offer useful instruments to users to access documents (link resolver, link to full-text searches, links to the catalogue) (Breeding, *The Many Facets of Managing Electronic Resources*, 2004). The integration of multiple tools available for access and allocation of resources is not easy and may lead to a confrontation between the Web site and the library OPAC.

Today, in the "integration era" integrated systems are a problem to be resolved. A central part of the automation of libraries for various reasons are not yet able to provide an adequate response to



the needs of market information (Dempsey, 2005-b). These systems are specifically designed for managing physical collections and have not fully developed the potential of integrating the management of various types of electronic resources, such as:

- licensed material, such as e-journal, services Abstract & Indexing (A & I), etc. For this there are instruments such as ERM, resolver;
- digitized library materials;
- institutional archives or archives of object learning (a unit of e-learning).

In addition, there should not be excluded the possibilities of integration with administrative management systems or financial management related to the institution linked to the library (Courant & Griffiths, 2006).

Methodology

Based on the nature of the problem studied, the chosen approach to research is the case study (Myers, 1997; Marie-Claude Boudreau, 2001). The case study is taken into Luarasi University Library, which provides a wide range of books and magazines to users but not giving them the opportunity to make an online reservation. So, the process of research and borrowing books is not fulfilled through a management system but manually by the library staff. The objective of this study is to understand the importance and development of an online management system for the Luarasi University Library. Development of a new system of online library management would enable all books and records of the borrowers to be stored in a database to avoid excessive manual work and human errors. During this stage was created a structural questionnaire taken from different standard models to which were made some small changes about some variables which would result helpful in our study (Library Research Service, 2019), (survio, 2019). The questionnaire was created with Google Forms and was sent via e-mail to all the lecturers, students and administrative employees of Luarasi University. There were sent about 800 emails which composed the selected population for the study, from which only 147 individuals filled the questionnaire, which constituted the random sample for the study.

From the 147 respondents, resulted that:

- Gender: 69.4% were females and 30.6% males.



- Age: 12.2% were 18 or under 18 years of age, 66% were between 19-24, 10.2% were between 25-30 and 11.6% were between 31-64 years of age.
- Education: 22.4% High school, 41.5% Bachelor, 31.3% Master and 4.8% PhD.

Out of 147 respondents 14.3% were Lecturers, 83.7% were Students and 2% Administrative Employees. The study was conducted in three main phases:

- 1) Data collection o was carried out through several interviews with the employees and users of the Luarasi University Library. The qualitative data collection through different interviews turned out to be very crucial to the understanding of different functioning and problematic at Luarasi library.
- 2) Data collection was implemented through a structured questionnaire made with Google Forms. The questionnaire was emailed to students, lecturers and employees of Luarasi University. The questionnaire was completed by 147 individuals.
- 3) Analysis of the collected data, through Excel and SPSS programs. From the analysis of this data will be determined also the necessary information for the design and construction of the new system for the management of the Luarasi University library.

Results and Discussions

Descriptive Analyses

About the question “What is the language you use when studying the literature? (more than an alternative may be chosen)”, the respondents answered as in the below chart:

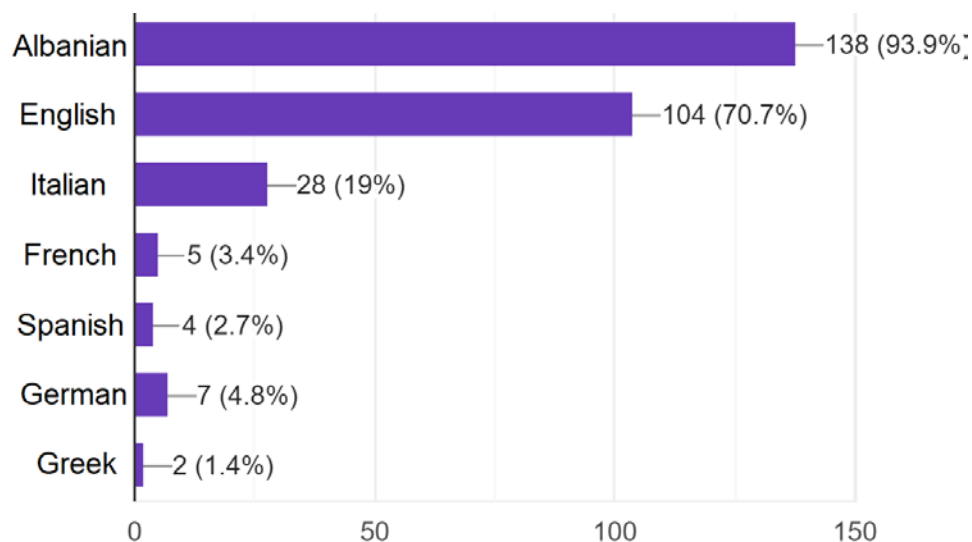


Chart 1: What is the language you use when studying the literature?

It can clearly be noticed that the most used language in studying the literature is the Albanian language (93.9%), English (70.7%) and Italian (19%).

About the question: "How often do you frequent the library?", it resulted that most of the library users have frequented the library of Luarasi University, but there was also a category who had never visited the library.

About the question: "Where do you get the information about the library of Luarasi University? (more than an alternative may be chosen)", the respondents answered as in the below chart:

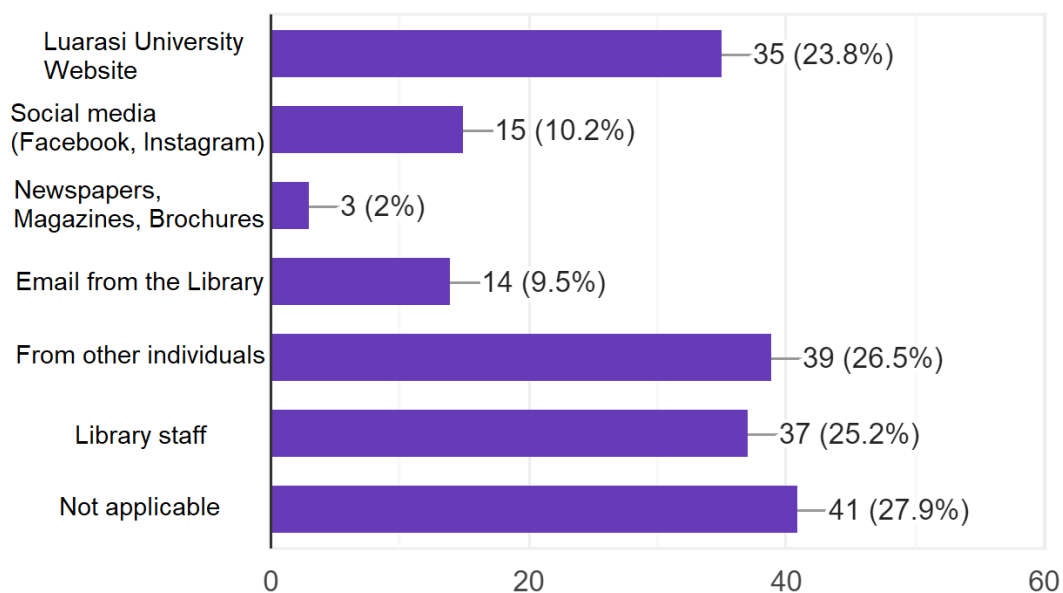


Chart 2: Where do you get the information about the library of Luarasi University?

According to the answers it results that most of the users do not get the right information about the library of Luarasi University. A major part of the user's state that it is not applied the way to provide information in relation to the library. It results that, the main source to give information about the Luarasi library, is a static page on the University website. During this stage it was studied and analyzed the data regarding the 2 (two) last questions of the questionnaire (8 and 9). It was also analyzed the dependent and non-dependant variables to prove the hypothesis and give answer to the research questions. This data is processed by EXCEL programme and SPSS.

About to the question 8 of the questionnaire: "Your assessment of each of the following library services at Luarasi University:", the respondents had to give an answer to 13 variables with an



estimation 5 (Excellent), 4 (Good), 3 (Medium), 2 (Poor), 1 (Very Poor) and 0 (Not applicable).
The average point results are shown in the table below.

Table 1

Your assessment of each of the following library services at Luarasi University

Summary	
Groups	Mean
8.1 Customer Service	3.80
8.2 Collection (of books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, etc.)	3.42
8.3 Online Services (library website, online book catalog, etc.)	2.64
8.4 Book borrowing using the library's online management system.	2.86
8.5 Digital Collections (Books, Magazines, Periodicals, Newspapers, etc.)	2.82
8.6 Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	2.90
8.7 Library Rules	3.65
8.8 Use of computer and printer/photocopy	3.21
8.9 Study/reading room	3.34
8.10 Discussion Halls and Group Work	3.04
8.11 Using Internet (Wi-Fi)	3.23
8.12 Library Schedule	3.37
8.13 Generally, how would you rate the library?	3.34

Firstly, with the help of SPSS it was verified if the statistics of question 8 were reliable. It turned out that the coefficient Cronbach's Alpha to be .958 which shows a high reliability of the statistics.

About question 9 of the questionnaire: "Assessment of the importance of each of the following library services:", the respondents had to give an answer to 14 variables with an assessment that ranged from 5 (Very Important), 4 (Important), 3 (Medium), 2 (Little Important) to 1 (Not Important). The average point results are shown in the table below.

Table 2

Assessment of the importance of each of the following library services

Summary	
Groups	Mean
9.1 Online services (library website, online book catalog, etc.)	4.41
9.2 Search (of books, magazines, periodicals, newsletters, etc.) using the online library management system.	4.39



9.3Borrowing (books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, etc.) using the online library management system.	4.33
9.4Searching / borrowing assistance from library staff.	4.30
9.5Using computer and printer / photocopy.	4.35
9.6Study / reading room.	4.41
9.7 Discussion and group work halls.	4.33
9.8Using Internet (Wi-Fi).	4.39
9.9Borrowing Books.	4.34
9.10Digital Collections (Books, Magazines, Periodicals, Newspapers, etc.).	4.35
9.11Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	4.30
9.12Newspapers, magazines and periodicals.	4.17
9.13Generally, how important is the library for you?	4.33
9.14 How important is the online library management system?	4.48

Even in this case, with the help of the SPSS programme it was verified if the statistics regarding question 9 were reliable. It turned out that the coefficient Cronbach's Alpha to be .972 which shows a high reliability of the statistics.

Inferential Analyses

Testing of Hypothesis

- Hypothesis 1_a: Users of Luarasi university spent a lot of time meeting library services, including book collection, online services and book borrowing.

To give an answer to the question: “*Do the users of Luarasi University meet Library services, including book collection, online services and book borrowing?*”, variables which are under the average were studied (8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6) and 8.13. According to the under average estimation of these variables as well as the correlation connection between them, as the author Xhomara (2019) suggest, it resulted to be a strong connection (see the table below).

Table 3

Do the users of Luarasi University meet Library services, including book collection, online services and book borrow

	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.6	8.13	Mean
8.3 Online Services (library website, online book catalog, etc.)	1					2.64
8.4 Book borrowing using the library's online management system.	0.81	1				2.86
8.5 Digital Collections (Books, Magazines, Periodicals, Newspapers, etc.)	0.78	0.83	1			2.82



8.6 Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	0.64	0.70	0.70	1		2.90
8.13 Generally, how would you rate the library?	0.72	0.70	0.66	0.70	1	3.34

Therefore, it can be said that the "Online Services" and "Book borrowing" do not meet the expectations of the library users of Luarasi University.

- Hypothesis 2_a: Library online services save a lot of time spending on searching and borrowing a book.

To give an answer to the second research question: "Do online library services affect the time spent on searching and borrowing a book?" as well as testing the hypothesis raised from the beginning, were studied variables with a high average according to their importance (9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.11, 9.13 and 9,14). Taking into account the high assessment in the average of the variables 9.1, 9.2, 9.11, 9.12, 9.13 as it can be seen in the table below by the correlation connection (1st Correlation, 2nd Correlation, 3rd Correlation and 4th Correlation) that there are strong connections between them, we could say that it can be proved the alternative hypothesis raised since the beginning by answering as well the second research question. In fact, it can be clearly seen in the table that non-dependant variables "Online Services", "Search using the online library management system" and "Borrowing using the online library management system" have a strong connection with the dependant variable "Time spent on searching and borrowing a book".

Table 4

Do online library services affect the time spent on searching and borrowing a book

1st Correlation	9.1	9.11
9.1 Online services (library website, online book catalog, etc.)	1	
9.11 Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	0.62	1
2nd Correlation	9.2	9.11
9.2 Search (of books, magazines, periodicals, newsletters, etc.) using the online library management system.	1	
9.11 Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	0.68	1
3rd Correlation	9.3	9.11
9.3 Borrowing (books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, etc.) using the online library management system.	1	
9.11 Time spent on searching and borrowing books.	0.77	1



4 th Correlation	9.13	9.14
9.13 Generally, how important is the library for you?	1	
9.14 How important is the online library management system?	0.84	1

Qualitative Analyses

Several interviews with the employees as well as frequent library users were held during this phase to collect other qualitative data. During these interviews were noticed various problematics in the actual management of the library. These were some of the problems:

- Impossibility to search fast and easy books, because all the books are registered in a notebook and there is no other possibility of research.
- Impossibility to generate reports to see what books are available at the library;
- Impossibility to generate reports on users who have borrowed books in the library;
- Keeping manually and daily changes that take place in the library: book borrowed from a user, the book turned by the user, etc. A procedure which can bring numerous errors and may result in uncontrollable and tedious especially when the flow of library users is huge;
- When the user asks to borrow a book, the library employee must physically check for the presence of this book in the library as this book might not be available because someone else might have borrowed it and the librarian must check all the library cards to find out who has borrowed it and when is the due date to be returned.
- Excessive time consuming on borrowing books and in manual jobs.

They cannot easily generate reports because every procedure is performed manually, and this makes the generation of reports almost impossible. Viewing these problems in the actual management of the library, the process of borrowing and searching daily books can bring many errors and too time consuming for the user as well as for the library employees of the Luarasi University library. Therefore, the qualitative results support quantitative ones.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand the importance of an online library management system at Luarasi University and to implement them in the future. The product of research conducted answers questions/hypothesis and satisfies the requirements set out originally at the



analysis stage reaching these conclusions. There are some various problems in the current library management:

- Not limits for book borrowers; they can take more than 2 books at the same time.
- Impossible to generate reports to see what books are available at the library;
- Impossible to generate reports on users who have borrowed books in the library;
- Keeping manually and daily changes that take place in the library: book borrowed from a user, the book turned by the user, etc., A procedure which can bring numerous errors and may result in uncontrollable and tedious especially when the flow of library users is huge;
- When the user asks to borrow a book, library employee must physically check for the presence of this book in the library;
- Excessive consumption of time on borrowing books and in manual jobs.

The study found that the "Online Services" and "Book borrowing" do not meet the expectations of the library users of Luarasi University. Independent variables "*Online Services*", "*Search using the online library management system*" and "*Borrowing using the online library management system*" have a strong correlation with the dependant variable "*Time spent on searching and borrowing a book*". The implemented system will provide students, teachers or members of university request online books efficiently, makes possible reservation of a book to borrow. Also, it manages employees of the library borrowing books as well. The new system will reduce the workload of the employees of the library by increasing efficiency of various library activities, such as:

- the ability to easy search books;
- the ability to register new users in the system by creating an account;
- the possibility of reserving for borrowing books from online library;
- limits to the number of books that can take users simultaneously;
- the possibility of generating reports for books given to users;
- avoidance of excessive manual work, errors, and time consuming for borrowing books;
- avoidance of excessive flow of library users, because they can go there only when they have possibility to reserve and borrow a book.

The new system will avoid the complexity of record keeping users manually in notebooks when they borrow a book and therefore it is a relief for employees when verifying information about the individuals who borrowed the book. The new system will be designed in such a way that



future modifications can be made easily. Given the fact that the use of tablets and smartphones is widespread nowadays, we intend to provide the functionalities of the library management system based on these communication media.

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Improvement of Object Tracking Performance Using

Kalman Filtering (Simulation Model Through Matlab Built-In Functions)

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Abstract

Digital image processing finds many applications in two dimensional and three-dimensional graphics. Furthermore, this field is subject to research and simulation in various domains of graphics and computer vision. One of the subjects treated and considered in the digital processing of images is the detection of objects in motion; the objects in question can be items or individuals and developed algorithms present variant performances with respect to the parameters to be considered. In this paper, we have highlighted the performance of an algorithm that detects an object in motion. This performance is related to the speed of the object in motion and its uninterrupted detection during a time interval of 2 minutes. The simulation methodology is supported by the Matlab program which in the R2017a version has integrated and ready-made functions for such simulation processes. Specifically, as input of the simulation model is a video material that contains objects in motion under the detection process. In the simulation model we have shown graphically selected the objects in motion. The program has limits and opens discussions for further research in the sense of quality performance of selecting objects in motion in the speed functions of their motion. Finally, this simulation and research model serves for further research that may lead to the generation of a practical product of detecting movable objects.

Key words: *object; simulation; performance; algorithm; video.*



Introduction

The field of study of computer vision is a space of space that offers considerable challenges in the digital image processing and digital processing of video for research purposes and the development of concrete applications such as: biometric processing, applications in civil and military security cameras, etc. Numerous studies and research have been conducted in recent years in this field of study in general and object tracking. Object tracking itself explores a series of discussions and debates about simulation models and related simulation simulations used and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each model and simulation software particularly. The approach of fuzzy logic modeling is widely applied to such patterns and a series of simulations have been developed for research purposes in connection with the further fading of such techniques. The Matlab program is a closed-source modeling and simulation software that enables many simulation spaces that preserve inter alia the field of study of digital signal processing in general and its derivatives in particular.

In our study, we introduced effects on the performance of an improved algorithmic model that detects the movement of an object in a video file. The modified algorithm consists in creating a model based on fuzzy logic methods to reduce the time it takes for the Matlab program's ability to track the moving object in the video.

Concretely, in our simulation model we have considered a video file that has a duration of 62 seconds which represents an environment that has in its content people moving.

The performance of an object tracking is calculated at the time of separation between the sealing sequences of objects and the time the color marker needs to go after the object in question. The smaller it is this time, the more continuous and qualitative the tracking of the object in question.

In this sense, the standard algorithm requires more time than the improved algorithm according to the fuzzy approach; this means that the object's moving object is slower in pursuit of the object and requires a lot of time to go after it and this is an anomaly especially for objects that are at high speeds.

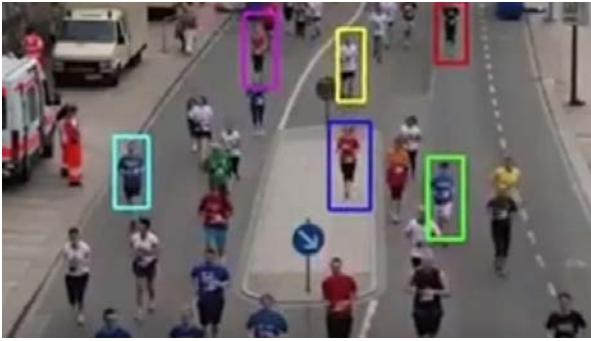


Figure 1. View the results of object tracking in the video file used in our simulation model

As a performance element, statistical methods that are modeled and developed through Matlab are given which give a quantitative sense of the trend and the transfer of the time values necessary for the marker to follow the object in motion.

Finally, part of this research also includes the issues of the recommendations and limits that this fuzzy modification of object tracking modifies.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research consists of data sampling and statistical treatment of data. Specifically, in our simulation model is used a video file that contains backgrounds of objects and persons in motion. This video file has a duration of 62 seconds. The essence of improved algorithm performance consists in interfering with a cycle of this algorithm and adding two additional variables that lead to the growth of the algorithm complex, but which itself improve the performance in question. The application of this interference, in the minimization of time, is the color marking shown in Figure 1, to follow the moving object in question. The smaller the time it takes for trackers to track the object in motion, the higher the performance of the simulation model.

In our analysis of the performance, 120 samples were taken under the effect of the statistical analysis; these samples consist of the recent moments of the unit of time; moreover, for each of the samples is measured the necessary time each marker needs to track the object in motion for that moment; the unit of this time is taken into consideration in millisecond units. Where the analysis process is applied as in the case of a standard algorithm approached by fuzzy concepts as well as in the improved algorithm case.



Further, for the calculation of performance, statistical analyzes were taken by creating simulated trend-lines through Matlab R2017a. The applied trendline algorithm is "smoothing spline", reflecting the resulting data of this trend-line both in the case of standard and improved method. The "smoothing" parameter used is the default value of 0.9999977182557248 which is approximately 1. Also, part of the simulation results and the spline smoothing statistic is also the activation of the residual concept presentation option.

Results and discussions

The simulation model results are shown in the following two figures. Figure 2 shows the trend line through the "smooth spline" of the standard algorithm performance. As can be seen, values in milliseconds do not exceed 3.2 ms while in figure 3 it is noted that the value of the tracking time of the moving object does not exceed 2.5 milliseconds. Also parallel to the curve fitting through spox spots are also shown residual plots results.

Additional data on statistical simulation results are shown in the table below.

Table 1

Data on statistical simulation results

	<i>Smoothing parameter</i>	<i>SSE</i>	<i>R-squared</i>	<i>Adjusted R-square</i>	<i>RMSE</i>
<i>Standard Algorithm</i>	0.99999772	0.5591	0.764	0.4108	0.1057
<i>Improved Algorithm</i>	0.99999772	0.3249	0.7341	0.336	0.8057



a) *Standard algorithm:*

Smoothing spline:

$f(x)$ = piecewise polynomial computed from p where x is normalized by mean 63.5 and std 36.52

Smoothing parameter

$p = 0.99999772$

Goodness of fit:

SSE: 0.5591

R-squared 0.764

Adjusted R-square: 0.4108

RMSE: 0.1057

b) *Improved algorithm:*

Smoothing spline:

$f(x)$ = piecewise polynomial computed from p where x is normalized by mean 63.5 and std 36.52

Smoothing parameter

$p = 0.99999772$

Goodness of fit:

SSE: 0.3249

R-squared 0.7341

Adjusted R-square: 0.336

RMSE: 0.8057

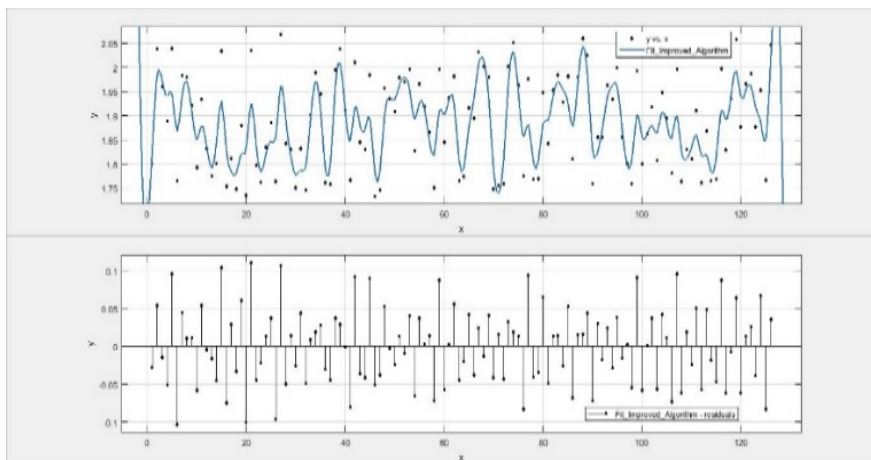


Figure 2. Results of statistical simulation for the standard algorithm

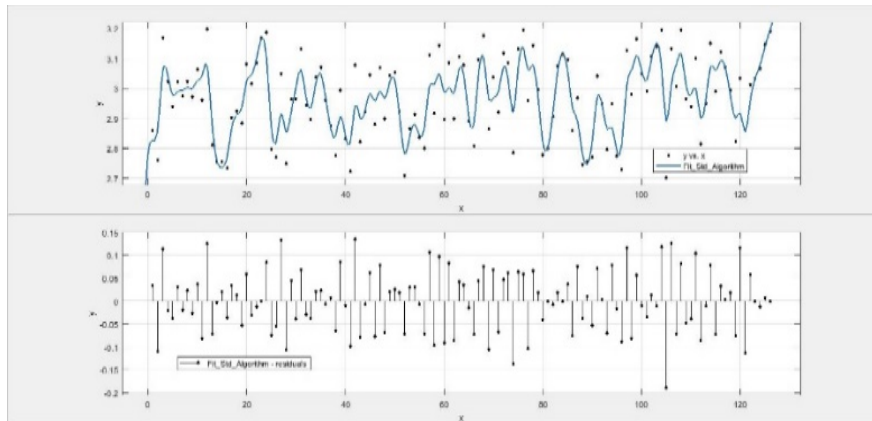


Figure 3. Results of statistical simulation for the improved algorithm

Conclusions

In this paper, we discussed the object tracking issue under the simulation optics by the fuzzy logic approach by considering improving the performance of this algorithm. The process of this study consisted in obtaining 120 sample sequences from a video file that has backgrounds in the background. The purpose of this study consisted in the performance analysis in the sense of tracking more and more of the object moving into the video file thus leading to the linearity and quality of the algorithm. Improvement of the simulation model performance is also reflected in the statistical analysis by the smooth spline method and therefore the expected results. As is also the case with simulation results, the time difference value for the improved algorithm is smaller than in the case of a standard algorithm. Finally, part of the search is the fact of further limitations and suggestions that include the simulation model in question. These limits consist in the further reduction of the time required to track the objects in motion that leads to higher performance quality and this is more noticeable when the objects in motion are at relatively high speeds.

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An exploratory study of software piracy in a higher education environment

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Abstract

Software theft and intellectual property violations are some of the most sensitive issues in computing nowadays. Software piracy is older compared to most of Information Technology products used today and has been the topic of numerous studies, which have found it to be an extensive phenomenon in general, and particularly among university students. This paper provides a general view of software piracy focused mostly into the Albanian higher education context. Over the years the software piracy



level in Albania has grown causing economic damage to companies that deal with the development and sale of software products. Government's role, as the biggest buyer and user of software products, non-government organizations, business, but especially the role of educational institutions in terms of informative campaigns about software piracy, is considered important and part of this study. A survey was conducted to determine if the above-mentioned groups have any responsibility to carry out informative campaigns related to software piracy. The paper concludes with some suggestions on fighting software piracy using some marketing tools to raise public awareness of the issue.

Key words: *software piracy, intellectual property rights, higher education, Albania*

Introduction

“The current state of the Albania ICT centric innovation ecosystem is that it is nascent and needs support to develop, but there are positive trends to be seen” (ITU, 2016). Application of information technology includes a broad spectrum of application levels: government, business, non-governmental organizations, and of course education. This new Albanian reality towards information technology and digitalization, besides the positive effects, is often associated with negative phenomena such as piracy, copyright infringement, fraud, etc. This paper examines software piracy in a higher education context.

“Software piracy” is categorized as the unauthorized use or reproduction of another's work. (OxfordDictionary, 2019). Programs, movies and other electronic creations, like works of art and literature fall under the protection of intellectual property law. The copyright law preserves all rights over a program or a website to the creator, and violating these rights is considered illegal. Software piracy is a widespread phenomenon in developing countries. Albania in 2017 resulted with a rating of 74% of unlicensed software installation and with an estimated damage amounting to approximately 10 million dollars. Albania's rating is equal to Montenegro's, higher compared to North Macedonia and Serbia with their respective ratings of 63% and 66% of unlicensed software installation. Software piracy is widespread across almost all of Europe and beyond but still in Albania there is very little research regarding this topic, especially empirical studies that focus on software piracy. This paper provides an exploratory study of software piracy in a higher education environment focusing on the attitude of software users (students,



academics and administrative staff) in which the piracy awareness is being addressed by the government, non-governmental agencies, business and education institutions.

Background

According to BSA The Software Alliance report on Unlicensed Software Use the Central and Eastern Europe countries have an average rate of 57%, same to Asia-Pacific Region and Africa but far way higher compared to Western Europe or North America with their corresponding rating of 26% and 16 %. (BSA The Software Alliance, 2018). "Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) is an OECD term for the group of countries comprising Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania". (OECD, 2001). The UN report on Economic Situation and Prospects classifies Albania as an economy in transition, an economy that is changing from being one under government control to become a market economy. The Republic of Albania has been an official candidate for accession to the European Union (EU) since June 2014 and is on the current agenda for future enlargement of the EU. Many reforms have been undertaken to complete the necessary recommendations towards integration. Some of this recommendation is related to Intellectual Property Rights. Albania has developed a good legal framework regarding Intellectual Property Rights Protection. Law No. 35/2016 of March 31, 2016, on Copyright and Related Rights, Law No. 9947 of July 7, 2008, on Industrial Property (as amended up to Law No. 55/2014 of May 29, 2014, Law No. 9902 of April 17, 2008, on Consumer Protection, Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 34 of January 18, 2017, on the Registration Procedure, the Organization and the Classification of Copyright Works, Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 527 of July 20, 2016, on Approval of the National Intellectual Property Strategy 2016-2020 are some important initiatives towards developing this necessary legal framework. Considering also the treaty approvals such as Law No. 10179 of October 29, 2009, on the Accession of the Republic of Albania in the European Patent Convention, Law No. 10180 of October 29, 2009, on the Accession of the Republic of Albania in the Patent Law Treaty of WIPO (2009) the framework becomes more complete. (World Intellectual Property Organisation, 2018).



“Despite these encouraging legal reforms governmental activity in IPR context is described as “virtually non-existent” – for most copyright industries, and especially in the case of the business software industry”. (Buhajjoti & Lurie, 2015). The WIPO report on Global Innovation Index in 2018 ranked Albania in the 89th place among 126 other countries around the world. The “Rule of Law” in the Albanian institutions got a score of 34.4 that ranked Albania in the 84th place. All this numbers show that there is a certain problematic associating IPR law enforcement and protection. (Cornell University, INSEAD and WIPO, 2018). There is a general perception that people living in poor countries have a low WTP (Willingness to Pay) for software products, media products such as music, videos or movies because these goods tend to cost a lot of money. In poor markets where legitimate media costs the same (in relative terms) as it does in rich markets, the amount of licit purchasing is about the same. Several studies have found university students one of the biggest communities of unlicensed software users. There is a public concern regarding today student’s ethical development to intellectual property, keeping in mind that today’s generation of students will become the future entrepreneurs, innovators. “Sometimes student beliefs mirror those modeled by their teachers, with many young people (88%) justifying piracy from a perception that individual software costs only pennies to produce and represents no harm”. (Teston, 2008).

Methodology

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of approximately 700 undergraduate and graduate students, 60 persons in the academic staff, 15 persons of the administrative staff from a private University: Luarasi University College. The groups of students were randomly selected, yielding an initial sample of 122. After 2 surveys were disqualified for incomplete or improper responses, the remaining 120 surveys comprised the phase of analysis. The statistical analysis, results, and conclusions of this study are based on the remaining 120 valid subjects

Instrument and Data Collection

The questionnaire used was essentially the same one used by (El Sheikh, Abdali Rashed, Al Qudah, & Graham Peace, 2006). Some additional questions were added asking about sex, age,



level of education, if the respondent had ever downloaded an unlicensed software and if was aware of unlicensed software usage in his work environment. The final question was related to some specific software used in universities in Albania. SPSS was used to perform statistical analysis of the data collected from the survey forms. The methodologies used were descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis and chi square analysis. The survey was delivered online using google forms.

Results and discussions

Descriptive Statistics that was discussed in this work was the frequency and percentages of profiles of respondents among the students, teachers and administrative staff. According to their gender, 52.4% of the respondents are female and 47.6% are male. According to variable age, 51.3 % are between 18 and 22 years, 16.5 % between 23 to 25 years old, 19.5% between 26 to 40 years, 11% between 41 and 60 years and 1.7% older than 61 years. Most of respondents are undergraduate students, with 50.9% of all respondents, 35.9% are graduate students and 13.2% are PhD.

Table 1

Age:

	Freque ncy	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-22	237	51.3	51.3	51.3
23-25	76	16.5	16.5	67.7
26-40	90	19.5	19.5	87.2
41-60	51	11.0	11.0	98.3
Over 60 years old	8	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	462	100.0	100.0	

The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient resulted in 0.863. This coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: “_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable”. (George & Mallery, 2003)

Table 2

Reliability Statistics



Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.863	.867	18

This result showed that there is a good consistency of the items in the scale. The questionnaire in one of its sections contains questions regarding tools which could be used to reduce software piracy. To answer some of the research questions a factorial analysis was used.

Table 3

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.778
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	df
	Sig.
	934.152
	153
	.000

Factor analysis was used to construct the new factors affecting software piracy reduction and awareness. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of sphericity are both tests that can be used to determine that a factor analysis could be useful. The results value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is 0.778 which is greater than 0.6 and Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant ($p < 0.005$, $p = 0.000$). It is suggested that if the Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant, and if the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is greater than 0.6, then factorability is assumed. (statisticshowto, 2016). Table 2 displays the total variance explained at 5 stages for factors that are affecting software piracy awareness and reduction. The factors extracted were those with an eigenvalue greater than 1.

Table 4

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.785	32.140	32.140	5.785	32.140	32.140	4.007	22.259	22.259
2	2.348	13.043	45.183	2.348	13.043	45.183	2.596	14.419	36.678
3	1.673	9.294	54.477	1.673	9.294	54.477	2.229	12.383	49.061
4	1.207	6.706	61.183	1.207	6.706	61.183	1.698	9.435	58.496
5	1.085	6.029	67.212	1.085	6.029	67.212	1.569	8.715	67.212
6	.949	5.275	72.486						
7	.759	4.216	76.702						
8	.610	3.390	80.091						
9	.601	3.340	83.432						
10	.507	2.815	86.246						
11	.462	2.565	88.811						



12	.400	2.222	91.033						
13	.372	2.064	93.097						
14	.357	1.984	95.080						
15	.299	1.661	96.742						
16	.241	1.339	98.081						
17	.190	1.058	99.138						
18	.155	.862	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4 shows the rotated factor matrix for the questionnaire. The variables with factor loadings more than 0.6 were chosen. After performing Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization, Factor 1 comprised seven items with factor loadings ranging from 0.684 to 0.778. The items in Factor 1 are using internet as a media channel, advertising in magazines focusing on software, advertising in popular press, television and radio, distributing brochures, presenting at conferences and seminars, using curricula and subjects in universities and knowledge on copyright an intellectual property law. Factor 2 comprised of 4 items with factor loadings ranging from 0.643 to 0.828. The items in Factor 2 are government’s responsibility to conduct awareness campaigns to combat software piracy, non-governmental organization’s responsibility to conduct awareness campaigns to combat software piracy, business responsibility to conduct awareness campaigns to combat software piracy and universities responsibility to conduct awareness campaigns to combat software piracy. Factor 3 comprised of 4 items with factor loadings ranging from 0.638 to 0.815. The items in Factor 3 are governments good job to raise awareness regarding software piracy, NGO-s good job to raise awareness regarding software piracy, Business good job to raise awareness regarding software piracy and universities good job to raise awareness regarding software piracy. Factor 4 comprised of 2 items. The items in Factor 4 are the messages simplicity tend to prevent software piracy and the reduction of software piracy. Factor 5 comprised of 2 items. The items in Factor 4 are good job of universities towards raising public awareness on software piracy and the rising awareness on software piracy.

Table 5

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
The government has a responsibility to conduct an awareness campaign to combat software piracy	.278	.677	.023	.048	-.105
[The government is doing a good job to raise public awareness regarding software piracy]	-.036	.038	.638	.478	-.254
[Non-governmental agencies have a responsibility to conduct an awareness campaign to combat software piracy]	.126	.828	.111	.093	-.083



[Non-governmental agencies are doing a good job to raise public awareness regarding software piracy]	.053	.216	.815	-.034	.020
[Companies have a responsibility to conduct an awareness campaign to combat software piracy]	.243	.643	.205	.244	.039
[Companies are doing a good job to raise public awareness regarding software piracy]	.171	.034	.769	.233	.235
[Universities have a responsibility to conduct an awareness campaign to combat software piracy]	.195	.709	-.020	-.025	.383
[Universities are doing a good job to raise public awareness regarding software piracy]	.056	-.050	.625	-.067	.633
Tools [Using the internet as a media channel is an effective way of raising public awareness regarding software piracy issues]	.778	.144	.058	.135	.042
Tools [Advertising in magazines focusing on software is an effective way of reducing software piracy]	.691	-.026	.219	.088	.124
Tools [Advertising in the popular press, television and radio is an effective way of reducing software piracy]	.776	.150	.112	-.206	.117
Tools [Distributing brochures to raise people's awareness of the software piracy problems is an effective way of reducing software piracy]	.659	.127	.051	.151	.041
Tools [Presenting at conferences and seminars is an effective way of reducing software piracy]	.684	.358	.012	-.107	.225
Tools [University curricula serves for raising public awareness on reducing software piracy]	.710	.317	-.109	.200	.052
Tools [Knowing the Legislation associated to Software Piracy helps in reducing software piracy]	.743	.247	-.024	.193	-.002
[Keeping the message simple is an important aspect of preventing software piracy]	.277	.360	.146	.713	-.072
[People awareness of the risks of software piracy is increasing]	.225	.035	.043	.180	.798
[Currently, software piracy is decreasing]	.098	.027	.131	.787	.393

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Table 6

Name of New Factors

Factor	Name	Percentage of Variance
1	Effective tools to reduce software piracy	22.259
2	Government, NGO-s, business and universities responsibility on raising public	14.419



	awareness on software piracy	
3	Government, NGO-s, business and universities are doing a good job on raising public awareness on software piracy	12.383
4	Simple messages and software piracy reduction	9.435
5	Universities good job on public awareness	8.715

The next analysis involves testing three hypotheses for verifying the association between the variables. Estimated variables are government’s job and non-government organizations job, raised public awareness on software piracy, businesses job and universities job, the increasing awareness of people on risks of software piracy. The Chi Square statistic is commonly used for testing relationships between categorical variables. The null hypothesis of the Chi-Square test is that no relationship exists on the categorical variables in the population; they are independent (CompleteDissertation by Statistics Solutions, 2019). The null hypothesis H_0 : There is no association between government’s job and non-government organizations job in raising public awareness on software piracy. Alternative hypothesis H_a : There is an association between government’s job and non-government organizations job in raising public awareness on software piracy.

Table 7

Chi-Square Tests of government’s job and non-government organizations job in raising public awareness on software piracy

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	191.819 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	174.450	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	84.348	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	301		

a. 4 cells (16.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.42.

The table above shows the Chi-square value as 191.819 and its associated P value as 0.000 which is lower than P value of 0.05, hence no significant difference has been observed. There is an association between government’s job and non-government organizations job in raising public



awareness on software piracy. The other two hypothesis tested: The null hypothesis H_0 : There is no relationship between businesses job and universities job in raising public awareness on software piracy. Alternative hypothesis H_a : There is an association between businesses job and universities job in raising public awareness on software piracy.

Table 8

Chi-Square Tests of businesses job and universities job in raising public awareness on software piracy

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	235.719 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	213.588	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	85.326	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	301		

a. 10 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .74.

The table above shows the Chi-square value as 235.719 and its associated P value as 0.000 which is lower than P value of 0.05, hence no significant difference has been observed. There is an association between businesses job and universities job in raising public awareness on software piracy. The null hypothesis H_0 : There is no relationship between universities job on raising public awareness and the increasing awareness of people on risks associated to software piracy. Alternative hypothesis H_a : There is a relationship between universities job on raising public awareness and the increasing awareness of people on risks of software piracy.

Table 9

Chi-Square Tests of universities job on raising public awareness and the increasing awareness of people on risks of software piracy

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	188.583 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	168.936	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	30.322	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	301		



- a. 12 cells (48.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .58.

The table above shows the Chi-square value as 235.719 and its associated P value as 0.000 which is lower than P value of 0.05, hence no significant difference has been observed. There is an association between universities job on raising public awareness and the increasing awareness of people on risks of software piracy. The analysis conducted does not explain if the association between variables is either strong or weak but is limited to just testing if does exist an association between them. It will not tell us that how closely they are associated.

Conclusions

Software piracy remains a major problem in developing countries such as Albania. In addition to the well-structured legal framework, software piracy generates loses in millions of dollars to companies offering software services. The results of the conducted questionnaire at a private university in Albania showed that the government, non-governmental organizations, businesses and higher education institutions have a responsibility for raising public awareness on software piracy, and these units are working well towards fulfilling this goal. Internet as a media channel, advertising in magazines focusing on software, advertising in popular press, television and radio, distributing brochures, presenting at conferences and seminars, using curricula and subjects in universities, diffusing knowledge on copyright an intellectual property law are effective tools of reducing software piracy.

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The Speech Recognition Performance Improvement Considering the Sampling Range of the Sound (Simulation Modeling Through Matlab)

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Abstract

The digital sound processing is a field of study and dissemination that brings a host of contributing domains in an integrated way to generate products that find multiple applications especially in creating an individual's identity. This paper deals with a simulation model, through the Matlab test-bench, of the speech recognition process. The model is created at the proposal level for the subject field and gives the limits and recommendations for improvements and further developments of this simulation method. The modelling methodology includes three parts; the first part is coded program, and it takes some audio files that can be inputted through two manners: my microphone as well as uploading particular audio files; the second part is the creation of a database that retains these files to enable speech recognition when entering a new audio file. The third part consists of the audio recognition process that is considered. The speech search and the retrieval process are built through some built-in functions that the latest versions of Matlab offer. Finally, the simulation model provides a new speech identification model that leaves space for further discussion and limitations to the relatively small number of face images that can support the database in Matlab.

Key words: *sound; database; speech; retrieval; simulation;*

Introduction

The identification of sound is a process that consists in several sub-processes attached to each other and that are executed according to a well-defined order. Identifying rough voice it is the

method in finding through a certain algorithm to determine which of the actual sounds recorded is the reference. To achieve the desired results, the signal at the entrance of the system, needs to pass in the process of conversion from analog signal to digital signal. Below, in figure 1 we have presented the schematic blocks that enables the conversion from analog to digital signals.

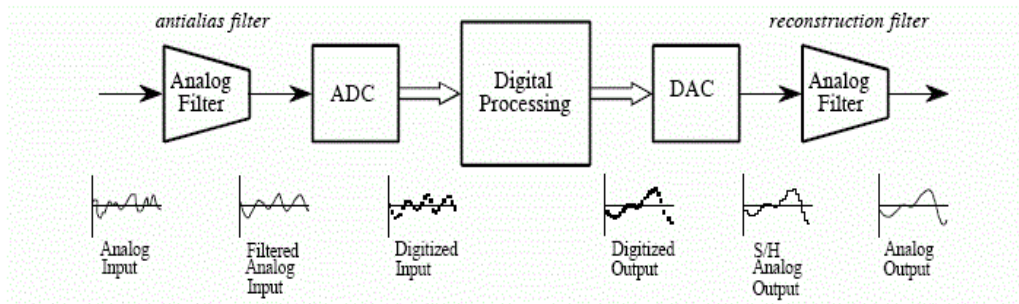


Figure 1. The schematic blocks showing the modules that enable the conversion of analog to digital signal

In figure 2 we have shown the respective charts of the analog, the sampled and quantized signal.

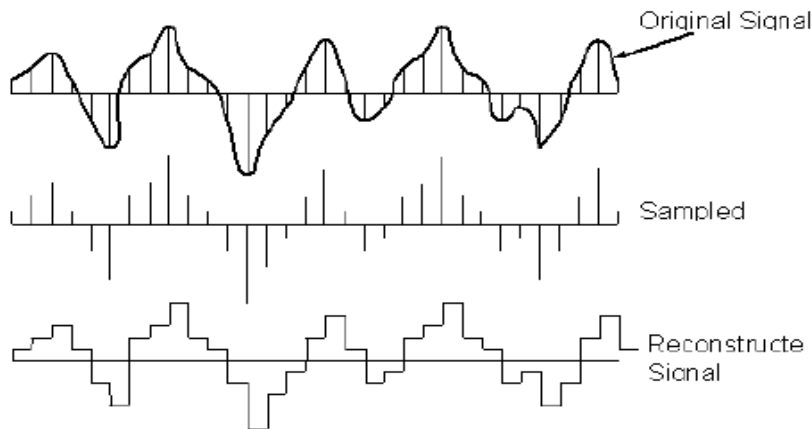


Figure 2. Three graphs showing respectively the original signal (analog), the sampled one and the rebuilt one

Figure 3 shows in detail the graph which coincides with the process of sampling.

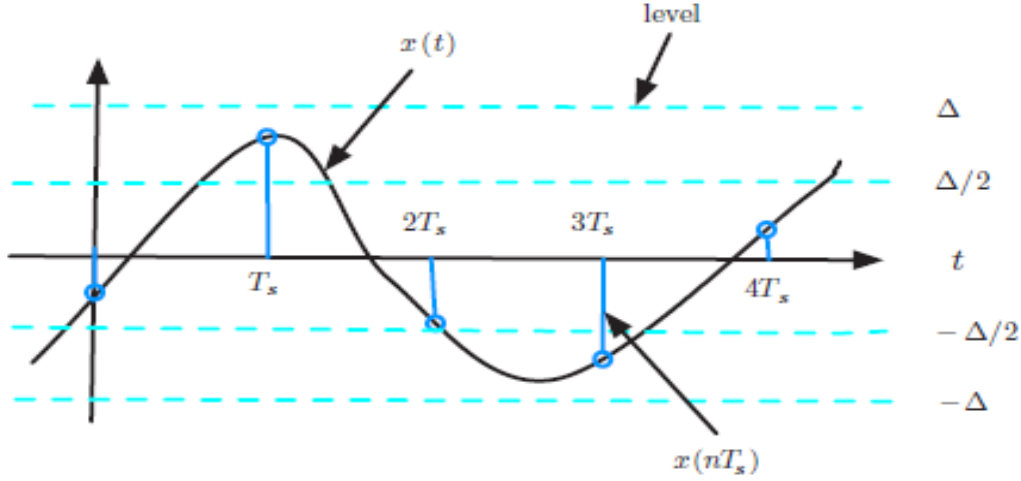


Figure 3. Graph showing in detail the process of sampling of the analog signal
 The theoretical description of the improved PSO algorithm

In computer science, the particle swarm optimization (PSO) is a computational method that optimizes a problem by iteratively trying to improve a candidate solution with regard to a given measure of quality. PSO optimizes a problem by having a population of candidate solutions, dubbed particles, and moving these particles around in the search-space according to simple mathematical formula over the particle's position and velocity. Each particle's movement is influenced by its local best known position but, it is also guided toward the best known positions in the search-space, which are updated when better positions are found by other particles. This is expected to move the swarm toward the best solutions. The PSO algorithm starts by generating **random positions for the particles**, within an initialization region $\Theta' \subseteq \Theta$. Velocities are usually initialized within Θ' but they can also be initialized to zero or to small random values to prevent particles from leaving the search space during the first iterations. During the main loop of the algorithm, the velocities and positions of the particles are iteratively updated until a stopping criterion is met. The update rules are:

$$\vec{v}^t_{t+1} = w\vec{v}^t + \phi_1 U^t_1 (\vec{b}^t - \vec{x}^t) + \phi_2 U^t_2 (\vec{l}^t - \vec{x}^t) \quad (1)$$

$$\vec{x}^t_{t+1} = \vec{x}^t + \vec{v}^t_{t+1}, \quad (2)$$

where w is a parameter called *inertia weight*, ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 are two parameters called *acceleration coefficients*, U^t_1 and U^t_2 are two $n \times n$ diagonal matrices in which the entries in the main

diagonal are random numbers uniformly distributed in the interval $[0,1)$. At each iteration, these matrices are regenerated. Usually, vector \vec{r}^{ti} , referred to as the *neighborhood best*, is the best position ever found by any particle in the neighborhood of particle p_i , that is, $f(\vec{r}^{ti}) \leq f(\vec{b}^{tj}) \forall p_j \in N_i$. If the values of w , ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 are properly chosen, it is guaranteed that the particles' velocities do not grow to infinity.

The three terms in the velocity-update rule above characterize the local behaviors that particles follow. The first term, called the inertia or momentum serves as a memory of the previous flight direction, preventing the particle from drastically changing direction. The second term, called the cognitive component model the tendency of particles to return to previously known best positions. The third term, called the social component quantifies the performance of a particle relative to its neighbors. It represents a group norm or standard that should be attained (Bolle, R. M., Connell, J. H., Pankanti, S., Ratha, N. K., & Senior, A. W. 2004).

In some cases, particles can be attracted to regions outside the feasible search space Θ . For this reason, mechanisms for preserving solution feasibility and a proper swarm operation have been devised. One of the least disruptive mechanisms for preserving feasibility is one in which particles going outside Θ are not allowed to improve their personal best position so that they are attracted back to the feasible space in subsequent iterations.

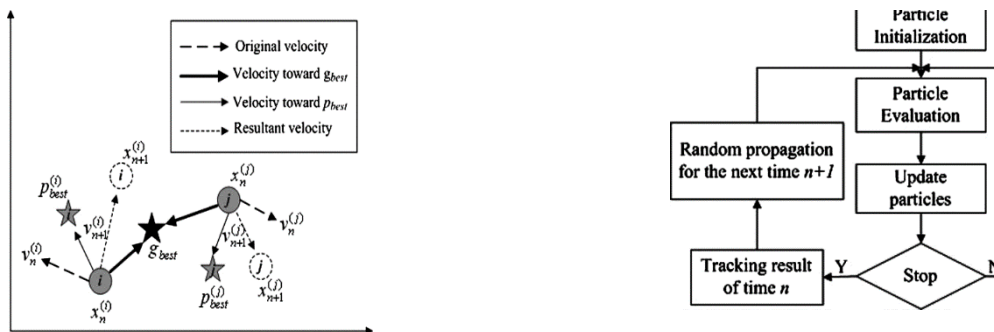


Figure 4. The figure that shows schematically the work of the enhanced PSO algorithm

Literature review

Speech recognition is the interdisciplinary subfield of computational linguistics that develops methodologies and technologies which enable the recognition and translation of the spoken language into text by computers. It is also known as automatic speech recognition (ASR), computer speech recognition or speech to text (STT) (Buhrow, W. C. 2017). It incorporates

knowledge and research in the linguistics, computer science, and electrical engineering fields (Solomon, C., & Breckon, T. 2012). Some speech recognition systems require "training" (also called "enrollment") where an individual speaker reads text or isolated vocabulary into the system (Datta, A. K., Datta, M., & Banerjee, P. K. 2016). The system analyzes the person's specific voice and uses it to fine-tune the recognition of that person's speech, resulting in increased accuracy. Systems that do not use training are called "speaker independent"^[1] systems. Systems that use training are called "speaker dependent" (Bourlai, T. 2016).

Speech recognition applications include voice user interfaces such as voice dialing (e.g. "call home"), call routing (e.g. "I would like to make a collect call"), domotic appliance control, search (e.g. find a podcast where particular words were spoken), simple data entry (e.g., entering a credit card number), preparation of structured documents (e.g. a radiology report), determining speaker characteristics, speech-to-text processing (e.g., word processors or emails), and aircraft (usually termed direct voice input). The term *voice recognition* or speaker identification refers to identifying the speaker, rather than what they are saying (Petrou, M., & Petrou, C. 2015). Recognizing the speaker can simplify the task of translating speech in systems that have been trained on a specific person's voice or it can be used to authenticate or verify the identity of a speaker as part of a security process (Chityala, R., & Pudipeddi, S. 2014). From the technology perspective, speech recognition has a long history with several waves of major innovations. Most recently, the field has benefited from advances in deep learning and big data (Newman, R. 2010). The advances are evidenced not only by the surge of academic papers published in the field, but more importantly by the worldwide industry adoption of a variety of deep learning methods in designing and deploying speech recognition systems (Jain, A. K., & Li, S. Z. 2011).

Both acoustic modeling and language modeling are important parts of modern statistically-based speech recognition algorithms. Hidden Markov models (HMMs) are widely used in many systems. Language modeling is also used in many other natural language processing applications such as document classification or statistical machine translation. Modern general-purpose speech recognition systems are based on Hidden Markov Models. These are statistical models that output a sequence of symbols or quantities. HMMs are used in speech recognition because a speech signal can be viewed as a piecewise stationary signal or a short-time stationary signal. In



a short time-scale (e.g., 10 milliseconds), speech can be approximated as a stationary process. Speech can be thought of as a Markov model for many stochastic purposes (Vacca, J. R. 2007).

Another reason why HMMs are popular is because they can be trained automatically and are simple and computationally feasible to use (Gonzalez, R. C., & Woods, R. E. 2018). In speech recognition, the hidden Markov model would output a sequence of n-dimensional real-valued vectors (with n being a small integer, such as 10), outputting one of these every 10 milliseconds. The vectors would consist of cepstral coefficients, which are obtained by taking a Fourier transform of a short time window of speech and decorrelating the spectrum using a cosine transform, then taking the first (most significant) coefficients. The hidden Markov model will tend to have in each state a statistical distribution that is a mixture of diagonal covariance Gaussians, which will give a likelihood for each observed vector. Each word, or (for more general speech recognition systems), each phoneme, will have a different output distribution; a hidden Markov model for a sequence of words or phonemes is made by concatenating the individual trained hidden Markov models for the separate words and phonemes (Nixon, M. S., & Aguado, A. S. 2012).

Described above are the core elements of the most common, HMM-based approach to speech recognition. Modern speech recognition systems use various combinations of a number of standard techniques in order to improve results over the basic approach described above. A typical large-vocabulary system would need context dependency for the phonemes (so phonemes with different left and right context have different realizations as HMM states); it would use cepstral normalization to normalize for different speaker and recording conditions; for further speaker normalization it might use vocal tract length normalization (VTLN) for male-female normalization and maximum likelihood linear regression (MLLR) for more general speaker adaptation. The features would have so-called delta and delta-delta coefficients to capture speech dynamics and in addition might use heteroscedastic linear discriminant analysis (HLDA); or might skip the delta and delta-delta coefficients and use splicing and an LDA-based projection followed perhaps by heteroscedastic linear discriminant analysis or a global semi-tied co variance transform (also known as maximum likelihood linear transform, or MLLT). Many systems use so-called discriminative training techniques that dispense with a purely statistical approach to HMM parameter estimation and instead optimize some



classification-related measure of the training data. Examples are maximum mutual information (MMI), minimum classification error (MCE) and minimum phone error (MPE).

Decoding of the speech (the term for what happens when the system is presented with a new utterance and must compute the most likely source sentence) would probably use the Viterbi algorithm to find the best path, and here there is a choice between dynamically creating a combination hidden Markov model, which includes both the acoustic and language model information, and combining it statically beforehand (the finite state transducer, or FST, approach). A possible improvement to decoding is to keep a set of good candidates instead of just keeping the best candidate, and to use a better scoring function (re scoring) to rate these good candidates so that we may pick the best one according to this refined score. The set of candidates can be kept either as a list (the N-best list approach) or as a subset of the models (a lattice). Re scoring is usually done by trying to minimize the Bayes risk (or an approximation thereof): Instead of taking the source sentence with maximal probability, we try to take the sentence that minimizes the expectancy of a given loss function with regards to all possible transcriptions (i.e., we take the sentence that minimizes the average distance to other possible sentences weighted by their estimated probability). The loss function is usually the Levenstein distance, though it can be different distances for specific tasks; the set of possible transcriptions is, of course, pruned to maintain tractability. Efficient algorithms have been devised to re score lattices represented as weighted finite state transducers with edit distances represented themselves as a finite state transducer verifying certain assumptions. Dynamic time warping is an approach that was historically used for speech recognition but has now largely been displaced by the more successful HMM-based approach. Dynamic time warping is an algorithm for measuring similarity between two sequences that may vary in time or speed. For instance, similarities in walking patterns would be detected, even if in one video the person was walking slowly and if in another he or she were walking more quickly, or even if there were accelerations and deceleration during the course of one observation. DTW has been applied to video, audio, and graphics – indeed, any data that can be turned into a linear representation can be analyzed with DTW.

A well-known application has been automatic speech recognition, to cope with different speaking speeds. In general, it is a method that allows a computer to find an optimal match between two given sequences (e.g., time series) with certain restrictions. That is, the sequences



are "warped" non-linearly to match each other. This sequence alignment method is often used in the context of hidden Markov models. Neural networks emerged as an attractive acoustic modeling approach in ASR in the late 1980s. Since then, neural networks have been used in many aspects of speech recognition such as phoneme classification, isolated word recognition,[58] audiovisual speech recognition, audiovisual speaker recognition and speaker adaptation. Neural networks make fewer explicit assumptions about feature statistical properties than HMMs and have several qualities making them attractive recognition models for speech recognition. When used to estimate the probabilities of a speech feature segment, neural networks allow discriminative training in a natural and efficient manner. However, despite of their effectiveness in classifying short-time units such as individual phonemes and isolated words, early neural networks were rarely successful for continuous recognition tasks because of their limited ability to model temporal dependencies.

One approach to this limitation was to use neural networks as a pre-processing, feature transformation or dimensionality reduction,[60] step prior to HMM based recognition. However, more recently, LSTM and related recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and Time Delay Neural Networks (TDNN's) have demonstrated improved performance in this area.

Deep Neural Networks and Denoising Autoencoders are also under investigation. A deep feedforward neural network (DNN) is an artificial neural network with multiple hidden layers of units between the input and output layers. Similar to shallow neural networks, DNNs can model complex non-linear relationships. DNN architectures generate compositional models, where extra layers enable composition of features from lower layers, giving a huge learning capacity and thus the potential of modeling complex patterns of speech data. A success of DNNs in large vocabulary speech recognition occurred in 2010 by industrial researchers, in collaboration with academic researchers, where large output layers of the DNN based on context dependent HMM states constructed by decision trees were adopted. Since 2014, there has been much research interest in "end-to-end" ASR. Traditional phonetic-based (i.e., all HMM-based model) approaches required separate components and training for the pronunciation, acoustic and language model. End-to-end models jointly learn all the components of the speech recognizer. This is valuable since it simplifies the training process and deployment process. For example, a n-gram language model is required for all HMM-based systems, and a typical n-gram language model often takes several gigabytes in memory making them impractical to deploy on

mobile devices. Consequently, modern commercial ASR systems from Google and Apple (as of 2017) are deployed on the cloud and require a network connection as opposed to the device locally.

The first attempt of end-to-end ASR was with Connectionist Temporal Classification (CTC) based systems introduced by Alex Graves of Google DeepMind and Navdeep Jaitly of the University of Toronto in 2014. The model consisted of recurrent neural networks and a CTC layer. Jointly, the RNN-CTC model learns the pronunciation and acoustic model together, however it is incapable of learning the language due to conditional independence assumptions similar to a HMM. Consequently, CTC models can directly learn to map speech acoustics to English characters, but the models make many common spelling mistakes and must rely on a separate language model to clean up the transcripts. Later, Baidu broadened on the work with extremely large datasets and demonstrated some commercial success in Chinese Mandarin and English. In 2016, University of Oxford presented LipNet, the first end-to-end sentence-level lip reading model, using spatiotemporal convolutions coupled with an RNN-CTC architecture, surpassing human-level performance in a restricted grammar dataset. A large-scale CNN-RNN-CTC architecture was presented in 2018 by Google DeepMind achieving 6 times better performance than human experts.

An alternative approach to CTC-based models are attention-based models. Attention-based ASR models were introduced simultaneously by Chan et al. of Carnegie Mellon University and Google Brain and Bahdanau et al. of the University of Montreal in 2016. The model named "Listen, Attend and Spell" (LAS), literally "listens" to the acoustic signal, pays "attention" to different parts of the signal and "spells" out the transcript one character at a time (Das, R. 2018). Unlike CTC-based models, attention-based models do not have conditional-independence assumptions and can learn all the components of a speech recognizer including the pronunciation, acoustic and language model directly. This means, during deployment, there is no need to carry around a language model making it very practical for deployment onto applications with limited memory. By the end of 2016, the attention-based models have seen considerable success including outperforming the CTC models (with or without an external language model). Various extensions have been proposed since the original LAS model. Latent Sequence Decompositions (LSD) was proposed by Carnegie Mellon University, MIT and Google Brain to directly emit sub-word units which are more natural than English characters;[83] University of



Oxford and Google DeepMind extended LAS to "Watch, Listen, Attend and Spell" (WLAS) to handle lip reading surpassing human-level performance. One fundamental principle of deep learning is to do away with hand-crafted feature engineering and to use raw features. This principle was first explored successfully in the architecture of deep autoencoder on the "raw" spectrogram or linear filter-bank features, showing its superiority over the Mel-Cepstral features which contain a few stages of fixed transformation from spectrograms. The true "raw" features of speech, waveforms, have more recently been shown to produce excellent larger-scale speech recognition results.

Methodology

The research methodology in question consists in changing the said PSO algorithm by re-configuring two cycles of the "particle evaluation" phase. This cycle has a special importance in the whole process of the Particle Swarm Optimization algorithm because it has an impact on the timely performance of the processes that consider this algorithm. In computational science, particle swarm optimization (PSO) is a computational method that optimizes a problem by iteratively trying to improve a candidate solution with regard to a given measure of quality. It solves a problem by having a population of candidate solutions, here dubbed particles, and moving these particles around in the search-space according to simple mathematical formulae over the particle's position and velocity. Each particle's movement is influenced by its local best known position, but is also guided toward the best known positions in the search-space, which are updated as better positions are found by other particles. This is expected to move the swarm toward the best solutions. PSO is originally attributed to Kennedy, Eberhart and Shi and was first intended for simulating social behavior,[4] as a stylized representation of the movement of organisms in a bird flock or fish school. The algorithm was simplified, and it was observed to be performing optimization. The book by Kennedy and Eberhart[5] describes many philosophical aspects of PSO and swarm intelligence. An extensive survey of PSO applications is made by Poli. Recently, a comprehensive review on theoretical and experimental works on PSO has been published by Bonyadi and Michalewicz.

PSO is a meta-heuristic as it makes few or no assumptions about the problem being optimized and can search very large spaces of candidate solutions. However, metaheuristics such as PSO do

not guarantee an optimal solution ever found. Also, PSO does not use the gradient of the problem being optimized, which means PSO does not require that the optimization problem be differentiable as is required by classic optimization methods such as gradient descent and quasi-newton methods. A basic variant of the PSO algorithm works by having a population (called a swarm) of candidate solutions (called particles). These particles are moved around in the search-space according to a few simple formulae.[9] The movements of the particles are guided by their own best known position in the search-space as well as the entire swarm's best known position. When improved positions are being discovered these will then come to guide the movements of the swarm. The process is repeated and by doing so it is hoped, but not guaranteed, that a satisfactory solution will eventually be discovered.

Results and discussions

The simulation model results are shown in the following two figures. Figure 5 shows the trend line through the "sum of sine" of the standard algorithm performance. As can be seen, values in milliseconds do not exceed 4.7 seconds while in figure 6 it is noted that the value of the tracking time of the moving object does not exceed 3.1 milliseconds. Also parallel to the curve fitting through spox spots are also shown residual plots results.

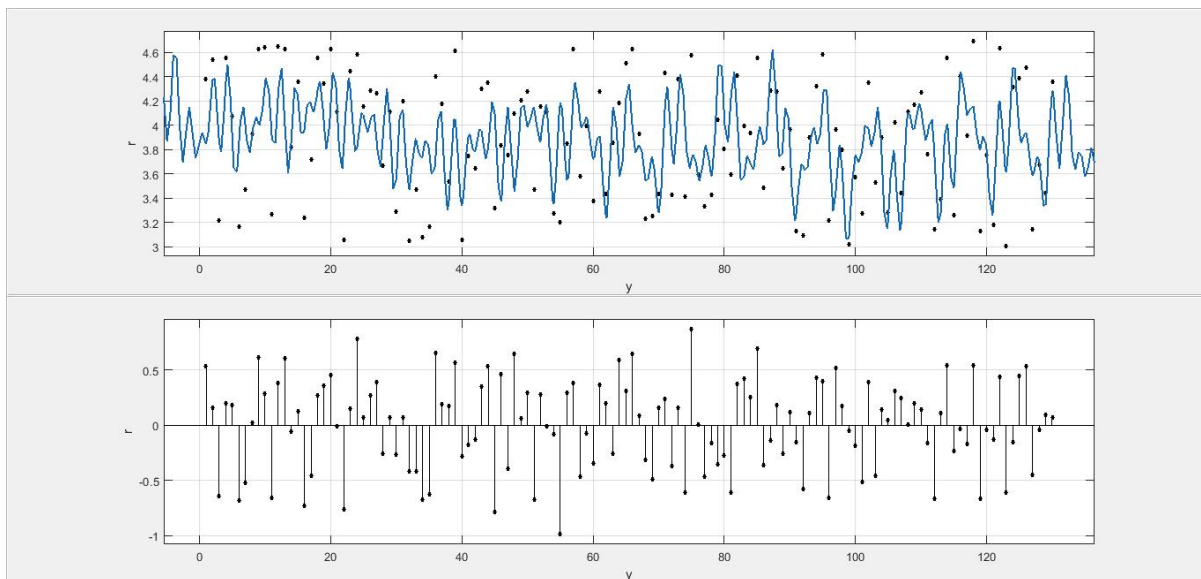


Figure 5. Results of simulation for the standard algorithm

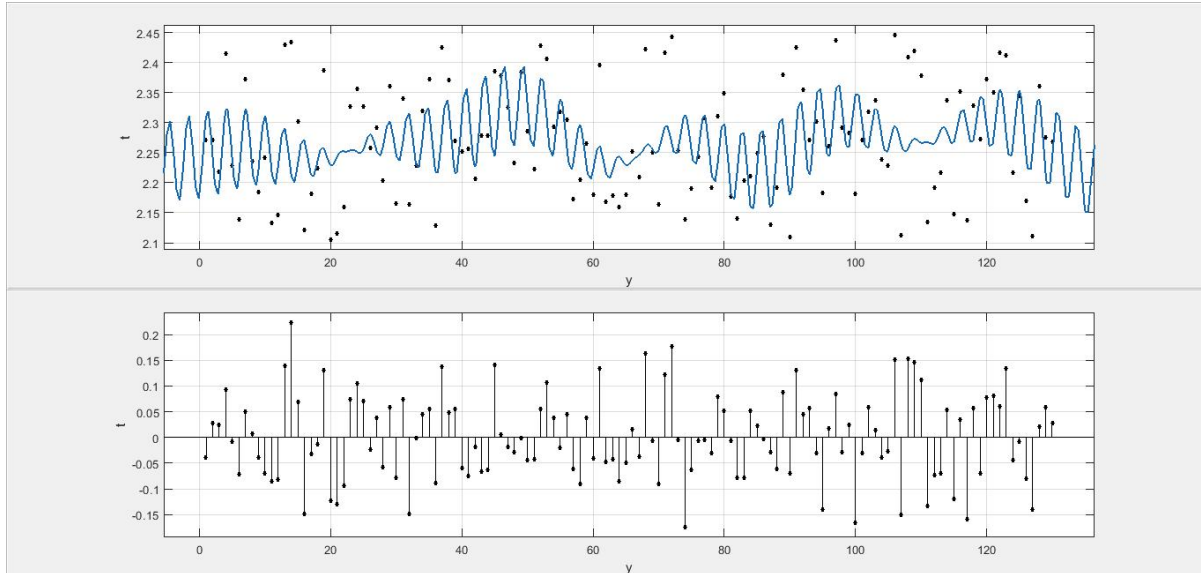


Figure 6. Results of simulation for the improved algorithm

The approximation equation by the "Sum of Sine" method is theoretically the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
 f(x) = & \\
 & a1*\sin(b1*x+c1) + a2*\sin(b2*x+c2) + a3*\sin(b3*x+c3) + \\
 & a4*\sin(b4*x+c4) + a5*\sin(b5*x+c5) + a6*\sin(b6*x+c6) + \\
 & a7*\sin(b7*x+c7) + a8*\sin(b8*x+c8)
 \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where, the coefficients a1, b1, etc. consist of the approximation line determinants according to the "Sum of Sine" method. The values of the above constants are presented below for both the simulation model and the improved simulation.

Table 1

Trendline coefficients according to the General Gauss8 algorithm for the classic simulation model

Coefficients (with 95% confidence bounds)	The values Standard Algorithm	The values Improved Algorithm
a1	5.366 (-3.863e+04, 3.864e+04)	7.283 (-5.475e+06, 5.475e+06)
b1	0.01026 (-58.91, 58.93)	0.01776 (-1715, 1715)
c1	0.8661 (-4363, 4365)	0.4334 (-1.097e+05, 1.097e+05)
a2	1.554 (-3.864e+04, 3.864e+04)	5.04 (-5.475e+06, 5.475e+06)
b2	0.02149 (-110.3, 110.3)	0.02197 (-2137, 2137)
c2	3.191 (-7949, 7956)	3.306 (-1.367e+05, 1.367e+05)
a3	0.08746 (-12.91, 13.08)	0.04523 (-252.5, 252.6)



b3	0.09046 (-2.034, 2.214)	0.08882 (-38.11, 38.29)
c3	1.293 (-159.9, 162.5)	2.669 (-1024, 1029)
a4	0.2354 (0.1191, 0.3516)	0.02832 (-75.45, 75.51)
b4	3.099 (3.086, 3.112)	0.1198 (-35.98, 36.22)
c4	0.6499 (-0.201, 1.501)	3.038 (-2186, 2192)
a5	0.1012 (-0.02943, 0.2319)	0.01718 (-0.1696, 0.2039)
b5	0.196 (0.1427, 0.2494)	0.2316 (-0.3285, 0.7917)
c5	-2.324 (-6.335, 1.687)	-2.758 (-54.34, 48.82)
a6	0.1635 (0.04752, 0.2794)	0.01876 (-0.221, 0.2585)
b6	0.876 (0.8506, 0.9014)	0.2834 (-0.08641, 0.6532)
c6	0.08393 (-1.876, 2.043)	-0.4315 (-25.67, 24.81)
a7	0.1809 (0.06572, 0.2961)	0.03783 (0.01463, 0.06103)
b7	0.8332 (0.81, 0.8564)	2.086 (2.069, 2.102)
c7	-1.941 (-3.751, -0.132)	-1.04 (-2.266, 0.1856)
a8	0.1921 (0.08023, 0.3039)	0.03553 (0.0123, 0.05876)
b8	2.353 (2.337, 2.368)	2.229 (2.212, 2.246)
c8	3.928 (2.76, 5.096)	-1.157 (-2.457, 0.1435)

Conclusions and recommendations

In this paper we discussed about the field of biometric speech recognition regarding performance of the PSO algorithm. The importance of the PSO model, as an algorithm for biometric speech identification processes, plays an important role and provides space for continuous reconfigurations and modifications that improve the performance of the models in question in different terms where one of them is the time of facial identification execution versus a certain database. In our model we have implemented a simulation model through Matlab software (R2017b), which realizes the speech recognition process including an open source database of 130 speech images. The purpose of this paper was to present a simulation model that deals inside it with a modified version of the PSO algorithm; the modeling was intended to give the results of this improvement of the PSO algorithm in terms of the execution time of identifying a speech sample.

The modification, carried out in the PSO algorithm, was the intervening in the respective cycles by introducing a subset into the algorithm. Also, the modification of this modeling was the intervention standard code that makes it possible to read the database that is further applied in the basic model algorithm. Also, to reflect the results in time, we simulated through Matlab a "Sum



of Sine" algorithm model that generates a threefold reflection performance of the standard Eigenface algorithm versus the improved algorithm. Along with the graphical data of Sine approximation, specific and supporting parameters are also given, where they are considered as computable coefficients. Because of the Sine method simulations, it is concluded that the execution time of the speech identification process for the standard PSO algorithm has extremes that show greater time values compared to the improved pattern. Disputes and discussions that arise from this study leave spaces for improvements in the terms of time needed to perform facial identification process performances as well as the size of the database needed to keep the face images; in relation to the database arises the challenge of designing models that go hand in hand with the improvement of the model's quality in relation to the execution.

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**INTERNATIONAL
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Tirana, Albania 8th May 2019