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## Self-Regulated Learning: Exploring Its Role and Connected Variables

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### Abstract

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has become increasingly important in today's educational settings. It's all about how people manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions to meet their own learning goals. In the last few years, researchers have been doing a better job of showing how SRL is different from other ideas, like meta-cognition, and how it plays a key role in student learning. This study looks at existing research on self-regulated learning and its impact on every part of how students learn. Motivation is a major player here; it keeps students engaged and involved. Research shows that things like self-belief and the importance students put on a task can really affect how they manage their learning. This review investigates the theories behind self-regulated learning and its link to motivation. What stands out is that motivated students tend to set goals, check their progress, and think about what's working or not in their studies. When students believe in themselves and see value in what they're doing, they're much more likely to succeed and stay engaged over time.

**Keywords:** Self-regulated learning, motivation, students, active learning, self-efficacy

### Introduction

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is now a key term in educational psychology, reflecting a paradigm shift toward student-centered learning. As education adapts to meet the needs of different societies, students are expected to take charge of their learning instead of soaking up information. SRL theories show that students who use metacognitive, motivational and behavioral strategies usually perform better academically and grow personally. These strategies include setting goals, planning, self-monitoring, and reflecting, which prepare learners for complex learning environments (Abu Bakar et al., 2017).

Zimmerman's (1989, as cited in Cobb et al., 2023) seminal definition of SRL shows how cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes fit together. Some scholars argue for a wider view that considers the social and cultural influences on SRL (Jud et al., 2024). This focus on autonomy, self-efficacy, and meaningful engagement highlights how individual psychology interacts with outside support and challenges.

Many studies talk about the benefits of self-regulated learning (SRL), but not as many look into what helps or hinders its development. For instance, Jud and others (2024) mention that SRL involves handling emotions along with thinking, which isn't often addressed in SRL programs. Zimmerman (2016) argues that SRL is crucial for lifelong learning, which raises questions about how well schools promote these skills over time. This review aims to link theories to real-life teaching practices and policies, especially in places like Albania. The education system there is transforming to boost student independence and could really use some solid SRL strategies. By focusing on these key ideas, this review wants to connect theory with classroom reality. It looks at how insights from SRL can shape curriculum design and teacher training. This is particularly important in less-studied areas like Albania, where the education system is changing to encourage student autonomy but doesn't have strong SRL strategies in place. Connecting theory with practice in different cultural settings is a big challenge for today's education. Learning environments, therefore, must be designed with three essential components in mind: the learner, instructional materials, and the instructor (Cobb, 2023).

## **Literature review**

The literature covers various theoretical models, each with its strengths and weaknesses. Zimmerman's (2000) three-phase model—forethought, performance, and self-reflection gains attention for its clarity and flexibility. Still, some critics feel its linear approach oversimplifies the messy reality of self-regulation, especially in tough learning situations.

Panadero (2017) broadens the discussion by arguing that SRL isn't just for formal education; it's essential for personal and professional success. Yet, there's a need for more research on how these processes differ across cultures or social classes. Boekaerts' dual-processing model makes a noteworthy point by including emotional regulation, showing how students switch between mastery goals and coping strategies based on challenges. This brings to light some gaps in SRL initiatives that often overlook emotional and psychological challenges.

Boekaerts' (1996) dual-processing model offers a critical advancement by integrating emotional regulation, recognizing that students oscillate between mastery goals and coping mechanisms depending on perceived threats or challenges. This highlights a gap in many SRL programs, which often neglect the emotional and psychological hurdles that derail regulation processes.

Pintrich's (2000, 2004) framework is recognized for its multidimensional approach, covering cognition, motivation, and context. But while it's thorough, its complexity can make it hard for teachers to put into practice without adequate training. Each model sheds light on SRL, revealing ongoing tensions between thorough understanding and practical use in classrooms.

While these models each contribute valuable insights, a comparative examination highlights their respective strengths and limitations. Zimmerman's (2000) three-phase cyclical model—comprising forethought, performance, and self-reflection—provides a clear and adaptable framework for understanding SRL across varied educational contexts. However, its somewhat linear depiction risks oversimplifying the iterative and complex nature of learning, especially in emotionally charged situations. Pintrich's (2000, 2004) multidimensional framework expands the scope by incorporating contextual and motivational dimensions, offering a richer but more complex model that can be challenging to operationalize without extensive teacher support and training. Boekaerts' (1996) dual-processing model uniquely emphasizes emotional regulation, addressing critical psychological barriers to effective self-regulation often neglected in other frameworks. Lastly, Panadero (2017) situates SRL within the broader scope of lifelong learning, underscoring adaptability beyond formal education. Together, these models illuminate the multifaceted nature of SRL while revealing ongoing tensions between theoretical comprehensiveness and practical classroom applicability. Understanding these differences is essential for selecting and applying SRL frameworks in diverse educational settings.

## **Methodology**

### **3.1 Rationale**

This research employs a systematic literature review methodology to explore empirical findings on SRL. The rationale for using this methodology is to identify and synthesise the relationship between SRL and other related variables. This study adopts a rigorous, systematic approach to synthesizing recent scholarships on SRL. By focusing on peer-reviewed studies from the last decade, the review ensures relevance to contemporary educational challenges, including digital learning and increasing diversity in classrooms. The use of citation tracking and advanced search strategies enhances the reliability of the review.

### **3.2 Method**

A systematic review strategy involved four academic databases: JSTOR, PubMed, oogle Scholar and Research Gate where the search was conducted using the following keywords: "self-regulated learning", "performance" and "motivation". The inclusion of certain literature was based on whether they were peer reviewed articles, and whether validation and credible assessment tools were used. As the literature review conducted in this study included mixed methods the necessary data was collected from both qualitative and quantitative studies to capture the complexity of SRL (meta-cognition), academic performance, and the growing role of digital learning tools.

*Research question 1:* How does self-regulation influence the overall learning process?

*Research question 2:* What are some variables that are most closely related to self-regulated learning?

*Research question 3:* Why is self-regulated learning crucial today to develop lifelong learning and personal growth in today's education context?

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 How Self-Regulated Learning Affects the Learning Process**

Research shows that self-regulated learning (SRL) plays a big role in the learning process. It helps students set goals, take thoughtful actions, and think about their own learning. According to Zimmerman (2000), students who plan and set goals tend to handle their workload better and stay motivated during tasks. While working through a task, they monitor how they're doing and adjust whenever they run into challenges. In the reflection phase, they look back at their results, which helps them improve in future learning cycles.

Panadero (2017) points out that SRL helps build critical thinking skills and allows students to adapt to different learning situations. Research has found that SRL not only boosts academic success but also helps students bounce back from setbacks, building their confidence and persistence. Still, while we understand individual benefits, there's not enough research on how schools and cultures influence SRL.

However, while students' benefits of SRL are well-documented, there is a gap in research regarding the influence of schools and cultural environments on the development and practice of SRL. Further exploration in these areas could provide valuable insights into how educational systems and cultural factors can support or hinder the adoption of self-regulated learning strategies.

### **4.2 Important Factors Linked to Self-Regulated Learning**

Recent studies have expanded the idea of SRL to include social and collaborative aspects. For instance, Jud et al. (2024) look at how teachers and students' motivation can work together to improve SRL. Brenner (2022) explores how future teachers learn to work together in managing their learning processes. Despite these findings, there's still limited research on how social factors affect individual SRL in different cultures and educational settings. Most studies focus on Western or online learning environments, leaving a gap in understanding SRL in schools that are less well-resourced or culturally different. Alastair and Meng (2024) stress that motivation is key for sustaining SRL, highlighting that finding personal value in tasks keeps learners engaged.

The addition of social and collaborative components to SRL signals a substantial change in our understanding of learning. Teachers and other educators can design more successful plans for promoting SRL in a variety of educational contexts by

recognizing the importance of motivation, social interactions, and cultural background. In addition to creating inclusive and encouraging learning communities, this holistic approach may enable students to take more responsibility for their education.

### **4.3 SRL, Lifelong Learning, and Personal Growth**

The growth of digital learning has also created new challenges for SRL. In these settings, learners must juggle cognitive tasks, motivation, and time management on their own, all while dealing with digital distractions and sometimes limited help from instructors (Abu Bakar et al., 2017). There are also big differences in access to technology and supportive learning environments, which raises concerns about fairness. Students in underfunded schools or those with learning challenges might struggle more to develop good self-regulatory skills. This shows why we need inclusive SRL strategies that consider different learners' needs.

Nen et al. (2023) note that SRL helps build essential lifelong learning skills, especially as the digital world rapidly changes. Self-regulated learning is key for promoting lifelong learning. It gives people the tools they need to handle uncertainty, adapt to new situations, and pursue personal growth (Hindradjat et al., 2022). SRL techniques—like setting goals, tracking progress, and reflecting on what's learned—help students take charge of their growth, both in school and beyond. This is especially important in digital learning where learners must manage their own time and motivation without constant teacher support (Abu Bakar et al., 2017).

## **Discussion**

Discussion about Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) shows just how significant it is in modern educational psychology, but it also shows significant inconsistencies between theoretical models and how they are used in the real world. Though SRL has been recognized as essential to learner autonomy and lifelong learning, the difficulties in transforming its principles into effective teaching strategies reveal further systemic challenges within the education system. This critical analysis examines the tensions, barriers, and prospects inherent in SRL research and practice, providing an informed view on its potential and shortcomings.

### **5.1 Theoretical Clarity and Practical Complexity**

Zimmerman's (2008) model of SRL has been credited for its clarity and applicability in the classroom context. The cyclical phases of forethought, performance, and self-reflection are easily interpreted and applied within classroom settings. Zimmerman's (2008) model's narrow focus on cognitive ability and behavioral processes ignores the effective and socio-relational components of learning that are the foundation of student engagement and success. On the opposite side are the newer models by Boekaerts (2006) and Brenner (2008) that emphasize connections between affect,

motivation, and social contexts. These models highlight the interactions of cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social processes related to SRL, but are criticized for being overly complex and not providing a useful framework for educators.

Pintrich's (2000, 2004) model serves as a comprehensive representation of the SRL process but may limit the ability of teachers to apply it in the classroom because it combines multiple dimensions and processes that may require training and instructional resources that most teachers do not possess. In some cases, this is even more problematic, as it would not be easy for a teacher in an under-resourced system such as Albania to apply any, one or more, of the dimensions of Pintrich's model as there are demands for vigilance to situational realities.

## **5.2 Role of Motivation and socio-cultural contexts**

Jud et al.'s (2024) analysis illustrates the complexity of motivation, self-efficacy, and task value and SRL while reinforcing the importance of intrinsic/extrinsic factors of SRL learning behaviours. Jud et al.'s work highlights the lack of consideration for the individual factors that are the motivation which teachers and educators should give attention to in the interest of further developing SRL learning behaviours into educational policy and professional development programs for teachers within developing regions. Research into SRL also neglects the socio-cultural context of learning and tends to universalize research using broad frameworks that risk neglecting community-based solutions. As demonstrated in Albania, in collectivist societies emphasis on social networks exists as a response to community and family which informs education (Jud et al., 2024). To successfully understand, develop, implement, and increase the SRL learning behaviours one must clearly define the role socio-cultural contexts play in individual learning processes. Not paying attention to how varying forms of networks, which engage the socio-cultural practices of education and pedagogy shape and contribute to student learning, simply reproduces educational privileges which continuously exist and are emphasized in one-sized-fits-all approaches to SRL.

## **6. Conclusions**

In summary, promoting SRL research continues to inform practical and accessible models of development and practices in SRL. This review contributed to current theoretical and empirical models of SRL and has highlighted SRL's critical role in cognitive control, the motivation to engage, and lifelong learning. SRL processes consistently engage motivation, self-efficacy, and metacognition as major components. With the focus in education shifting towards learner agency, there remains the need for research on the application of SRL across contexts, as well as policies to promote student-centered learning opportunities.

Future research should extend beyond theoretical to prioritize the development of practical, equitable frameworks that accommodate learners from diverse socio-

cultural and economic backgrounds. Strengthening the link between SRL development and policy reform, alongside targeted teacher training programs, is essential for fostering learner autonomy and resilience in increasingly digital, globalized education systems. Only through such integrated approaches can the promise of SRL for lifelong learning and personal growth be fully realized.

## 7. Limitations

This review is constrained by its focus on English-language sources, which may limit the cultural breadth of its conclusions. Also, since different studies use various research methods, it makes it hard to compare their results directly, showing a need for more consistent methods across the board. Future studies should work on these areas and explore SRL practices in non-Western and under-resourced schools.

Besides these methodological issues, the focus on specific locations and languages limits what the review covers. This points out the need for more studies on SRL processes in less represented groups, like students with disabilities and those in struggling educational systems. Filling these gaps is important to create theories and practices that truly represent the varied experiences of learners around the world

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## **Evaluating the Educational Potential of Chatgpt Among University Students – An Experimental Study**

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### **Abstract**

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, has become increasingly common among students of all academic levels. The ease of accessing and organizing information has made this technology a favorite learning tool. However, there is a tendency to replace traditional literature learning with the use of ChatGPT, which raises questions about the validity of this tool as a primary source of knowledge. **Methodology:** This experimental study was conducted with the participation of 19 university-level students, who agreed to be tested on the knowledge they had acquired. The study was divided into two groups: one that used ChatGPT and another that relied on traditional literature. **Results:** 74% of the students passed the test, while 26% failed. The group that used ChatGPT achieved an average score of 66.8 out of a possible 100, while the other group had an average score of 46.6. **Conclusions:** ChatGPT appears to be a useful tool for gaining basic knowledge to pass academic tests. Considering the overall test results, an increase in the use of ChatGPT is anticipated, underscoring the need for a thoughtful integration of technology into the learning process. To ensure quality and academic integrity, it is essential to maintain a balanced approach that combines innovation with the strengths of conventional educational methods.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, knowledge evaluation, student, higher education

### **Introduction**

Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, its use has rapidly expanded across nearly all fields, including academia and the teaching and learning process. The challenges facing higher education institutions worldwide are related to the fact that students are increasingly using this application to achieve high school results, carry out various projects or presentations, and acquire professional knowledge. This is supported by recent literature, which reports that more than half of the students

interviewed use or consider using artificial intelligence for academic purposes [1, 2]. Advantages such as personalized and adaptive learning, increased accessibility, and enhanced student and academic well-being are some of the benefits of integrating AI into the learning process [3, 4, 5].

Despite the evident benefits of AI in higher education, within the teaching community, there is still concern about replacing traditional literature reading with ChatGPT, as it poses the risk of obtaining information that is not controlled, unreliable, or inaccurate. Few studies have assessed the educational potential of ChatGPT across various fields, with accuracy levels ranging from 76% to 85% [6, 7, 8].

This study aims to evaluate the potential of using the ChatGPT tool for learning among medical sciences students as a basic or complementary modality for acquiring knowledge.

## **Methodology**

In this experimental study, second-year students from a private university in Tirana, Albania, participated. They were informed about the study objectives and requirements and gave their consent. Initially, students were voluntarily divided into 2 groups. Students in Group A were instructed to prepare on a specific topic from the mandatory literature course, while students in Group B prepared on the same subject with the help of ChatGPT.

A written test was designed for this study, consisting of three types of questions: multiple-choice, descriptive, and clinical case questions. Each type of question was assigned a specific number of points: multiple-choice questions had a maximum of 25 points, descriptive answers had 30 points, and the clinical case had 45 points, totaling 100 points. A numerical evaluation grade was used to grade the tests, providing a clearer understanding of the results. The exam was assessed by the same instructor, and the evaluation was conducted anonymously to minimize subjectivity.

## **Statistical analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. The statistical tests included an independent samples t-test to evaluate significant differences in means between the two groups, and Levene's Test for equality of variances to determine whether the student groups had equal variances (i.e., similar data distributions) in their exam results. Correlation analysis was performed to examine associations between variables, with a significance level set at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## **Results**

In this study, 25 students initially agreed to participate, but only 19 students attended the test, including 12 females (63%) and 7 males (37%). The distribution of students by gender and study type is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

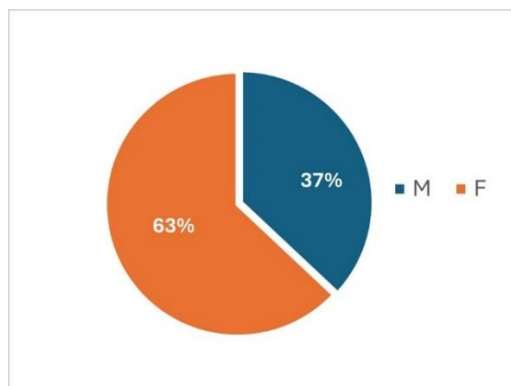


Figure 1. Gender distribution

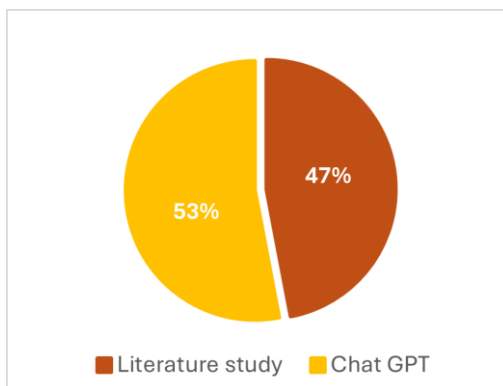


Figure 2. Study type distribution

According to the numerical evaluation, 74% of the students collected 41 points and passed the exam, whereas 26% of them collected 41 points and failed the exam (Figure 3). The overall test performance of each student is graphically shown in Figure 4, where important numerical differences are observed between the two groups.

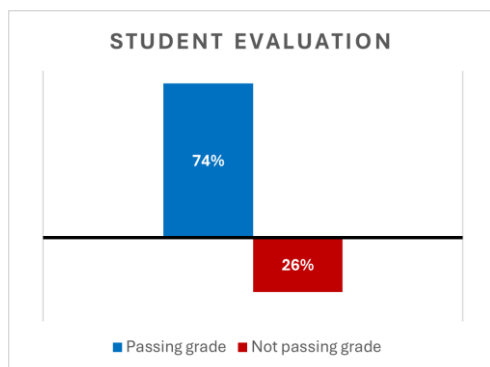


Figure 3. Students' evaluation

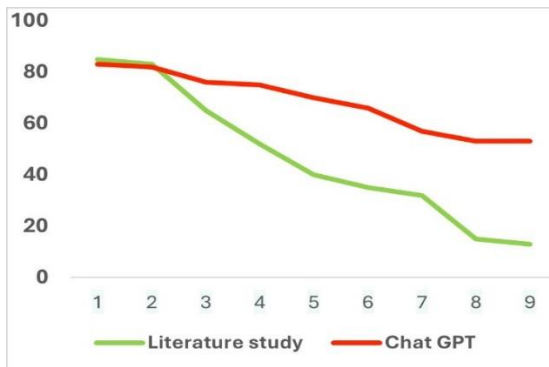


Figure 4. Overall performance of each student

A t-test was used to investigate whether there is a significant difference between the means of the two independent samples, Group A and Group B (there are no common members between the two groups). The results show that students who used ChatGPT for exam preparation achieved higher scores on average ( $M = 66.80$ ) compared to those who prepared by studying the literature ( $M = 46.67$ ) (Table 1). To assess whether the student groups had equal variances (i.e., the data had similar distributions) in the exam results, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was used (Table 2). The result of this test was  $F(17) = 6.477$ ,  $p = 0.021$ , which is less than the statistical significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the variances are not equal between the two groups. Consequently, the t-test for independent samples was used,

assuming unequal variances, which resulted in  $t(10.92) = -2.08$ ,  $p = 0.062$ . This suggests that although students who used ChatGPT tend to perform better, the difference is not statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

### Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Total points	Group A (Literature study)	9	<b>46.67</b>	26.660	8.887
	Group B (ChatGPT)	10	<b>66.80</b>	12.127	3.835

Table 1. Mean scores for both groups

### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
Points earned	Equal variances assumed	6.477	<b>0.021</b>	-2.158	17	0.046	-20.133	9.330	-39.818 0.449
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.080	<b>10.920</b>	<b>0.062</b>	-20.133	9.679	-41.455 1.188

Table 2. The impact of the type of study (literature study/ChatGPT study) on the points earned in the assessment (students' performance).

Then, we analyzed the answers separately in terms of means, across the three question types (multiple-choice, descriptive questions, and clinical case) for both groups (Figure 5):

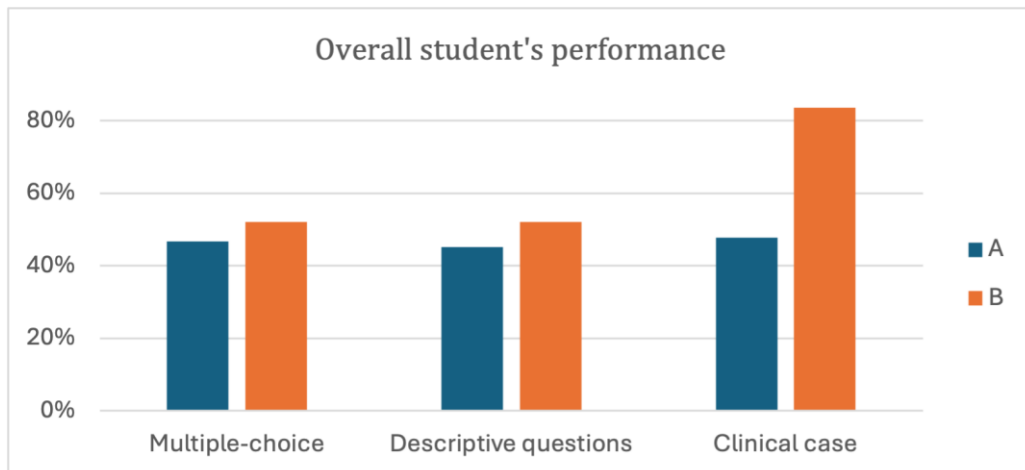


Figure 5. Students' performance according to the type of questions

The results show that students who used ChatGPT during exam preparation scored higher on average on Multiple-Choice questions ( $M = 13.00$ ) compared to those who prepared by studying the literature ( $M = 11.67$ ) (Table 3). Levene's Test for equality of variances (i.e., the data had similar distributions in the exam) was used. The result of this test was  $F(17) = 0.107$ ,  $p = 0.748$ , which is greater than the statistical significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the variances are equal between the two groups. After it was determined that the variances between the groups are equal, the t-test for independent samples was used, assuming equal variances ("Equal variances assumed"). The test results showed no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of scores on the multiple-choice questions,  $t(17) = -0.466$ ,  $p = 0.647$  (Table 4). Although the ChatGPT group scored higher on average ( $M = 13.00$ ) than the literature study group ( $M = 11.67$ ), this difference is not statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level. Therefore, it cannot be affirmed with certainty that the type of study significantly influenced academic performance on the multiple-choice questions.

## Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Multiple-choice question points	Group A (Literature study)	9	<b>11.67</b>	5.590	1.863
	Group B (ChatGPT)	10	<b>13.00</b>	6.749	2.134

Table 3. Mean scores for multiple-choice questions

## Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Multiple-choice points	Equal variances assumed	0.107	<b>0.748</b>	-0.466	17	<b>0.647</b>	-1.333	2.863	-7.373	4.707
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.471	16.902	0.644	-1.333	2.833	-7.314	4.647

Table 4. The impact of the type of study (literature study/ChatGPT study) on the points earned in multiple-choice questions.

Analyzing the results of the Descriptive question answers, we noticed that students who used ChatGPT for exam preparation scored higher on average on this question category ( $M = 15.60$ ) compared to those who prepared through literature study ( $M = 13.56$ ) (Table 5). The same assessment test was used to assess whether the student groups had equal variances (i.e., the data had similar distributions) in the exam results. The result of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was  $F(17) = 29.341$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , which is less than the statistical significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the variances are not equal between the two groups. Consequently, the t-test for independent samples was used, assuming unequal variances, which resulted in  $t(9.97) = -0.436$ ,  $p = 0.672$  (Table 6). So, although the ChatGPT group achieved a slightly higher average, this difference is not large enough to be considered statistically significant. Therefore, based on this analysis, it cannot be confirmed with certainty that the type of study significantly affected performance on the descriptive questions.

### Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Descriptive answers points	Group A (Literature study)	9	<b>13.56</b>	13.268	4.423
	Group B (ChatGPT)	10	<b>15.60</b>	4.926	1.558

Table 5. Mean scores for descriptive question answers

## Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
Descriptive question points	Equal variances assumed	29.341	<b>.000</b>	- <b>0.455</b>	17	0.655	-2.044	4.494	-11.527 7.438
	Equal variances not assumed			- <b>0.436</b>	<b>9.972</b>	<b>0.672</b>	-2.044	4.689	-12.496 8.407

Table 6. The impact of the type of study (literature study/ChatGPT study) on the points earned in descriptive questions.

Regarding the answers to the clinical case, the results show again that students who used ChatGPT during exam preparation achieved, on average, higher scores in the Clinical Case question ( $M = 37.60$ ) compared to those who prepared by reading the literature ( $M = 21.44$ ) (Table 7). The result of Levene's Test for equality of variances in exam results was  $F(17) = 12.840$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , which is less than the statistical significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the variances are not equal between the two groups. Consequently, the t-test for independent samples was used, assuming unequal variances, which resulted in  $t(9.69) = -2.865$ ,  $p = 0.017$  (Table 8). This implies that the type of study had a significant impact on students' performance in answering questions about the clinical case, and the use of ChatGPT contributed positively to their preparation for this part of the exam.

Group Statistics

Groups				Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Clinical points	case	Group (Literature study)	A 9	<b>21.44</b>	16.087	5.362
		Group (ChatGPT)	B 10	<b>37.60</b>	5.522	1.746

Table 7. Mean scores for clinical case answers

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Clinical Case points	Equal variances assumed	12.840	<b>0.002</b>	<b>2.994</b>	17	0.008	-16.156	5.396	-27.540	-4.771
	Equal variances not assumed			<b>2.865</b>	<b>9.690</b>	<b>0.017</b>	-16.156	5.639	-28.776	-3.536

Table 8. The impact of the type of study (literature study/ChatGPT study) on the points earned in clinical case questions.

To provide a clearer evaluation of student performance, we applied the grading system currently used at Albanian University to the students' scores. This system ranges from 0 to 100 points, where scores of 91-100 points are graded with 10, 81-90 points are graded with 9, 71-80 points are graded with 8, 61-70 points are graded with 7, 51-60 points are graded 6 and 41-50 points are graded with 5. Grade 4 is considered a failing grade ( $\leq 41$  points). The students' results in the exam are presented in Table 9, and their grades are graphically explained in Figure 6.

	Grades 9/10	Grades 7/8	Grades 5/6	Grade 4
<b>Total students</b>	4	5	5	5

Table 9. Graded evaluation 0-100 points. Score under 41 points = failed, 41+ = Passing.

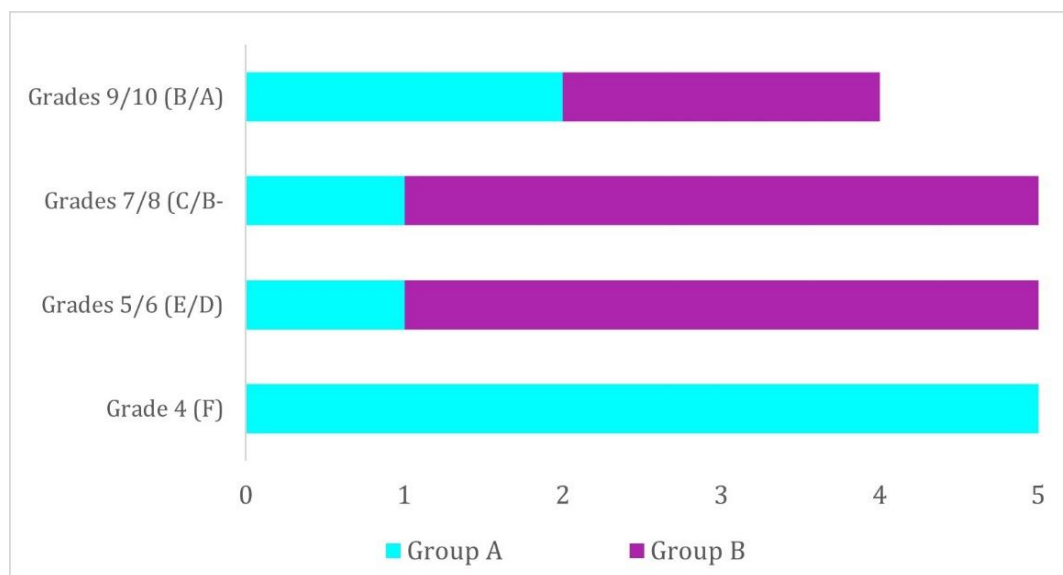


Figure 6. Graded system of evaluation

## Discussion

Our study found no statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, students who used ChatGPT (Group B) generally performed better on the exam than those who relied solely on reading literature (Group A), as shown by the mean scores. The overall mean score was 66.8 for ChatGPT users and 46.7 for the other group. This score corresponds to a grade of 7 in the Albanian University assessment system, which indicates average performance for Group B. For Group A,

it translates to a grade of 5, just above the passing mark of 4. We believe several factors contributed to this. Using ChatGPT can help students develop the basic knowledge needed to answer test questions. Group B's consistent, above-median performance suggests that ChatGPT helped them access relevant and organized information, resulting in similar responses within this group. Our findings align with other studies. For example, Svendsen et al, [9] although unable to demonstrate a statistically significant effect of ChatGPT on students' short-term learning, observed a positive potential impact of ChatGPT on learning outcomes, whereas Kavadella et al, [10] reported that students using ChatGPT for their assignments performed significantly better than their colleagues who relied on traditional literature research. Soulage et al. [11], as well, who tested ChatGPT and students on a university physiology exam, found a median AI score of 75% compared to a median score of 56% for students ( $p < 0.001$ ), with a 29% failure rate among students versus a 100% passing rate for ChatGPT.

However, we observed that despite higher average scores, no student in Group B reached the maximum score. This could be due to the students' limited knowledge of how to use ChatGPT effectively. The tool provided generally accurate and factually correct answers, but many were impersonal and lacked depth or critical thinking. This was likely because students relied solely on the system without engaging in personal analysis or deeper reasoning. This reasoning might also explain the consistency seen in Group B's results. Receiving similar answers from the AI led to similar responses, with only minor differences in performance. Our results are comparable to those of Krupp et al. [12], who found limited reflection or critical engagement, resulting in uniform and shallow responses in students using ChatGPT to solve physics questions. The authors noted that copying and pasting was the most common approach, highlighting the limited reflection during use. In contrast, our study found that Group A showed more variability in scores, possibly reflecting different levels of students' understanding and interpretation when studying independently from literature sources.

According to the study's overall findings, 74% of students passed the exam, while 26% failed. Interestingly, all failing students belonged to Group A, who studied according to the literature. There may be several reasons for this result. One possible reason might be a lack of motivation. Some students may not have taken the study seriously because it was an experimental study rather than a formal, graded test, which could have affected their engagement and motivation to study for or complete the test. Another factor to consider is the difficulty of the exam. Despite studying the literature, students might have found it hard to properly demonstrate their understanding due to the exam's format or complexity. Insufficient preparation could also have played a role. Factors such as a lack of time, poor study methods, or difficulty

understanding the subject may have contributed to these students not being well-prepared for the test.

Some interesting observations in our study included the notable variations within Group A (the literature group), where some students failed while others achieved maximum and very high scores. This finding suggests that individual differences, such as study habits, comprehension skills, or prior knowledge, played a significant role. These differences were less apparent in Group B (ChatGPT users), where most scores were close to the average, indicating uniformity among the answers. Our findings suggest that traditional study methods (literature-based) can lead to both exceptional and poor performances among students, depending entirely on their study capacity and approach. Conversely, AI-based learning in our study provides consistent performance, although it is not statistically significant overall. In the literature, it is well-documented that students' academic performance is influenced by numerous factors [13, 14, 15, 16]. Nazari et al [17] note that students' engagement, self-efficacy, and academic emotions are important factors in educational psychology that play a role in addressing low achievement problems, motivation, and learning effectiveness, as well as the relationship between learning affective aspects and achievement in traditional education. These factors should be considered in academic environments to help students reach their full potential.

We also evaluated students' performance from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. From a quantitative standpoint, students in Group B (ChatGPT users) generally achieved higher scores, as presented in the graphs. This suggests that artificial intelligence may help students establish a reliable baseline of knowledge, sufficient to perform well in assessments, especially in more objective or structured question formats. However, analyzing the data from a qualitative perspective, we noticed that the most well-developed and analytically strong answers came from students in Group A (Literature study). For example, when questioned to describe the effects and the mechanism of action of fluoride in teeth and the advantages of its use, a student from Group A (Literature study) answered: *"Fluoride is a very important ultra-microelement in increasing the caries resistance of teeth. It has the ability to act on hydroxyapatite crystals and replace hydroxyl groups by forming hydroxyapatite. This incorporation of fluoride into the tooth structure, especially by topical fluoridation immediately after tooth eruption, has several positive aspects:*

- remineralizing initial lesions
- increasing resistance to demineralization
- increasing post-eruptive maturation of teeth
- interfering with the growth and multiplication of cariogenic bacteria in dental plaque, which are capable of fermenting simple carbohydrates from the diet and producing

*acids that promote the demineralization of enamel prisms until the appearance of carious lesions."*

Another student from Group B (ChatGPT) gave this answer: "*Fluoride strengthens the structure of tooth enamel by increasing resistance to acid attacks caused by bacteria in bacterial plaque.*

- 1. helps remineralize damaged enamel by restoring lost minerals*
- 2. helps prevent demineralization by preventing the action of acids*

*Advantages: prevents tooth decay, reduces the risk of caries, overall improvement of the oral system".* In our opinion, this indicates that ChatGPT can support efficient access to information, but it may not yet give the same depth of reasoning or integration of more complex concepts as traditional study methods.

In this study, we analyzed the various types of exam questions separately to determine if any question type or learning method has superiority. There was no statistically significant difference between groups for the *Multiple-Choice* questions ( $p = 0.647$ ); Group B (ChatGPT users) had a higher mean score than Group A (Literature study), likely due to ChatGPT's ability to provide clear, concise, and structured answers. The efficiency of AI in synthesizing information may have helped students, especially when answering questions with defined characteristics. In the *Descriptive* questions category, students in Group B demonstrated slightly higher mean scores, although the difference was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.672$ ), compared to their colleagues in Group A. However, for this question category, responses from Group A students were more exhaustive and reflected deeper understanding and critical reasoning. This may suggest that traditional learning methods, which involve the processing and analysis of information, enhance students' readiness for questions that require argumentation or thorough explanations. Interestingly, for the last category of the *Clinical Case* question, Group B demonstrated a strong, statistically significant performance ( $p = 0.017$ ). This suggests that ChatGPT can be effectively applied to clinical reasoning tasks. However, the lack of personalization or clinical judgment in the answers remains, and this can be addressed through a deeper learning and thinking process.

The present study has some limitations, which lie firstly in the limited number of students participating in the experiment and secondly, the seriousness of their commitment to the study, which may have affected their engagement in the experiment. However, the results suggest that, based on academic performance, the tendency to use Chat GPT will increase among students, posing a challenge that requires integrating innovation and AI into the teaching and learning process. This can be achieved by utilizing it as a source of knowledge cultivation, without falling into academic dishonesty.

## Conclusion

At the end of this study, we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between the two learning methods. However, using ChatGPT tends to provide higher scores for medical students, resulting in better grades than those achieved through traditional literature learning, but their academic performance level was average. Among the students with the highest scores from both groups, the most exhaustive and well-argued answers were given by students who learned based on literature, especially for the category of descriptive questions, where a solid knowledge base is required. Regarding the answers to the clinical case question, students who used ChatGPT provided significantly more accurate answers, supporting the idea that AI could compete with human judgment, with even better results.

Considering that even among ChatGPT users, there are differences in performance, ranging from the highest to the lowest, we can assume that the use of AI can complement students' knowledge to achieve better academic results. To expand the value of such tools, students should learn or be instructed on how to critically assess and complement AI-generated information. This includes developing the ability to question, verify, and integrate the responses provided by AI into the context, rather than relying on them passively. Developing methods to encourage students to effectively combine AI-based information with deeper engagement in course materials or clinical reasoning may help create a connection between general knowledge and advanced skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

However, for higher-order thinking tasks and more complex elaborations, traditional methods still appear to provide an advantage. This highlights the importance of a blended learning approach, where AI tools complement rather than replace critical, reflective, and active learning strategies.

As a recommendation for the future, it is necessary to evaluate the longevity of this knowledge over time to better understand whether it can truly serve students in education.

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## Heidegger's Anxiety-Awareness Idea

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### Abstract

In this essay I will exploring the themes of Anxiety-Awareness toward death in Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*<sup>1</sup> and their integration with Martin Heidegger's philosophy. Proust employs a cyclical narrative structure to depict different dimensions of time. Heidegger, in his work *Being and Time*, emphasizes temporality as a key element in the existential structure of human existence. He discusses the concepts of Being-toward-death and attaining completeness in death, highlighting the fear associated with authentic Dasein. The essay seeks to establish a connection between the narrator of Proust's novel, Marcel, and Heidegger's notion of Dasein. It aims to explore the idea of anxiety-awareness in the face of death, as depicted in *In Search*, through an examination of Heidegger's philosophy. The ultimate goal is to understand how Marcel, as a character, attempts to immortalize and relive moments of Being through writing.

**Keywords:** Proust, Heidegger, Time, Temporality, anxiety, Death

### Introduction

Some novels become immortalized by the mere repetition of their names. When we encounter the title of such a novel, questions arise in our minds, accompanied by a sense of excitement as we anticipate delving into its contents. As we read the lines within, we are carried away by the flow of words. When reading "*In Search*," the first thing that comes to mind is indeed the concept of time. It may even prompt you to glance at your watch, and suddenly a flood of both good and bad memories from life may appear before your eyes. Is it a search in the past, a glimpse into the future, or an immersion in the present? The answer lies within the novel itself. Perhaps it is because death awaits us that we must truly live; this is what Céline explores in his

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<sup>1</sup>- Hereinafter, we use it with the short form of "The Search".

novel *"Death on Credit,"*<sup>1</sup> and Proust<sup>2</sup>, in his work *"In Search,"* also touches upon this theme. As we reach the end of the great literary journey in *"Time Regained,"* we witness what the author ultimately accomplishes. Above all else, what I have learned from this novel is that the entire book originates from one significant preoccupation: the anxiety of death and the fear of leaving words unsaid, which can deeply wound the soul. It is as if the weight of "death" is carried, much like the cross on Christ's shoulder. *"In Search"* is a novel that delves into an inherent subject of humanity, one that has perhaps always been among the most profound human preoccupations: our mortality. The truth of our finite existence resonates within the context of "time," even though time itself possesses a physical structure. meaning also has a time-dependent nature. However, what are the things that can be found that do not depend on time?

On the other hand, according to Heidegger, we humans are not, primarily and in the most ordinary sense, subjects of cognition and mind. Additionally, we are not spectators or observers who are separated from the world or objects by an invisible window. We are not distinct subjects separate from the universe. Instead, we are an essential part of that reality, and from the very beginning, we exist in the world, engage with it. According to Heidegger, engaging in the philosophical pursuit of uncovering and elucidating the fundamental question of existence is the proper approach. He himself consistently grappled with this matter. In his quest to address this question, Heidegger introduced a novel concept of time and temporality, previously unseen.

### Three Ecstatic of Time

For Heidegger, temporality functions as a horizon, wherein the condition lies in the potential for comprehending the universe. The primary focus in Heidegger's thought is not time itself, but rather the temporality of Dasein (human existence). He argues that it is not "time" that is understood based on Being, but rather "Being" that is understood based on time. This perspective stands in direct contrast to the prevailing approach in philosophy and metaphysics, which typically prioritize time as the primary framework for understanding existence.

Human existence is conceived of ex-stat-ic from very beginning, and this ecstatic structure is bound with the temporal horizon of Being. A Being without time is for

<sup>1</sup>- "Death on Credit" (French: "Mort à crédit") is a semi-autobiographical novel written by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, a renowned French writer. The book was published in 1936 and is considered one of Céline's most notable works. It is a continuation of his previous novel, "Journey to the End of the Night," and explores similar themes of despair, alienation, and the human condition.

<sup>2</sup>- wherever the word "Proust" is used, it refers to Marcel Proust as the author of the novel. On the other hand, wherever the word "Marcel" is used, it indicates the main character of the novel.

Heidegger inconceivable and a timeless Being would be pure contradiction (Klun, 2007 :592).

In Heidegger's philosophy, a distinction is made between time and temporality. Time, in the conventional sense, can indeed be measured using clocks or other quantitative methods. However, temporality, as understood by Heidegger, encompasses a more profound and existential dimension. Temporality refers to the way in which human existence unfolds and relates to the world, encompassing our subjective experiences, engagement with possibilities, and our sense of past, present, and future. It is a more holistic concept that goes beyond the mere measurement of time. In Heidegger's philosophy, time is considered external and can be attributed to any object or being, whether it is "Ready-To-Hand" (Zuhandensein) or "Present-At-Hand" (Vorhandensein). Heidegger explains that time is conceived as contractual and artificial, whereas temporality is regarded as ontological, an essential aspect without which Dasein cannot be adequately understood. The time measured by hours and clocks emerges from Dasein's ontological temporality. Without the primordial temporality of Dasein, it is not possible to project an external and objective sense of time. Temporality, along with our capacity for having time, enables us to comprehend existence and even navigate and take charge of our own being. According to Heidegger, Dasein is not simply a being that possesses "time" or "temporality"; rather, Dasein is time itself. In his philosophy, Dasein's essence is intimately intertwined with the concept of time, and Dasein is essentially characterized by its existence within time.

For Heidegger, time is both objective and subjective – but not at all in the way philosophers envisages it. It is objective in the sense that it is inherently worldly: world-time is more objective than anything we might come across within the world because it is the ecstatico-horizonal condition for the possibility of coming across entities in the world. And it is subjective in the sense that the ontological roots of its worldliness lie in the human way of being: it is more subjective than anything in the psychic life of an individual because it is the condition for the possibility of the existence of any being whose Being is care (Mulhal, 2005: 205).

Therefore, it can be said that Dasein enables time to manifest itself as world-time or universal time through temporality, while physical time is simultaneously created. We then synchronize this physical time with clocks based on the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. However, this represents not the lived experience of time, but rather the changes in positional states. In this particular concept of time, only the present exists, the past is what has already occurred, and the future is what has yet to come. This understanding of time cannot be regarded as an object, as associating it with objective time would result in time being linked to space.

Every day Dasein, the Dasein which takes time, come across time proximally in what it encounters within-the-world as a ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. The time

which it is has thus 'experienced' is understood within the horizon of that way of understanding Being which is the closest for Dasein; that is, it is understood as something which is itself somehow present-at-hand.... In the development of this ordinary conception, there is a remarkable vacillation as to whether the character to be attributed to time is 'subjective' or 'objective'. Where time is taken as being in itself, it gets allotted pre-eminently to the 'soul' notwithstanding, and where it has the kind of character which belongs to 'consciousness', it still functions 'Objectively' (Heidegger. 1962: 457).

Dasein has three ecstasies that form the basis of mechanical and routine everyday time. In this manner, we structure our temporality according to our daily habits on the world, reducing time from its existential concept as the foundation of Dasein's existence to a mechanistic understanding of time for living in the world. Dasein's future represents the potential for moving forward, progressing in a direction that ultimately culminates with death and the possibility of fulfillment. Heidegger describes Dasein's past as "thrownness." Humans have already been thrown into the world. Although Dasein's past is always with it, Dasein is not capable of changing it. According to Critchley:

Heidegger's claim in his discussion of temporality is that there are three 'ecstasies' of time: the future (Zukunft) that is revealed in the anticipation of death, the past or "having-beenness" (Gwesenheit) that is opened in the notion of conscience, guilt and resoluteness, and the present or "waiting-towards" (Gegen-wart) that is grasped in the moment of vision, or taking action in the situation (Critchley, 2008: 147).

### **1-1- Being towards death in the "future"**

In Heidegger's philosophy, the future is Dasein's movement towards death, and it represents one of the possibilities for Dasein. However, this does not imply that time will cease with our death as Dasein; instead, time can continue. The future holds such significance for Heidegger that he perceives death not in the traditional and colloquial sense, but rather as the absence of the future. That is, Dasein is finite, while Dasein's temporality is infinite.

In enumerating the ecstasies, we have always mentioned the future first we have done this to indicate that the future has a priority in the ecstatic unity of primordial and authentic temporality. This is so, even though temporality does not first arise through a cumulative sequence of the ecstasies, but in each case temporalize itself in their equiprimordially. ...The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future (Heidegger. 1962: 378).

The authentic Dasein recognizes its solitude. Death represents the most authentic possibility for Dasein, posing a threat to the entirety of its existence. For Heidegger, the human being is a creature destined for death.

Human beings relate to themselves as subject to death; it constitutes an ineliminable aspect of their self-understanding, and hence of their understanding of themselves as being ahead-of-themselves. This means that a certain conception of wholeness or completion is inextricably involved in Dasein's conception of its existence as a head-of-itself (Mulhall, 2005: 298).

This death is the ultimate possibility for Dasein. In other words, after Dasein's death, there are no longer any possibilities for Dasein to make plans in the world.

History deals with dead Dasein. Past Dasein performed glorious deeds in awareness of its own mortality and it is interestingly different from ourselves because it is dead, but not gone" (Inwood.1997: 72).

For Heidegger, the ability to choose is one of the attributes of Dasein. This capacity for choice and projection into the future is formed within the unfinished state of Dasein and persists until its death. In Heidegger's philosophy, death signifies the end of being-in-the-world-with-others, while others continue to exist.

## **1-2- Anxiety in being-toward-death**

Although death brings an end to the possibilities of Dasein, it also provides the potential for new beginnings and shapes the trajectory of Dasein's existence from beginning to end. In Heidegger's view, the contemplation of death is an inner voice that emerges in the state of anxiety. Dasein is perpetually oriented towards its ultimate end. Dasein remains incomplete as long as it exists, and once it ceases to exist, it is no longer Dasein. Therefore, the awareness of anxiety towards death accompanies Dasein, rather than death itself. Even in the face of the death of others, our understanding of death will remain incomplete. As long as death is approached and comprehended through the customs, religious beliefs, and cultural associations that surround it, it will remain an enigmatic and mysterious event that pertains to the present moment and the future. According to Heidegger, in death, the essence of the deceased undergoes a transformation from being Dasein to being a lifeless corpse. The anxiety of death compels Dasein to confront and engage with the world, and it is in this very encounter that the authentic existence of Dasein manifests itself. It should not be forgotten that in Heidegger's philosophy, the death's anxiety awareness is distinct from fear.

Fear always fears something determinate within the world – either equipment or another Dasein. Anxiety, on the other hand, is not related to any entity within the world. As a result, anxiety reveals entities within the world as without significance. In the case of fear, Dasein discovers itself in a state of fearing and from that point clarifies to itself which of its involvements are detrimental to it. ...It is always possible to ask locative questions concerning fear. The question: 'Where is the threat coming from?' can always be given a definitive answer in the case of fear. It is precisely the

impossibility of locating anxiety in the world that distinguishes it from fear. Anxiety does not have a place in Dasein's world (Adkinz, 2007: 45-6).

The anxiety of death is a state of mind in which nothing in the world holds the same significance for Dasein as it did before, and the entire world becomes a realm of possibilities for Dasein. It is possible to delve deeper and consider fear of consciousness as one of the factors that differentiate human beings in terms of how they utilize their possibilities. In the upcoming section on Marcel Proust's novel, we will explore how, in a state of anxiety, Dasein becomes liberated from everything in the world that has preoccupied it.

The world of "Ready-To-Hand" and "Present-At-Hand" objects will vanish. In this state, Dasein, in its orientation towards death, is no longer willing to live like other Dasein. This point marks the commencement of our exploration in the second part of this essay, where Marcel Proust separates himself from the world of objects and other individuals. He gains an understanding of death and the potential for wholeness within the state of anxiety.

### **Time in "*In Search of Lost Time*"**

So, dealing with the concept of Anxiety-Awareness toward death in Proust' novel should be traced through the channel of the concept of time and Proust's and Heidegger's encounter with this concept. When discussing the concept of time in the history of literature, it is widely recognized that Marcel Proust excels in portraying "time" in exceptional and remarkable ways. Proust daringly broke an important taboo with the novel "*In Search*" - the taboo surrounding the intricacies of the human mind throughout history. The human, in a constant pursuit of spending time, comes to realize their vulnerability when confronted with the passage of time. This realization forms one of the opening scenes of the modern novel, emphasizing the significance of this theme.

This novel basically does not follow the usual time and in its narrative, time, hours and chapters are intertwined, like a snake and by disrupting this coil, the author goes through the area of time (Shayegan, 2017: 91).

His specialization lies in capturing the essence of time and depicting it repeatedly through incredible descriptions. And perhaps even more spectacular than these descriptions are the resurrection of the distant past. Whether it be through tasting the crumbs of a madeleine dipped in lime blossom tea or stumbling upon an uneven pavement. Or a mat that is one day the beginning of the world and the next day the end of the enchanting world of important names. The narrative time of this novel has a different and complex structure. In fact, the end of the book is the beginning of the story. That is to say, the story starts anew at the end and goes back to the very beginning of the book, without a definitive endpoint. This kind of manipulation in the narrative time, which occurs both within the story and in the reader's mind,

diminishes the objective nature of time and leads it towards the philosophical conceptions of the twentieth century.

Proust also aligns himself with a tendency of philosophy contemporary with him: one which, from Bergson to Heidegger, in different ways but with significant point in common, seeks to understand Being by exploring the obscurities of Time (Kristeva, 1993: 6).

Throughout the novel, Marcel focuses on the relationship between the past and the present, while Proust has contemplated the future as the ultimate goal and completion of his work. Proust captures the present with the help of past events, resisting the fading into oblivion. He carries the events of the past, having experienced them, and utilizes them for his future in *"In Search"*:

Time is so fugitive, so fleeting that it is nothing else than those contiguous impression of our memory which bring together many slices of our experiences into an infinite flow, as though the very life we have lived, the very places we have seen, the very people we have touched and loved, the very delights we have experienced were only syllables which were merely recorded for our convenience (artificially) into order to make our journey on this earth (Carnafa, 2001: 5).

When a man is asleep, he has in a circle round him the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly host. Instinctively, when he awakes, he looks to these, and in an instant read off his own position on the earth's surface and the amount of time that has elapsed during his slumbers; but this ordered procession is apt to grow confused, and to break its ranks. Suppose that, towards morning, after a night of insomnia, sleep descends upon him while he is reading, in quite a different position from that in which he normally goes to sleep, he has only to lift his arm to arrest the sun and turn it back in its course, and, at the moment of waking, he will have no idea of the time, but will conclude that he has just gone to bed (Proust, 1922, Vol 1: 6).

Throughout the novel, Proust repeatedly alters the pace at which time passes. He is unconcerned with clock time, but rather focuses on the inner sense of time<sup>1</sup>, where the significance of "one second" resides, a concept inherent within every individual.

He reconsidered human life not only from the perspective of social and scientific time (where one hour equals sixty minutes), but also from the perspective of inner continuity (where one minute of boredom equals one hour and one hour of happiness equals one minute). The years, months, days, fixed time, and official time, which are calculated based on the earth's motion around the sun, are artificial perceptions of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Bergson, time of clock is not real time.

time created by reason. There exists another time, the 'time' that arises when considering human consciousness as a fixed point (Shayegan, 2017: 126).

Proust's concept of time is primarily rooted in the remembrance of the past. It revolves around the relationship between unique moments, whose reality is solely dependent on breaking free from the constraints of time and habits. In his novel, Proust employs the notion of "lived-time".

The French title *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* indicates Proust's two-fold aim: to present time as Lost and time as Regained. With Bergson, Proust was persuaded that the intellectual faculty could not catch the irreversible nature of time. In the dream process, however, the past is also present in that it merges with its own and its communal history. In the dream, we get to know what is not known through discursive reasoning (Soshower, 2014: 2-3).

But why does Proust see the time like this? Proust's perception of time stems from a particular reason, which is revealed in the last volume of the novel. It can be attributed to his fear of death, or as Heidegger would put it, his existential awareness of anxiety towards death.

## **2-1- Death's anxiety-awareness in the *In Search***

Marcel Proust was a theorist of death, and the novel "In Search" is the result of Proust's experience in the face of the anxiety of death. As the author searches for the meaning of life, in the first step, he realizes that the arrogance of the snobbish community is empty. In the next step, he challenges the concept of love, and ultimately, he reaches the meaning of being alone in life. We can observe that time in Proust's novel revolves around the lost past and an unfinished future. This concept of "time" does not possess a theological or scientific nature, but rather embodies a philosophical understanding that has intertwined with a psychological trajectory. According to Proust, the past is not static or stable. It can be argued that, for Proust, the past is not a finished entity that remains permanently behind us at a fixed point in time. The past is shaped by impressions, perceptions, illusions, and dreams. Lived-time is limited for an individual Dasein, and death represents the ultimate possibility for humans. Similar to Heidegger, the narrator of the novel perceives death with great significance.

Marcel assigns considerable importance to death and views it as the definitive end, an inevitable occurrence. The concept of "being-toward-death" as proposed by Heidegger aligns with Marcel's preoccupation, which drives him to write the novel. The experience of attending Princess Guermantes' parties on multiple occasions throughout different periods of Marcel's life had deeply unsettled him. The recurrence of a series of impressions not only triggers memories of past events for Marcel but also resurrects the version of himself that existed during those specific moments. The ideal image portrayed by Proust in his novel originates from the future. Within this

novel, the act of deciphering and recreating the past serves the purpose of achieving future aspirations. Proust was dedicated to constructing a world that his readers would perceive as a sacred realm, holding it in high regard. In Heidegger's philosophy, Dasein extends beyond the mere knowledge of the present moment. It encompasses a forward movement towards the future and a backward reflection on the past. This aspect of Heidegger's temporal philosophy can be seen as a fundamental underpinning of Proust's novel. It suggests that Proust's work draws inspiration from the notion that human existence is characterized by its orientation towards both the future and the past. The novel "In Search" initially looks towards the future as Marcel endeavours to reach it and write the novel. However, Marcel also delves into the past, using his own experiences as Proust's raw material for crafting a literary work. The question arises: what is the purpose or benefit of exploring this past? The answer can be found within the pages of the novel itself.

For just as it is not the desire to become famous but the habit of being laborious that enables us to produce a finished work, so it is not the activity of the present moment but wise relaxations from the past that help us to safeguard the future" (Proust, 1922. Vol 2: 479).

Proust follows Heidegger's theory that the future is the original time, and he explicitly states that the past comes after the future. Human life, specifically the time when humans deal with it on a daily basis, is a period in which the future holds validity. In this novel, the "narrator" aspires to write a book that restores both the objective time spent in laziness and illness, and the subjective time drowned in darkness and oblivion. The narrator faces towards the future, using the past as a means to access it. However, he doesn't only refer to his own past but also to the past of his generation. In his creation of the future, Marcel delves into the Renaissance era and the art history of that time, while consistently maintaining his gaze towards the future.

I felt myself, but did not believe myself to be master of the future, because I realized that this sensation was due merely to the fact that the future did not yet exist, and that thus I was not crushed by its inevitability. In short, while I lied, I was perhaps putting into my words more truth than I supposed. I had just had an example of this, when I told Albertine that I should quickly forget her; this was what had indeed happened to me in the case of Gilberte, whom I now refrained from going to see in order to escape not a grief but an irksome duty (Proust, 1929, Vol 5: 220).

Proust's concept of the future, as mentioned earlier, revolves around "possibility." It represents what is yet to come and lies ahead of us. The narrator's focus on time, particularly the future time in which he is deeply engaged throughout the novel, echoes the essence of authentic Dasein. Marcel is aware that he is moving towards death and acknowledges his finite and limited nature. It is through this understanding that he grasps the concept of original time. Proust recognizes that living in anxiety about death restricts one's possibilities. By accepting his finiteness, he embraces all

the possibilities available to him. In line with Heidegger's perspective, Dasein avoids confronting the certainty of its own death by adopting the mindset of "everyone dies, but not right now". The Dasein, when engaged in authentic action, considers death to be a fundamental possibility. This is the same concept that Proust had also realized and embraced.

We may, indeed, say that the hour of death is uncertain, but when we say so we represent that hour to ourselves as situated in a vague and remote expanse of time, it never occurs to us that it can have any connexion with the day that has already dawned, or may signify that death—or its first assault and partial possession of us, after which it will never leave hold of us again—may occur this very afternoon, so far from uncertain, this afternoon every hour of which has already been allotted to some occupation. You make a point of taking your drive every day so that in a month's time you will have had the full benefit of the fresh air; you have hesitated over which cloak you will take, which cabman to call, you are in the cab, the whole day lies before you, short because you have to be at home early, as a friend is coming to see you; you hope that it will be as fine again to-morrow; and you have no suspicion that death, which has been making its way towards you along another plane, shrouded in an impenetrable darkness, has chosen precisely this day of all days to make its appearance, in a few minutes' time, more or less, at the moment when the carriage has reached the Champs-Élysées (Proust, 1925, Vol 3: 203).

The anxiety of death was the main reasons that persuaded Proust to write a novel of introspection and exploration. Death, seen as the possibility of completeness in one's existence, serves as a guiding theme throughout this novel.

For Proust there are really two aspects of death. One kind of death man may transcend through art and ought not be feared. Another (the same one really, it merely depends upon the vantage point of the beholder), preventing the artist from accomplishing his creation, therefore is real death, or at least its beginning, and a death to be feared. As soon as Proust himself suspected that death would interrupt his own work we find him in *A la recherche* uttering an agonized cry (Riva, 1962: 8).

At the beginning of this essay, we discussed Heidegger's belief that Dasein is constantly engaged in interpreting the world. Dasein encounters various backgrounds and situations, which are intertwined with its existence. It can be argued that Dasein's life is intricately connected to the world it faces. The concept of death in Heidegger's philosophy is emphasized as a guiding force and a pivotal aspect for understanding the concept of existence. Similarly, in Proust's novel, death serves as a focal point and holds significant gravity. In the face of the existential issue of death, Marcel portrays not only his own human condition but also that of French society. His profound anxiety about death serves as a catalyst that drives Marcel to create a masterpiece of art.

When we try to consider what will happen to us after our own death, is it not still our living self which we mistakenly project at that moment? And is it much more absurd, when all is said, to regret that a woman who no longer exists is unaware that we have learned what she was doing six years ago than to desire that of ourselves, who will be dead, the public shall still speak with approval a century hence? (Proust, 1930. Vol 6: 121).

For Proust, writing a novel of introspection and exploration is driven by his intention to reclaim his lost time and confront the anxiety of death and annihilation. Through the narrative's constant movement across three temporal dimensions and a reliance on the past, the narrator embarks on a search for this lost time.

Formerly, I used constantly to think of the uncertainty of the future that stretched before us, and endeavor to read its message. And now, what lay ahead of me, like a counterpart of the future—as worrying as the future because it was equally uncertain, equally difficult to decipher, equally mysterious, and crueller still because I did not have, as with the future, the possibility, or the illusion, of influencing it, and also because it would go on unfolding throughout the whole length of my life without my companion's being present to soothe the anguish that it caused me—was no longer Albertine's future, it was her past. Her past? That is the wrong word, since for jealousy there can be neither past nor future, and what it imagines is invariably the present (Proust, 1930. Vol 6: 87).

According to Martin Hägglund:

Marcel's aesthetic revelation and his investment in writing make him all the more aware of the threat of mortality. Marcel has discovered that his life is the "rich mining-basin" for the work of art he wants to create, but he is seized by fear because his death will entail. ... It follows that writing never can transcend temporal finitude but only serve as a resistance to and postponement of death (Hägglund.2012:25).

The state of anxiety experienced by Marcel renders his other preoccupations seemingly insignificant. Proust recognizes that his immersion in the material possessions, amenities, and people surrounding him is merely one aspect among many possibilities available to him. Marcel is afforded the freedom to choose among various possibilities. The anxiety of death serves as a catalyst, dismantling the notion that being surrounded by famous individuals and the aristocracy constitutes the only conceivable world. This dismantling process liberates Marcel from his existing world and grants him individuality. In this sense, the anxiety of death acts as a salvation, preventing Marcel from becoming submerged in his everyday reality and compelling him to move towards the future and its untapped possibilities. Convinced of his eventual demise, Proust chose to create a work of art with the aim of achieving a form of immortality. Proust holds a philosophical view of death, perceiving that certain aspects of our existence tend to fade away as time passes. He regards humans as

remnants of successive deaths, and believes that before facing their ultimate fate, they must strive to accomplish a magnificent work. Creating a work of art can be seen as an act of projection towards the future. As we discussed earlier, Dasein's future is a realm of possibilities and choices. In the face of their own future, individuals have the freedom to make choices. Proust's personal choice is to channel his aspirations and intentions into the creation of a work of art.

What artists call posterity is the posterity of the work of art. It is essential that the work shall create its own posterity. For if the work were held in reserve, were revealed only to posterity, that audience, for that particular work, would be not posterity but a group of contemporaries who were merely living half-a-century later in time. And so, it is essential that the artist (and this is what Vinteuil had done), if he wishes his work to be free to follow its own course, shall launch it, wherever he may find sufficient depth, confidently outward bound towards the future. And yet this interval of time, the true perspective in which to behold a work of art, if leaving it out of account is the mistake made by bad judges, taking it into account is at times a dangerous precaution of the good (Proust, 1924. Vol 2: 71).

According to Heidegger, authentic time is finite and reaches its conclusion with the death of Dasein. While time itself may continue indefinitely, our individual experience of time is limited. Proust, aware of the transience of his own existence, recognized that his own time would eventually come to an end. Indeed, the work of art serves as the medium through which Proust seeks to continue his existence even after his death. With a profound awareness of mortality, Proust turns to the creation of a work of art, undertaking a truly magnificent endeavour. Although Proust has passed away, his legacy lives on, and he has not been forgotten.

But sometimes the future is latent in us without our knowing it, and our supposedly lying words foreshadow an imminent reality (Proust, 1938. Vol 4: 43).

According to Heidegger, projecting the issue of existence based on one's existential possibilities is essentially the act of making time or unfolding the future. In a similar vein, Proust sees the creation of a work of art as a means of projection and possibility for this existential projection. Through his artistic endeavour, Proust engages in shaping the future and manifesting his existential possibilities. Indeed, Proust develops his future through the act of writing his novel *In Search of Lost Time*. As he contemplates his own mortality, Proust recognizes that as long as we exist as Dasein, we are inevitably confronted with the reality of death. However, despite this awareness, we as humans continue to engage in thinking about and planning for the future. We make plans for the immediate future, such as this afternoon, as well as for tomorrow, next month, and even next year. This forward-thinking mindset persists even in the face of our existential limitations. According to Heidegger, Dasein is characterized by being ahead of itself. Thus, Proust, as an authentic Dasein, was also ahead of himself.

And these dreams reminded me that, since I wished, someday, to become a writer, it was high time to decide what sort of books I was going to write. But as soon as I asked myself the question, and tried to discover some subjects to which I could impart a philosophical significance of infinite value, my mind would stop like a clock (Proust, 1922, Vol 1: 164-5).

Heidegger posits that the emergence of anything new in life can be understood as an attempt to evade or escape from the inevitability of death. This includes activities such as dressing, socializing, feasting, and creating artwork. These endeavours serve as ways to construct and engage with the infinite possibilities of existence, thereby reducing the anxiety surrounding death. Indeed, it can be said that the anxiety of knowing death eventually transformed Proust into the character we know today and shaped Marcel at the heart of the novel *In Search*. This existential awareness permeates the core of his novel *In Search* and melds the character of Marcel. Proust's exploration of mortality and the ephemeral nature of time is central to the narrative, contributing to the depth and complexity of the work.

## Conclusion

In the *Being and Time*, the reference to the concept of death does not solely pertain to the event that marks the end of each person's life. Heidegger assigns an existential significance to death, emphasizing its profound meaning in the context of human existence. He explores death as a fundamental aspect that shapes our understanding of being and our relationship with the world. In Heidegger's philosophy, the conception of death is accompanied by a unique state of fear, which differs from the conventional understanding of fear. This state of fear, known as the anxiety of death, does not have any specific external objects or targets. Instead, it arises from an existential awareness of our own mortality and the uncertainty that surrounds it. This anxiety distinguishes authentic Dasein from inauthentic Dasein. In the face of death, authentic Dasein discovers its possibilities to act upon. Thus, it can be said that Proust, through his temporality and genuine future, becomes an authentic Dasein, shaping his own existence. He draws material for his future from the past and reconstructs the lost time. Proust came to acknowledge that his death belonged to him and that eventually, he would have to confront it. He embraced the existential concept of death. This belief in existence led Proust to engage in remembering the past, living in the present, and making choices for the future. As a result of these choices, he embarked on the creation of his work of art. It appears that Marcel Proust had arrived at a state of authenticity in line with Heidegger's interpretation. As he approached the end of his life, Proust grappled with the anxiety of death. Based on what has been discussed, this anxiety of death possesses the essential elements to align with Heidegger's concept of anxiety as an awareness of death. Ultimately, in the last volume of the novel, this awareness leads Marcel to choose writing as the most fitting existential pursuit in his quest to reclaim the *Lost Time*.

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## **Main Linguistic Factors of Mother Tongue Interference in Learning English as a Second Language**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the phenomena of interlanguage and overgeneralization in second language acquisition (SLA), focusing on their roles in shaping learner language development. Second language acquisition (SLA) is the process through which individuals learn a language other than their native tongue, often resulting in a developmental progression marked by systematic stages and recurring patterns. Interlanguage is analyzed as a transitional linguistic system created in learners, influenced by both their native language (L1) and the target language (L2). The paper emphasizes that overgeneralization—where learners apply language rules too broadly—is a common feature of interlanguage and reflects underlying cognitive strategies rather than mere errors. Through a review of relevant theories and empirical examples, the paper highlights how interlanguage and overgeneralization can both hinder and facilitate language learning. It argues for a pedagogical perspective that views these phenomena as essential stages in the path toward language competence, rather than obstacles to be eradicated.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, linguistic factors, interlanguage, overgeneralization

### **1. Introduction**

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex, dynamic process marked by stages of development that often deviate from both the learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2). Among the most prominent features of this transitional process are interlanguage and overgeneralization, which provide insight into how learners internalize, process, and apply linguistic rules. Coined by Larry Selinker in 1972, interlanguage refers to the evolving linguistic system a learner constructs while acquiring a second language. It is neither a replica of the L1 nor an accurate version of the L2, but a unique linguistic system influenced by both.

Overgeneralization, on the other hand, occurs when learners apply learned rules too broadly—such as adding -ed to irregular verbs in English (*goed* instead of *went*). Though often perceived as mistakes, these patterns reflect learners' active

engagement with language rules and their attempts to create consistency within their developing interlanguage system. Understanding these phenomena not only sheds light on the cognitive mechanisms underlying language learning but also challenges traditional notions of error correction in the classroom.

This paper aims to examine the interrelated concepts of interlanguage and overgeneralization, discussing their implications for second language learning and teaching. By analyzing the theoretical foundations and practical examples of learner language, the study underscores the pedagogical importance of viewing errors not as failures, but as essential milestones in the path toward L2 proficiency.

### **1.1 Second Language Acquisition**

Any other language that a person learns or uses after acquiring his or her mother tongue is considered as a second language. Second language or L2 is defined as the language that is not the native language of the speaker, but is taught in the country of that person either in the state school system or privately. It is used for the purposes of communication, usually as a medium of education, government or business. Cook (2003) refers to the term second language as a language acquired by a person in addition to their mother tongue. Saville-Troike (2006) defines second language as an official art society dominant language needed for education, employment and other basic purposes. Saville-Troike refers to SLA as a study of individual or groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one and to the process of learning that language. However, it was Krashen's (1981) definition of SLA which became the basis for work by subsequent researchers. He defines second language acquisition "as a process by which people learn a second language. This process does not only involve learning the language it is also devoted to studying that process".

Linguists make an important distinction between learning and acquisition. According to Haynes (2007) language acquisition takes place when children acquire language through subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is similar to the way mother tongue is acquired. Language acquisition refers to acquiring language in a natural communication context. Whereas according to Haynes language learning is a direct instruction in the rules of language. Unlike in language acquisition in language learning students have conscious knowledge of the new language. It is a fact that when learning a second language learners already have one language present in their minds, thus making it difficult to learn a second language without using linguistic features of the first tongue.

Central to SLA is the concept that learners do not acquire the target language in a linear or error-free manner, but instead construct an evolving linguistic system—termed interlanguage—that reflects both influence from the first language and internalization of the new one. This process is further characterized by overgeneralization, a phenomenon in which learners extend grammatical rules

beyond their appropriate contexts, such as using regular verb forms for irregular ones. Far from being random mistakes, these overgeneralizations demonstrate the learner's active role in hypothesis testing and rule formation, both of which are essential to the internalization of linguistic structures. Understanding SLA through the lens of interlanguage and overgeneralization highlights the importance of recognizing errors as a natural and informative part of language learning, rather than as signs of linguistic failure. (Selinker, 1972)

## 1.2 Linguistic Factors of Interference

According to Lott (1983), three factors cause language interference: interlingual factors; as a source of important information for language learners. Interlingual transfer focuses particularly on elements that occur due to interference when learners transfer rules from their native language to the target language. Selinker (1972) adapted this norm to refer to the temporary grammar that learners of a second language build during the process of acquiring the target language (L2). This systematic knowledge of the second language (L2) is separated from the first language of the learners (L1) as well as the target language. Brown (2002) supports the idea of interlanguage, referring to the system that has an intermediate status, the structure of the learner's language, and not the native language or the target language. In fact, the term "interlanguage" gained wide popularity and has been used to describe intermediate varieties built during the learning of the target language. These are "transitional competence," "idiolect dialect," and "approximative system" from Nemser (1971), who emphasized the gradual shift towards the target language. Corder (1971) used the term "idiolect dialect" to express the idea that the learner's language is unique for each specific individual, and its rules are special only to that individual.

Another factor is overgeneralization and analogy. The excessive use of analogy as a factor in native language interference refers to cases when a speaker (often a child or someone learning a second language) tries to create new expressions in the language being learned (e.g., English) by copying models or structures from their native language or from previously heard examples in the target language, and they do this incorrectly or excessively because of overreliance on structure. For example, an Albanian learner might use the structure "*Ka libra mbi tavolinë*" (*There are books on the table*) and through analogy translate it into English as "*Has books on the table*" instead of "*There are books on the table.*" They apply a structure familiar from L1. Thinking the analogy works, this results in interference, and grammatical, syntactical, or idiomatic errors.

The third factor refers to structural transfer, a process where a learner applies grammatical structures, word models, or syntactic patterns from their native language to the target language. This is a common phenomenon in second language acquisition, which can lead to errors or model applications that reflect the structure

of the native language. This transfer occurs in, for example, word order, such as: In Albanian, the adjective typically comes after the noun (*djalë i mirë*), whereas in English the adjective comes before (*good boy*). In English, the subject is mandatory. A learner might say "*I bought bike*" instead of "*I bought a bike.*" In Albanian, when forming a question, often only the intonation changes without changing word order. In English, however, the word order between auxiliary and subject typically changes, for example: "*Are you coming?*" instead of "*You are coming?*" Or they might say: "*I like very much coffee*" (influenced by Albanian word order).

### 1.3 The Characteristics of Interlanguage

Interlanguage is not the system of the native language, nor the system of the target language, but it lies somewhere in between as an attempt by learners to give order and structure to the linguistic stimuli surrounding them. Through a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, learners slowly progress and are able to create more accurate statements within the system used by native speakers. Undoubtedly, interlanguage has its own features, which have been extensively discussed by many scholars. For example:

**Permeability:** This means that the rules that constitute the knowledge of learners at any given stage are not fixed, but are open to changes that come as a result of exposure to new input. This means that the interlanguage system, like any natural language, is dynamic and subject to evolution and continuous change. Interlanguage differs from systems and native languages only in the degree of permeability. (Nemser, 1969)

**Dynamicity:** The interlanguage of second language learners is constantly undergoing change. However, it does not jump suddenly from one stage to another, but rather undergoes a gradual and temporary system of transition. This happens through the introduction of a new rule, initially in one context, then in another, and so on. A rule — perhaps in the sense of its application — gradually extends across a wider range of linguistic contexts. Thus, the dynamicity of interlanguage consists of a series of overlapping "mini-grammars." Each grammar shares some rules with the previous grammar, but also contains new or revised rules. (Nemser, 1969)

**Systematicity:** Interlanguage is not a random collection of rules or anything else; it is systematic in itself. Like any natural language system, it has an internally coherent structure that can be analyzed linguistically. The learner behaves grammatically in the sense that they rely on a systematic understanding of the rules of their interlanguage. (Ellis, 1994)

**Variability:** At every stage of development, the language produced by learners displays systematic variability. This variability reflects specific form-function relationships that constitute the grammatical rules of the learner at that stage of development. Competence in learners should be seen as heterogeneous, not homogeneous. (Ellis, 1994)

Fossilization: Selinker (1972) observes that most second language learners, unlike native speakers, do not achieve full competence in the target language. This becomes measurable when their interlanguage contains rules or elements that differ from those of the target language. This phenomenon is called fossilization. It occurs when most second language learners cannot be corrected even with further learning. Fossilized forms may appear to disappear, but often reappear during productive use of the language — a phenomenon known as backsliding.

The causes of fossilization are different. Ellis (1994) gave a clear summary of all the causes. It is believed that when learners reach a critical age, their brains lose elasticity and, as a result, certain linguistic structures can no longer be acquired. Another cause is the lack of desire of the learner to be acculturated. It is suggested that learners do not try to adopt the cultural norms of the target language because of various social and psychological factors. Other causes that lead to fossilization are: 1) communicative pressure (pressure to use the language before full competence is achieved and this leads to fossilization); 2) lack of opportunity for better input (the learner cannot have access to better input in the target language and continues to use the interlanguage); 3) the nature of the feedback they receive on their language use.

Selinker (1972) also identified some other factors that influence interlanguage production, such as language transfer, which refers to the transfer of structures from the first language (L1) to the target language (L2) by the learner, including linguistic and cultural aspects in the organization and processing of second language (L2) data; transfer from training, which refers to the phenomenon where L2 learners may have over-practiced certain structures in the classroom to the point that they are no longer able to successfully develop new structures appropriate to the second language being learned. This is linked to the improvement of linguistic competence and the adequacy of input. Language development in the direction of the target language is more successful when learners are exposed to a high level of the target language and its culture. Communication strategies in both languages are also related to a systematic ability to use the language even when there are difficulties in expression to continue communication. Unfortunately, the frequent and successful use of these strategies may hinder acquisition, because learners often use them to compensate for the lack of linguistic knowledge with different communication strategies. As a result, the need to learn new forms of the target language decreases.

Another factor is overgeneralization of the target language material. For example, if the teacher or the learning material emphasizes repeatedly that an adjective plus “-ly” equals an adverb, learners may overgeneralize the rule and say something like: *“He treated me friendlyly.”* The analysis of these factors can help us better understand the depth and form of interlanguage and find better ways to further develop it.

In short, interlanguage is not like the system of the native language or the system of the target language, but lies somewhere in between. It is a system built upon the

learner's best efforts to make sense of the linguistic stimuli around them. Through a gradual process of trial and error, of hypothesis testing, learners slowly manage to create more accurate and native-like forms by using the language system correctly, avoiding errors, and getting closer to the target language.

## 1.4 Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is an important factor in the interference of the mother tongue, as it involves the incorrect application of linguistic/interlinguistic rules in situations where an exception to the rule is required. This factor in the interference of the mother tongue occurs when a learner applies rules or models from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2) incorrectly, thinking that these rules will also function in the new language. This is especially evident when the two languages have structural or lexical differences.

Studies on overgeneralization as a factor causing interference from the mother tongue during English learning have been conducted by several linguists who are researchers in the field of second language acquisition. Noam Chomsky, although not directly focused on interference, has discussed universal grammar theories and the acquisition of language by referring to overgeneralization. Selinker (1972), one of the main theorists of interlanguage, identifies overgeneralization as a key process in second language acquisition. He discusses how learners apply rules from their first language (L1) or overgeneralize rules from the target language (L2). This often leads to errors because the structures or rules of the two languages differ. For example, in the grammar of a learner whose first language has already simplified tense, they might overgeneralize the rule of English question form by saying: *"Goes she to the store?"* instead of *"Does she go to the store?"*.

Corder (1967), in his work on error analysis, emphasizes overgeneralization as a common source of errors in language learning. He explores how learners, in their efforts to simplify the learning process, extend linguistic rules beyond their proper use, often influenced by L1 (first language). One example of the excessive use of a grammatical rule from L1 to L2 is the order of adjectives before the noun — *"a leather, small, black wallet"* instead of the correct *"a small, black, leather wallet"* — based on the Albanian phrase *"një kuletë lëkure, e vogël, e zezë"*. This happens because the student transfers the rule for adjectives from Albanian to English, causing interference. Learners sometimes make errors by overgeneralizing rules and thus make incorrect predictions. According to Littlewood (1984), overgeneralization can occur when a learner incorrectly categorizes elements. For example, a student whose first language is Albanian might say *"She must to go now"* instead of *"She must go now"*, influenced by the Albanian *"Ajo duhet të shkojë tani"*.

Richards (1974), in his book "Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition", discusses overgeneralization as a type of error made by learners, linking

it to both intralinguistic and interlinguistic influences — the former arising from the influence of the target language, and the latter from the native language. Richards distinguishes between intralinguistic overgeneralization, which occurs when a learner incorrectly extends a rule within the second language (L2) itself, and errors that result from transfer from the first language (L1). For example, a learner might say *"He writed an essay"* instead of *"He wrote an essay."* This error arises from the overgeneralization of the past tense rule in English (adding -ed to verbs) to the irregular verb write → wrote. In this case, the error is not influenced by the learner's native language, but stems from an effort to simplify or regularize the grammar of L2.

Richards also explains interlinguistic overgeneralization as an error that occurs when learners apply the rules or structures of their native language (L1) to the second language (L2). For instance, an Italian speaker learning English might say *"He has 15 years"* instead of *"He is 15 years old."* This error happens because in Italian (L1), age is often expressed using the verb *"avere"* (*"to have"*), as in *"Lui ha 15 anni"* (literally: *"He has 15 years"*). The learner transfers this grammatical structure from their native language to English, resulting in incorrect usage. This type of error emphasizes the influence of L1 on learning L2, as the learner assumes that the structures of L1 apply universally.

Ellis (1994) discusses overgeneralization as part of the strategies of learners, which may lead to interference, particularly in the context of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. He discusses overgeneralization in phonology as a process where learners apply phonological rules from their first language (L1) or from their understanding of the second language (L2) in an incorrect and inaccurate way. An Albanian student pronounces the word *"sheep"* as /ʃɪp/ (with a short vowel sound) instead of the correct pronunciation /ʃi:p/ (with a long vowel sound).

Ellis discusses grammatical overgeneralization as a common phenomenon in second language learning, where learners apply grammatical rules from their first language (L1) or incorrectly extend the rules of the second language (L2) to situations where they are not applicable. Learners may attempt to apply rules they know from the first language or from other parts of the second language without recognizing exceptions or context-specific differences. For example, a learner of English might say *"Rained yesterday"* instead of *"It rained yesterday"*, incorrectly applying the rule for simple declarative sentences from Albanian *"Ra shi dje"* into English.

Regarding lexical overgeneralization as part of second language learning, learners may extend the meaning of words and use them in contexts where they do not usually belong due to the influence of their first language (L1) or an incomplete understanding of the second language (L2). For example, a learner might overgeneralize the word support based on their native language, while in English, the word has a different nuance. *"Kam nevojë për suport"* (*I need support*) in Albanian means *"I need help."* In this context, the English word *sympathy* may be misunderstood

to mean a positive feeling or liking toward someone, whereas in the sentence "*I feel deep sympathy for her after hearing about the loss of her grandfather,*" the word *sympathy* refers to sadness or compassion for someone else's misfortune or difficult situation. According to Ellis, overgeneralization is a natural part of language learning, as learners attempt to apply the new rules they have learned to all situations, even when exceptions or irregular forms exist.

In summary, overgeneralization is a natural and systematic phase in the acquisition of language. It shows that learners are experimenting with grammatical rules while trying to understand the system. However, when combined with interference from the mother tongue, it can lead to persistent errors if not addressed through correction or direct instruction.

## Conclusion

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex, dynamic process marked by stages of development that often deviate from both the learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2). Interlanguage and overgeneralization are integral aspects of second language development, representing more than just learner errors; they are manifestations of the dynamic and evolving nature of language learning. Interlanguage is not like the system of the native language or the system of the target language, but lies somewhere in between. Through a gradual process of trial and error, of hypothesis testing, learners slowly manage to create more accurate and native-like forms by using the language system correctly, avoiding errors, and getting closer to the target language.

While overgeneralization can lead to non-target-like forms, it also reveals learners' attempts to systematize and internalize linguistic rules. Recognizing these patterns enables educators to better understand the cognitive processes at work and to tailor instruction that supports rather than penalizes developmental stages. It shows that learners are experimenting with grammatical rules while trying to understand the system. However, when combined with interference from the mother tongue, it can lead to persistent errors if not addressed through correction or direct instruction. Ultimately, this paper affirms that a nuanced understanding of interlanguage and overgeneralization can contribute significantly to more effective language teaching strategies and more empathetic views of learner progress.

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## **Exploring Career preparation and development of learners with intellectual disabilities: A wellness case of a rural special school**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the case study was to explore how learners with intellectual disabilities in a deep rural special school are prepared to face the world of work. Objective: The objective of this study was to explore the career preparation and development of learners at a rural special school. Method: Twenty teachers who are currently employed at a special school were interviewed. Observations were also done in classes where different skills were taught. Results: All learners were prepared and developed for various careers. The findings reveal that some were prepared for entrepreneurship and to create jobs in their communities. Conclusion: Special schools should have well trained teachers in various skills. Learners should be prepared to earn money using various skills instead of relying on the monthly social grant that the government provides for persons living with disabilities. Contribution: The case study contributes to the implementation of Inclusive Education in the South African context.

**Keywords:** Career preparation; career development; career wellness; Inclusive Education; intellectual disabilities

### **Introduction**

Unemployment in South Africa is a big challenge. In the third quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate was reported to be at 32.1% showing a percentage point decrease of 1.4 from quarter 2 in 2024 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Also, among the youth aged between 15 and 34, there is a serious challenge of unemployment indicating 45,5% unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2024. These statistics reveal that there are a plethora of challenges that need to be explored regarding unemployment and career preparation in schools. Although these statistics show a general picture in the population, they do not show per gender and disability. It is appalling to note that the unemployment rate of people with disabilities is in excess of 90%, already approaching 100% in rural areas (Nexmedia, 2024). These statistics are a cause of concern for those in the education sector, be it at a lower level like a

school or at a higher level like the Department of Basic Education. The paper explores the career preparation and development of learners with intellectual disabilities in a special school in a deep rural area. These cohorts of students are found mostly in special schools or in mainstream schools. In both types of schools, it is important that all learners receive and enjoy an inclusive kind of an environment. Learners with intellectual disabilities are yearning to learn and also participate in the local economy like any other person. Unfortunately, the statistics that show over 90% of persons with disabilities are unemployed reveal that the desire for employment is normally never realised by the majority of people with disabilities. Exclusion is experienced by people with disabilities in various jobs and at school level, there is curriculum or epistemological exclusion. Not all teachers are trained in Inclusive Education and lack of training leads to lack of knowledge on how learners with intellectual disabilities may be taught. The problem that is being explored in this study is how learners with intellectual disabilities are assisted in transition planning towards different careers and life after school. **Therefore, the aim of the study reported on this paper is to explore the career preparation and development of learners with intellectual disabilities in a rural special school.**

### Intellectual Disability

Intellectual disability is defined by Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5-TR-APA, 2022) as a neurodevelopmental disorder that starts in childhood which affects thorough processing, social relations and practical aspects of daily life which relate to intellectual limitations. Hence, when one has an intellectual disability, one's intellectual wellness is affected. There may be also weakened capacity to learn new skills and limited understanding of complex things (Shree & Shukla, 2016). The cognitive development is affected by the neurodevelopmental disorder (Boat & Wu 2015). Owing to challenges in intellectual development, a learner may experience challenges in areas such as reasoning, planning, problem solving, abstract thinking and some experiential learning (Sivasubramanian, 2022). When using a standard intelligence test, the IQ score is below 70 and considerable deficiencies in functional and adaptive skills (Alexander & Reynolds, 2020). According to Boat and Wu (2015), there are four categories of intellectual impairment: (i) mild intellectual impairment, where individuals develop concepts more slowly overall, (ii) moderate intellectual impairment is characterised by functioning that is around three to four standard deviations below the mean in terms of intelligence and adaptability, and (iii) severe intellectual impairment. The foregoing definition is more inclined to the medical model but in this study an inclusive approach was followed in the case study in a rural area. According to Maistry (2018), there are 600 000 learners in South Africa of school going age who suffer from intellectual impairment. The figure may be an estimation owing to the unreported cases.

## **Inclusive education in South Africa leading to inclusion**

The United Nations (UN) (2015) adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 which promoted social justice, equality and the right to education for all (EFA). The latter was proposed at the Jomtien Conference in 1990 and equal rights to education for people with disabilities was emphasised. Inclusive education policy revisions were considered at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 in Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement put emphasis on doing away with exclusion and adopting inclusion and changing societal attitudes towards difference (UNESCO 1994). From an international platform, each country had to develop its own policies in alignment with international communities. In the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), human dignity, human rights and equality are emphasised. It is against this background that Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education Building an inclusive education and training system was established (Department of Education, 2001).

The White Paper outlines how the education and training system must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society, how it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place (Department of Education, 2001:11).

The purpose was to have an implementation of Inclusive Education in all types of schools in South Africa with the aim of minimising barriers to learning and enabling students to develop in their individual strengths. In the implementation of Inclusive Education, the crucial thing is the adaptation of the curriculum and availing support systems for all learners (Makoelle, 2016). Curriculum adaptation is necessary to suit the learning needs of learners and schools should not impose an inflexible curriculum which may exclude some learners. The teaching pedagogies also must recognise differences in learners. There must also be change in attitude, behaviour and accommodate the needs of all learners (Mahlo, 2016; Makoelle, 2016; Department of Education 2001). Unfortunately, research by Svendby (2020) indicates that some teachers lack awareness of disabilities and inclusive pedagogies in their teaching. This may lead to exclusion and lack of proper support in unlocking their potential. Learners' futures are prepared in classrooms, in communities and society at large. Therefore, inclusion is not an isolated phenomenon. All stakeholders must understand what inclusion is and how to implement it. Inclusion is also implemented in special schools where there may be different learning needs among the learner population. This study sought to explore the career preparation and development of learners with intellectual disabilities.

## **Career development**

According to Sefotho (2015), more than two million children who are disabled may miss education and an opportunity to be employed if there is no guidance and

support. It is necessary that the home, school, society and government ensure that children with disabilities are also accorded an opportunity to get proper and relevant education, and be reasonably accommodated and get some skills to fit into the world of work. All learners with disabilities need a chance to be prepared and developed in certain careers at school level and their homes should also give them appropriate support. Career development is defined by Kerka (2002) as involving self-knowledge with personality, interests, skills and abilities, understanding of the world of work and the requirements of specific occupations. Furthermore, one's abilities and skills are to be matched with a specific occupation and satisfy requirements. Therefore, it requires dedicated career guidance teacher to work closely with parents so that the relevant abilities, skills and interest may be identified and the learner be prepared and developed in the relevant career for optimum career wellness. Sefotho (2015) also highlights the importance of career guidance that will promote career development which could be used to bolster confidence and show them what jobs they can fit into despite their disabilities. More importantly, what will give learners confidence regarding careers during the preparatory stage and development is an ideological shift from a focus of deficits to a belief in the gifts, capacities and dreams of persons with disabilities (Michaels, 1997). Kerka (2002) also recommends a multifaceted career development programme for learners with intellectual disabilities for appropriate careers that suit their skills and abilities. For a successful career development programme in schools with learners with intellectual disabilities, the following factors are necessary for a successful career development: internal decision making ability, clear sense of goal orientation, reframing the learning disability experience, persistence, goodness of fit, learned creativity and social network providing support (Kerka, 2002:1). Significant others can also help in career development by instilling support in self-efficacy and career awareness as early as possible (Duschene, 1998). Schools also are equipped with computers, assistive technology, multimedia equipment in supporting learners with intellectual disabilities in their career development path. A study by Grayson, Wermuth, Holub and Anderson (1997) proposed a career development transition programme that may assist learners with intellectual disabilities. The programme is as follows: According to Grayson et al (1997:4), "7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents work with a transition specialist to prepare for high school; 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> graders gather information about postsecondary education and employment opportunities and undergo comprehensive vocational assessment; 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> graders engage in job shadowing, career fairs, workplace and college visits, and exploratory activities; connection 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders develop portfolios and make formal contacts with postschool institutions an organisations and an evaluation follow along activities by school staff tracking learner's progress after high school." The paper seeks to explore ways of preparing and developing learners with intellectual disabilities in a rural special school.

## **Career Readiness**

Several studies define career readiness as when students have knowledge, skills and academic preparation needed to enrol and succeed in college bearing courses (Mokher, et al 2018; Mishkind, 2014; De Witt, 2012 & Conley, 2012). However, for the current study of learners with intellectual disabilities at a special school, their career readiness would not be like those in mainstream schools. Therefore, it would be necessary to define the career readiness of learners with intellectual disabilities. The researcher coined this definition: a learner will have personal strengths, abilities and willingness to show performance and bring value at a workplace show diligence and acceptable ethical conduct. The definition given here is suitable for a mild impairment in the cognitive area. This case study explores the career preparation and development of learners with mild intellectual disabilities at a rural special school.

## **Transition Planning**

Learners with intellectual disabilities need a thorough preparation for career planning when they exit school. The preparation is known as transition planning which need community commitment, parental involvement, educators and other important structures to make a successful transition. Research on transition planning highlight that successful transitions were seen in areas where families, teachers and community assist learners in transition planning (Campas, 2023). Every member of the transition planning has a role to play. Parents are also valued as team members since they have a voice in their child's specific learning needs, future planning and specific intervention strategies. Campas (2023: 4 ) also outlines the role of teachers as follows: "Teachers play critical roles in providing transition services for students that have disabilities such as: (a) informing students and families of the transition process and services, (b) coordinating transition services such as arranging meetings, (c) networking, (d) supporting students and their families in finding and applying for adult services agencies, and (e) developing the skills that students require for life after high school (e.g., daily living, vocational training, personal skills, social skills, and arranging work experiences (Park, 2018). In third world countries, where there is still poverty in communities and illiteracy rate among parents of learners with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, there are challenges of lack of resources or lack of cooperation from parents. Some parents are in denial that their child has intellectual disabilities and need specialised support in order to have optimum career wellness. Every teacher in a special school should know the learner's family and try to understand the kind of support that must be extended to the learner in transition planning and career preparation. Adam (2021) purports that what works best during transition planning is the person-centred transition planning which provides a holistic support that positions each individual learner within a community and family. Isolating a learner from the community and family may not yield positive results during transition planning and career preparation.

The community and other structures in society play a critical role during transition planning and career preparation phase. It is important that the school creates a platform for collaborations with various organisations so that there is room for employment for exiting learners (Campas, 2023).

### **Problem statement**

Studies reveal that community business people are less willing to partner with schools to create meaningful work experiences for learners with disabilities as opposed to their peers without disabilities (Carter et al 2009). Another problem for learners with intellectual disabilities is the type of jobs into which these learners are absorbed. These include simple jobs such as packaging food, cleaning, stocking shelves, sales associates, cashiers, or stock clerks, helping customers, ringing up purchases, cleaning, maintenance work, gardening or landscaping, working at a restaurant, cafes, or catering companies (Nexmedia, 2024). There are stereotypes that learners with intellectual disabilities can only perform certain types of jobs. **Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the career preparation and development of learners with intellectual disabilities in a rural special school.**

### **Theoretical Framework**

An integrative theoretical lenses underpinning this study were Hettler's (1980) wellness theory and Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligence theory. The theory of wellness outlines the optimum functioning of a human being in all six dimensions such as physical, emotional, social, career, academic and spiritual wellness. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher used the career wellness dimension from Hettler's wellness theory. Career wellness cannot exist on its own because it is interlinked with other wellness dimensions such as intellectual, emotional, social physical and spiritual. Since the study's focus is on career preparation and development for learners with intellectual disabilities, it was appropriate that the lens used is on career wellness to establish how learners are prepared to reach the optimum functioning in their wellness. In the second theory, Gardner (1999:16) defines multiple intelligences as "intelligences are potentials-presumably, neural ones that will or will not be activated, depending upon values of a particular culture, the opportunities available in that culture and the personal decisions made by individuals and or their families, schoolteachers, and others." Gardner (1999:16) further explains intelligences as a biopsychosocial potential that processes information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the multiple intelligence theory assisted the researcher in exploring how learners in a rural special school, through multiple intelligences, were prepared and developed to attain career wellness.

## Method

The study was embedded in the interpretive paradigm owing to its exploratory and interpretive nature. Creswell (2011) defines the interpretive paradigm as research approach that focuses on understanding the world through the subjective experiences of individuals where reality is socially constructed. In the current case study, individuals will construct the reality of learners with intellectual disabilities, their career preparation, development and career wellness. A qualitative research method was followed since the study took place in a naturalistic setting as Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) explain. Owing to the nature of the study, the research design suitable for the special school's context was a case study design. Merriam (2015:38) defines a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system where a single entity is studied. In contrast, Yin (2014:16) describes a case study design as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Normally, case studies focus on answering the how questions which are relevant for this study. The research questions of the study was: How are learners with intellectual disabilities in a special school prepared for careers? Sampling was purposive (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011).

The sample size was 20 teachers at a rural special school, a principal, deputy principal and head of department. The learner population was 250. However, they did not participate in the study. The researcher preferred a semi-structured interview schedule for data collection. Semi-structured interviews are advantageous to use since they allow participants to give a detailed picture of a participant's belief about a particular context (De Vos et al 2011). Open-ended questions focused on teachers' level of qualifications, teacher's role in career preparation for learners, how the school is collaborating and partnering with organisations to support learners in career preparation and development, as well as teacher's role in involving parents.

We further used a structured observation sheet where we observed learners during their skills class when they were busy on their artefacts. The items that were on the structured observation schedules were as follows: which skills were taught, how easy or difficult was it for learners with intellectual disabilities, teachers' facilitation skills, the final product or artefacts produced by learners and the level of confidence in learners. We also observed parents during events at schools when they were viewing artefacts produced by their children. The following items were on the observation schedule: parents' reaction upon seeing their children's artefact, parental involvement in the skills project.

The study had an ethical clearance from the college of Education Ethics committee and the reference number is Ref:2024/02/14/90060059/14/AM. Permission was granted to collect data from teachers and school management committee and that observations can be carried out in classes. Data collection prolonged owing to the type of study, especially focusing on how learners were prepared for various careers. In

assessing some skills, the researcher had to wait for completion of projects or artefacts and return to view the products and interview the teacher. In other skills, it was also prolonged observations as products were designed. After completing data collection, a thematic content analysis was done by coding data, grouping similar codes into categories and collapsing categories into themes (Henning et al 2004).

### **Results of the study**

After data analysis, the following themes emerged:

#### **Themes from semi-structured interviews with teachers and school management**

Some level of specialisation in Inclusive Education does exist up to NQF level 8

Skills are allocated as per learner's demonstration of what their strength is and the teacher's observation.

Vocational skills done in school prepares learners for careers.

Further visiting companies which specializes in various skills.

Encouraging parents to buy learners equipment to start using at home.

Learners do get employed by various entities some are self employed

#### **Themes from Observation Schedule with learners**

**Observed how they do art, gardening, hair care, pedicure manicure, cooking, sewing, welding, carpentry, quilts, designs on mugs, etc**

**Knowledge was scaffolded to make it easy.**

**Teachers knew how to teach learners with intellectual disabilities.**

**Final products are shown in Figure 1 in the form of pictures and these were sold to community members.**

#### **Themes from Observation Schedule with parents**

Parents were excited to see their children's work

Parents assisted by buying some of the artefacts and some bought equipment for their children to also do the same at home.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### ***Themes from semi-structured interviews with teachers and school management***

#### ***Teachers' Biography***

The school has a staff component of 20 teachers. However, only four studied Inclusive Education, with the highest qualification being at NQF Level 8 Bachelor of honours. Sixteen teachers have generic qualifications mostly at NQF Level 6.

#### ***Skills are allocated as per learners' demonstration of what their strength is and the teacher's observation***

The teachers use multiple intelligence theory of Gardener (1999) where multiple intelligences are considered. In particular, teachers focused on learners' abilities, interest and personality which is in line with the study of Kerka (2002) on career development. Teachers are always watching how learners take tasks in class and how they are interested in certain skills. Again, it depends on the teacher's vigilance to notice the behaviour of every learner, skills, personality and strength. Excerpts from some teachers were as follows:

*T2: "My experience at this special school is that multiple intelligences help us those learners who are more naturalistic; we allocate them to gardening and they really enjoy what they are doing. When we do follow-up with those who exited the school, we have good testimonies that our learners are employed. For example, we have ten learners at poultry and agriculture farm earning a salary of their own; no longer depending on social grant."*

#### ***Vocational skills done in schools prepare learners for careers***

The special school has a clear plan for career preparation from junior classes to the final year class. Learners in a junior basics class are given simple tasks in preparation for complex skills that will produce artefacts that will be seen as vocational skills. In these classes, teachers bring more teaching aids to try and stimulate the brain of learners to be interested in skills development. One teacher said:

*T3: "I normally bring more teaching aids in class to ensure that my learners get interested in using their hands in creative arts. If the classroom does not have many teaching aids, I won't be able to know their interests and abilities."*

*T4: "My love for learners with intellectual disabilities is that what they love they openly display their love for a particular skill and we make sure that we prepare them for future careers by giving relevant vocational skills such as carpentry or sewing etc. "*

#### ***Visiting companies which specialises in various skills***

The findings of the study revealed that the special school has partners that support the school in career development and career preparation. Campas (2023) talks about

collaborations with companies the practical collaborations are seen at the special school. They managed to collaborate with the Department of Employment and Labour, community organisations, social development and local businesses that may assist learners who are on transition plan. The collaborations also help with learner-centred transition planning as Adam (2021) points out that each learner is positioned within a community and family which may yield positive results during transition planning. During interviews with teachers at a special school, some teachers mentioned the importance of collaborations with local organisations, for example some said:

T6: *"The local companies and organisations are very helpful for our learners who are completing at our school."*

T7: *"We normally invite Department of [Employment and]Labour to give talks to parents and learners about possibilities of different careers."*

### ***Encouraging parents to buy learners equipment to start using at home***

The results of the study were very clear regarding parental involvement in career preparation of learners at a special school. Parents are encouraged to support their children since the family is central to a learners' transition planning. In the current study, not all parents were present at meetings. However, those who attended were very supportive. As Campas (2023) highlights, in the research on transition planning that successful transitions were seen in areas where families, teachers and community assist learners throughout their journey. Another challenge was poverty in families which made parents not to be able to buy equipment for their children to continue with practising the taught skills at home. Taking excerpts from teachers:

T8: *"We have different types of parents at our special school. Some parents can only afford a bare minimum and they depend on the government social grant. They cannot afford to buy equipment like sewing machine and stoves that have ovens for learners to practice the skills learnt at school."*

T9: *"Some families stigmatised their children and don't believe in them."*

T10: *"Over [the] years, I met parents who were very supportive and were always in parents' meetings contributing positively towards the career preparation of their children."*

### ***Learners do get employed by various entities and some are self employed***

The findings of the study at a special school reveal that some learners manage to get employment upon completing school. This resonates well with literature and previous research especially looking at the types of jobs into which intellectual disability learners get absorbed. In the rural special school where the current study was conducted, not all learners get employed. The findings reveal that from 2020 to

2024, two were employed by the school, eight were employed by the Department of Employment and Labour, one was employed by ADT security company, and ten learners were employed by poultry and agricultural farm while three were self-employed, owning hair salons. The findings agree with those of Nexmedia (2024) which purport that learners with intellectual disabilities are simple owing to their cognitive abilities. However, one student was hired by a cash in transit company which is a job that needs one to be alert at all times. This finding is contrary to previous research by Carter et al (2009) who pointed out that only business people are less willing to partner with schools. Nexmedia (2024) says only simple jobs are suitable for learners with intellectual disabilities. What is exciting is that all learners who are employed were well behaved and hardworking; no bad thing was reported about them because the school is constantly in touch with their workplaces. This is a clear indication that the school together with some parents and partnerships did a good job in career preparation and career development of learners with intellectual disabilities. If all parents were fully involved, the success rate would be high and factors such as poverty also limit the success rate of self-employment to continue with the skills learnt at school.

### ***Themes from Observation Schedule with learners***

***Observed how they do art, gardening, hair care, pedicure manicure, Cooking, sewing, welding, carpentry, quilts, designs on mugs, etc***

The researcher was able to see how learners were involved in practical work, while learning various skills. The teachers were very patient with learners and each learner was shown how to carry out a certain skill. What was peculiar about the learners was the ability to listen and try and imitate the teacher. Also, where there was machinery involved, the teacher was patient to try and teach each learner how to use the sewing machine or the welding machine.

Table 1 shows the abilities of learners in terms of what they could do alone or assisted by the teacher:

Table 1: Skills by learners with or without teachers' help

Type of skill	Perform alone	Assisted by teacher
Hand eye co-ordination	√	
measurement		√
neatness	√	
preciseness		√
Hair care	√	

Type of skill	Perform alone	Assisted by teacher
pedicure	√	
manicure	√	
Operate Welding machine		√
Use sewing machine	√	
Use garden tools	√	
Use computer	√	

### ***Knowledge was scaffolded to make it easy***

Inclusion was seen in all skills classes. The teachers accommodated all learners since they were not all at the same level of cognitive ability. Learners' human rights were respected according to what was observed in all classes (The South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996).

### ***Teachers knew how to teach learners with intellectual disabilities***

From the observations, the curriculum was adapted to suit learners at a special school. More importantly, teachers use pedagogies relevant for learners with intellectual disabilities and they tried to accommodate learners needs and abilities (Mahlo 2016).

### ***Final products are shown in Figure 1 in the form of pictures and these were sold to community members***

Figure 1 shows a sample of artefacts produced by learners at the special school. These are sold during events at school and also at the community events. The money from the sales is brought to school coffers to buy more materials.

### Carpentry plus sewing of cushions



### Baking

### Hair care manicure and pedicure



### Crop farming



### Welding

### Decorating mugs

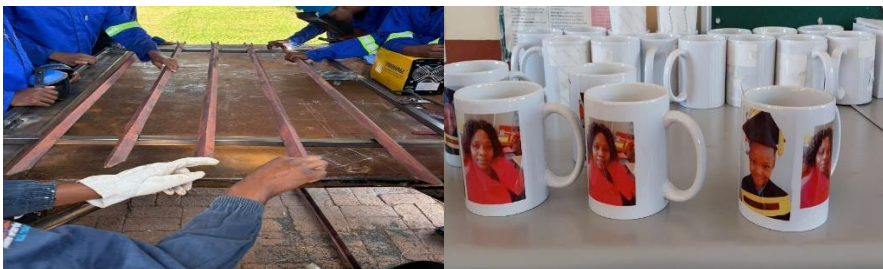


Figure 1: Artefacts produced by learners at the special school

## **Themes from Observation Schedule with parents**

### ***Parents were excited to see their children's work.***

On parents' faces, there was joy when they were looking at their children's artefacts. The names of learners were written on the artefacts which was also a point of reference for every parent that their children can produce something beautiful. As Campas (2023) points to the importance of family or parental involvement in career preparation and development, this was a clear indication at a special school that the parents who were involved were happy to see the product.

### ***Parents assisted by buying some of the artefacts and some bought equipment for their children to also do the same at home.***

For learners who are currently self-employed by having salons, it is parental intervention in supporting their children. The parents bought equipment so that they can support their children. Coupled with hair salons, learners do pedicure and manicure which is a good business in the community. Also, the community is supportive to these learners. They normally use their home premises to braid the hair and other haircare and nails.

## **Conclusion**

The study is a clear indication that all learners can learn as White Paper 6 Department of Education (2001) stipulates. Special schools also need dedicated teachers who will be passionate about their work and be willing to learn how learners with intellectual disabilities learn. Regular workshops are needed so that the teachers learn on how to adapt the curriculum to address learners' needs and apply inclusion in their classes. Each learner deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and their potential that are not seen or realised must be developed during their school careers while they are being prepared for various careers. A holistic development is also necessary during career development and preparation where their entire wellness is being shaped. Stereotypes regarding learners with intellectual disabilities are dealt with when communities see learners from a special school producing artefacts of high quality.

## **Contribution**

The study contributes to Inclusive Education regarding the career preparation and career development of learners with intellectual disabilities. All children can learn and the curriculum should be adapted to suit their abilities and needs. With the development of technology, it should be possible to use artificial intelligence to see how each learners can be prepared towards a particular career. Career wellness can be achieved if each learner's uniqueness is considered.

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## **Re-Imagining Continuous Assessment at An Open Distance and E Learning Institution: An Intellectual Wellness Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Assessment in higher education is riddled with challenges due to large numbers of students in modules. The paper addresses a case study of an Open Distance and e-Learning institution on how the implementation of continuous assessment (CA) evolved and the understandings thereof. An interpretivist paradigm was followed, and a qualitative research method was considered. Fourteen interviewed participants were sampled through snowballing. These were academics who implemented continuous assessments between the years 2020 and 2023. Following thematic content analysis the following themes emerged; CA can be part of curriculum planning; there was no training prior to the implementation of CA; very few read literature on CA; there are pros and cons of using CA ODeL institution; the size of a module versus the number of academics is a key determining factor; mixed forms of assessment were preferred with a number of quizzes and multiple-choice questions for large modules; feedback is necessary prior to proceeding to the next assessment activity and teaching and learning should be prioritized; summative assessment does not mean an examination. The study proposes a model for implementing a continuous assessment in an ODeL institution.

**Keywords:** ODeL, Continuous Assessment, Academic integrity, Assessment literate, Quality, Intellectual wellness

### **Introduction**

Traditional assessment places emphasis on the high stakes examination rather than formative assessment. Students' grading in formative assessment in traditional form of assessment is often lower than summative assessment. Formative assessment, which is normally conducted through assignments during the course of the semester is also important during the process of learning. This leads to assessment for learning which takes into account students' learning applying what they have learnt, being graded, receiving feedback and identifying gaps in knowledge. In formative assessment there is an expectation of feedback for learning. In summative assessment

where we have high stakes examinations especially in traditional assessment the process is normally known as assessment of learning (Hernandez, 2012). Traditional assessment also had good intentions in both formative and summative as purported by Hornby (2003) that formative assessment purpose is to provide support for future learning and summative to provide information about performance at the end of a course or qualification. For decades there was emphasis on formative with a lower weight and summative with a high weight and this was administered through high stakes examinations. The traditional approach of putting emphasis on high stakes examinations promoted memorization and regurgitation of knowledge which was mainly focusing on the lower cognitive level of Blooms taxonomy of remembering or recalling facts and move to middle level of understanding. The questioning prioritized how students could best display their grasp of content of their subject. The traditional approach was interested in assessment of learning and for academics it was exciting to have high pass rates, also the students were happy to get high marks in examinations. For the intellectual wellness of students, it is exciting to get high scores in examinations which also impacts on other wellness dimensions such as emotional, social and career wellness. High scores make one to feel good, to be respected by peers as a high performer and to choose any career and gain entry in any field due to high marks, hence the wellness of a student is impacted in a positive way.

The traditional approach to assessment also promoted surface learning where the student saw the work as a forced external imposition, routine unreflective memorization which led to limited understanding (Entwistle & Entwistle, 2001)

The paradigm shifts in assessment places emphasis on students' learning and the learning process which led to the introduction of continuous assessment in both basic and higher education systems. Another challenge in Higher Education institutions is that not all academics studied method of teaching and how to assess, hence a gap in andragogical skills. There is a need for assessment literate which is described by Popham (2009:4) as "understanding the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures and to engage in the ongoing process of adjusting instructional strategies to enrich students' learning experience."

The problem that was observed amongst academics and administrators was what continuous assessment is and how to implement it. Another challenge was the size of modules and the implementation of the size of modules and implementation of all the principles of continuous assessment. Furthermore, giving feedback timeously, identification of gaps in learning and the resubmission of assessment activities posed a serious challenge. **Hence the aim of this paper is: How can continuous assessment be reimaged in an ODeL institution from an Intellectual wellness perspective.**

## **Theoretical Framework**

The paper is positioned in a wellness theory by Hettler (1980) wherein the intellectual, emotional and social wellness played a key role. The intellectual wellness of students is important when introducing new forms of assessment in teaching and learning. Students have a way of getting used to a system and preparation is necessary when change occurs. Also, on the side of academics the intellectual wellness is important since most academics did not study education or methodology of teaching or how to assess. The researcher used the intellectual wellness as a lens for this paper since it helped in the grounding of the argument. The other wellness dimension such as emotional, social and career are also included due to a ripple effect which emanates from intellectual wellness. Emotional wellness is triggered when the stress is experienced and anxiety from the side of students due to the number of assessment activities and lack of feedback. The social wellness was experienced when academics started to attend the continuous professional development workshops wherein the use of tools for a myriad of assessment forms were introduced. The social wellness amongst peers was experienced. Regarding career wellness this may be linked to the type of graduate that is produced by the OdeL institution whether they have amassed skills in problem solving, critical thinking skills and high order thinking skills. Career wellness may not be measured with students still at the university but will be determined by the employer or when graduates are able to create jobs.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **What is Continuous Assessment?**

A study by Gallardo, Montolio and Ramio (2010:1) conducted in Barcelona explains how difficult it is to define continuous assessment and that there is no homogeneous interpretation on it. However, Gallardo et al (2010) gives examples on how continuous assessment can be implemented through essays, quizzes, presentations, participation projects and practical work. Continuous assessment should be spread throughout the term. Hence the definition that could be derived from Gallardo et al (2010) was that continuous assessment is a set of activities done throughout the semester with different weights assigned to each task. According to Omoningho (2019) continuous assessment considers everything the child does from the first day of the course in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Therefore, continuous assessment has four major characteristics which are comprehensive, cumulative, systematic and guidance oriented (Omoningho, 2019). Another definition provided by Rezaei (2015) is that continuous assessment refers to the use of one or several assessments during the course period instead of a single final exam in the last weeks of the semester. It also improves student learning and student engagement (Holmes, 2015).

Vahed, Walters and Ross (2021) explain continuous assessment as an approach making use of both formative assessment and summative assessment tasks. Vahed et al (2021) further posits that formative assessment provides regular progress updates for students through lecturer feedback. Learning is scaffolded and learning gaps are closed by both lecturer and student. The South African Council on Higher Education (2010) cautions academics against the extensive use of continuous assessment which may lead to heavy marking loads.

Kellaghan and Greaney (2004:45) define continuous assessment as an Integral component of the teaching and learning process. In addition, Muskin-UNESCO (2017:10) defines continuous assessment along a continuum of fully structured, planned mechanism which is conducted at regular intervals over the course of a term for primarily summative purposes, generating grades to combine with the score or scores from system's official end of year examination. In unstructured and even spontaneous methods to identify students 'comprehension of a concept content, or technique during instruction in order to make immediate adjustments to instruction and to provide prompt precise feedback to strengthen the learning of students, both individually and in groups (Muskin-UNESCO, 2017:10)." Furthermore, Kellaghan and Greaney (2004:45) assert that CA determine the students' level of knowledge, skill or understanding; to diagnose problems students may be encountering; to make decisions about the next instructional steps to take and to evaluate the learning that has taken place in a lesson. Continuous Assessment does not mean testing often however, it means communicating with the students often to find out whether they are truly learning or not (Walde, 2016). According to Seifu (2016) Continuous Assessment is not synonymous with continuous written tests. This seems to be a popular thing of frequent test writing instead of varying assessment forms in continuous assessment. These definitions provide an underpinning for an ODeL institution to be able to develop its model of implementing continuous assessment that will be suitable for the wellness (intellectual, emotional, social and career wellness dimensions) of both academics and students.

## **Character traits of Continuous Assessment**

### **CA as part of Curricular Planning**

Continuous Assessment forms part of curricular planning and module development. When learning outcomes and assessments criteria are determined, an academic should also think on how students will be assessed. CA cannot be an afterthought when content has been developed and completed. Since CA is an integral part of curricula, module development and teaching and learning process, it encourages students to learn on an ongoing basis (Trotter, 2006). Within CA there is assessment for learning. Pinchok and Brandt (2009) elaborate on assessment for learning as follows: 'On the fly" signify that a teacher may change course during a lesson to

address students' misunderstanding or gaps before proceeding with the planned lesson.

“Planned -for-embedded” where assessment is embedded in the curriculum to signal what learning has or has not occurred and to guide feedback at key points in the lesson (Muskin UNESCO, 2017:12).

### **Assessment for Learning**

Assessment for learning ensures that students constantly reflect on their learning and monitor their own progress. In assessment for learning marking should be done and students get feedback which enables them to attend to gaps in their learning. Hernández (2012) asserts that feedback motivates students to study, feedback from the previous assessment should be a feedforward to the next assessment (Bjaelde & Lindberg, 2018). Therefore, setting assessment in advance and uploading them on the Learning Management System (LMS) may not be ideal. Resubmission of assessment task is allowed in continuous assessment for improvement of marks. Feedforward is when students respond to feedback and become actively engaged to improve their learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hernandez, 2008; Vahed et al. 2021).

### **Scaffold Student Learning**

In continuous assessment tasks serve to scaffold student learning since each task builds on preceding tasks to enhance understanding of content (Vahed et al. 2021). Formative (assessment for learning) and summative assessment (assessment of learning) characterize continuous assessment only if there is feedback for learning and feedforward. In addition, there should be a mix and spread of assessment forms which cover the module outcomes. The assessment should also cover cognitive level of thinking which embraces high order thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and application questions. If one checks Bloom's Taxonomy questions should not only be focused on remembering of content but should transcend to application and evaluation level of thinking.

Formative assessment with feedback for learning can also be known as learning -oriented assessment, simply because it is linking assessment and learning (Hernandez, 2012). Carless (2007), Joughin (2009) Schmidt and O'Dochartaigh (2001) asserts that most academics take feedback seriously in learning -Oriented assessment.

### **Common Practices of Implementing Continuous Assessment and Challenges**

Findings of a study conducted by Seifu (2016) found that academics used tests, quizzes, individual and group assessments as forms of assessment. However, students did not receive feedback on their first test before the second one was administered. Thus, there was no feedback to improve on their learning. The use of frequent testing

is contrary to what Linn and Miller (2005) that tests are not the only assessment technique to assess the full range of students' learning process.

Large class or big modules were also highlighted as a challenge in implementing continuous assessment. For an institution to implement continuous assessment effectively the class size or module size should be reasonable. Seifu (2016) laments that engineering faculty saw large classes as a barrier to follow progress of individual students. Lack of knowledge on assessment techniques impedes a mix form of assessment in implementing continuous assessment effectively and this is caused by assessment illiteracy. Another challenge is the lack of clear manuals and guidelines on how continuous assessment may be implemented. The challenge on the side of students is lack of understanding in continuous assessment as a result they cheat so that they can attain high marks. According to Hernandez (2012:15) many academics view provision of feedback as a labour-intensive activity. The paper focuses on how to re-imagine continuous assessment at an open distance and e learning institution.

## **Method**

The study is embedded in a constructivist paradigm Schurink (2003) define it as a paradigm where reality can only be known by those who experience it personally. In this paper the reality is the implementation of the continuous assessment in an ODeL institution. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) define constructivist or interpretivist paradigm wherein the world is understood as others experience it. Regarding the ontological grounding of this study, assessment is seen as an integral part of teaching and learning, therefore the paper explored the reality of continuous assessment from the interpretivist perspective. As far as the epistemological grounding is concerned, I asked the question regarding the knowledge on assessment forms in continuous assessment and how to implement and interpret continuous assessment in an ODeL institution. Axiologically, ethics of continuous assessment were explored, the implementation process and what will be of value to the lecturer and the student. The researcher preferred the qualitative research method since the focus of the study was more on the interpretation and re-imagining how continuous assessment will be implemented in an ODeL institution. Qualitative method occurs more in a natural setting where participants experience the problem under study (Creswell, 2009). The research design employed for this study was phenomenological since it focused on the meaning of lived experiences Wagner et al. (2012) of academics in implementing continuous assessment in an ODeL institution. In order to get the relevant participants for the study, the researcher used snowballing as a sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which is used when members of a special population where individuals are approached then requested to find others who have similar practices (Laher & Botha, 2012). The researcher used snowball sampling in approaching the academics who were using continuous assessment in their modules and a few that were approached were

requested to get others, ultimately I ended up with fourteen participants for the study. The instrument used was semi-structured interviews which had the following open ended questions: how was continuous assessment implemented, what are the advantages of using continuous assessment, what are the disadvantages of using continuous assessment, how should the module size be like to manage continuous assessment, which assessment forms were used in implementing continuous assessment, which literature did academics read to understand continuous assessment, did they attend any training prior to implementing continuous assessment. Interview data was transcribed and analysed by coding, grouping similar codes together and when categories were formed they were collapsed into themes (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). After data analysis the following themes emerged:

Continuous assessment can be part of curriculum planning;

there was no training prior to the implementation of continuous assessment since the implementation was due to a management decision that all modules must follow continuous assessment;

very few read literature on continuous assessment;

there are pros and cons of using continuous assessment in an ODeL institution;

the size of a module versus the number of academics is a key determining factor; mixed forms of assessment were preferred;

feedback is necessary prior to proceeding to the next assessment activity and teaching and learning should be prioritized;

summative assessment does not mean an examination.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### ***Continuous assessment can be part of curriculum planning;***

Continuous assessment should not be an after thought but should be part of curriculum planning. The findings of the study revealed that the introduction of continuous assessment was an after thought and not part of curriculum design. Hence there was lack of knowledge on how to implement it and some used an old way of assessing with a number of small, chunked activities. Trotter (2006) points out that as one plans the curriculum one should also think of assessment and learning on an ongoing basis. It would have been better for the institution to incorporate type of assessment during curriculum planning so that academics should be aware that as one teaches assessment is also part of teaching and learning and not an afterthought. From an intellectual wellness perspective, it will be proper to incorporate the type of assessment in curriculum planning. If assessment is an afterthought there will be a

disconnect between what one teaches and what one assess. Some of the excerpts from participants were as follows:

P1: *"I joined the university in 2019 and the module was already developed and when we were expected to introduce CA I could not revise the module on the spot but had to figure out how to infuse it onto the content that was there already..."*

What participant one uttered was common across colleges where content was developed by a different lecturer who has either retired or is no longer teaching that module and a new academic was expected to continue on what was already developed. It will be prudent for the institution to consider what Trotter (2006) alludes to that assessment is crucial in curriculum planning.

***There was no training prior to the implementation of continuous assessment since the implementation was due to a management decision that all modules must follow continuous assessment;***

A university has different types of academics eg those who studied education and the teaching methodology and those who are purely subjects experts who are new in teaching and assessing. It is therefore necessary that professional development takes place for every academic who joins an institution of higher learning. Failure to expose experts from various disciplines to teaching methodologies and assessment can lead to confusion where there are expectations that may never be carried out accordingly. However, in this study some academics studied on their own masters' in Open Distance Learning just to know more on how to teach in an ODeL context. Out of fourteen participants in this study only two studied pedagogies and subject didactics and understood all the intricacies of assessment and teaching methodologies. Twelve participants were in the dark as far as teaching methodologies and assessment were concerned. From an intellectual wellness perspective, it is proper when an institution is introducing a new thing to have training and an awareness session and assess training needs. Their responses when they were asked about training prior to the implementation of continuous assessment revealed the following:

P5-10: *"No training were organized prior to the implementation of continuous assessment we had to figure out on how to do it."*

P11-14: *"I asked other peers on how one can do it, sharing of ideas helped a lot. We received training on using tools on the Learning Management System-Moodle and how we can develop quizzes."*

P3-4: *"due to my education background I knew what CA was and how to implement it however when we were told that it will be 100% formative I was surprised. No training was provided for me to understand the new format. However later in 2024 there was a revision and I learnt that summative will be there in CA."*

### ***Very few read literature on continuous assessment;***

The findings of this study revealed that out of fourteen participants only one read an article that was written by a colleague in the institution. All other participants relied on what other colleagues were saying on how one can implement continuous assessment

*P2: "As academics we are overwhelmed with our key performance areas, one must teach, research and do engaged scholarship. Marking is also overwhelming my module size is unbelievable 12 000 students. I must also moderate every assignment. I don't have time to read literature on CA, not that I don't want to but I am overwhelmed."*

### **There are pros and cons of using continuous assessment in an ODeL institution;**

Findings from the study revealed that some academics saw more advantages of having their modules on continuous assessment and the frequency of keeping the students busy was exciting for them. However, in some instances some felt that they could not mark the work of students and resorted to automated marking hence the overuse of quizzes. Another good example is the credit bearing assessments which were chunked and that motivated students to do all assessments. The only disadvantage was the non-resubmission of assessment tasks due to huge number of students in a module. Another disadvantage of using CA was few written assessment tasks and no timeous feedback to students due to module size. Also the back and forth of allowing gaps in learning to be filled was neglected which is one crucial element in the implementation process of applying CA fully in an institution of higher learning. In allowing the re learning and filling in of gaps of knowledge is supported by Holmes (2015). If this does not take place in CA then one key element of learning is violated. From an intellectual wellness perspective, it is appropriate to apply all principles of continuous assessment so that its benefits can be achieved and not be selective. Compromising some elements of CA nullifies the type of assessment the institution claims that they are using meanwhile they are not applying it to the latter.

### ***The size of a module versus the number of academics is a key determining factor; mixed forms of assessment were preferred;***

The findings revealed that most modules had many students more than one thousand and some seventeen thousand and few academics allocated to them. Once the ratio of lecturer student is compromised this poses a challenge in the implementation process of CA. All fourteen participants were either alone or were two in their modules. The challenge was marking within the allocated time and providing feedback before the next assessment task. The modules that were marked within four days were either multiple choice questions or quizzes. The challenge was in a semester students must also have other mixed forms of assessment which would provide an opportunity for writing out responses instead of choosing the correct answer only like in quizzes or multiple-choice type of questions.

*P5: "With the size of my module I prefer quizzes and these are using Blooms Taxonomy where a mix of questions are provided. Thereafter, marking is automated. I cannot give written exercises that will take more than a month to mark."*

*P10: "My discipline requires students to reason and to argue I need to give written assessment tasks my challenge is few markers that I have. If I am using CA I cannot give the next written assessment task before I give feedback on the previous one and gaps must be filled first from the previous assessment task. If I had many markers then I can use CA for my module and also if we allocate more lecturers for this module then we can implement CA smoothly."*

For the wellness of academics and the intellectual wellness of students it is important to have a reasonable size of a module versus the number of academics who are teaching that module. An academic who is overwhelmed with workload may end up with burnout trying to apply all the principles of CA in a big module. Also students who do not receive individual attention, timeous feedback end up with a compromised intellectual wellness.

***Feedback is necessary prior to proceeding to the next assessment activity and teaching and learning should be prioritized;***

One key element in the implementation process of CA is teaching first before assessment is administered. The findings revealed that some academics were teaching first and were able to issue the first assessment but giving feedback timeously was a challenge due to module size. The ODeL institutions have a high enrolment almost in all colleges or faculties. It becomes challenging to administer marking in a few days especially in written and essay type assessments. It was clear that this area needed some attention when interviewees were responding.

*P2: "I think for me to provide feedback timeously in essay type questions I need manpower more lecturers and more markers. Then we can apply principles of CA faithfully so teach first, assess and give feedback before we administer the next assessment task."*

Feedback and feedforward is an important step in learning as Bjaelde and Lindberg (2018) assert. Hernandez (2012) also emphasizes the importance of feedback since it motivates students to learn. For students intellectual wellness development, it is important to have regular and timeous feedback.

***Summative assessment does not mean an examination.***

The findings of the study revealed that participants had a misconception that CA does not have a summative assessment, and some thought summative assessment must always be an examination. Due to the high number of students in most modules maybe this challenge might have led to a thought of avoiding summative and to have formative assessments only. This is subject to further investigations on why the

thought of having 100% formative instead of having formative and summative assessment in CA. When participants were asked what they think about the allocation of percentages on formative and summative and whether summative assessment is necessary in CA some said the following:

*P7: "I think in CA most marks should go to formative and less for summative assessment. Summative is also necessary in CA"*

*P8: "For me what will work well is when formative assessment can make the student to pass even if one does not submit final summative assessment."*

*P9: "I think learning should be crucial in accumulating marks in formative as one is learning then very less marks for summative assessment."*

*P10: "What is important is that students must know that in CA you pass each time you do an assessment and all assessment tasks are important and not for students to wait for the final summative assessment."*

In Continuous assessment both formative and summative assessments are important, and allocation of weights should be different. It is crucial that summative should weigh less so that learning is accorded an opportunity during the year. An institution should determine how weights are allocated and communicate clearly to students that all assessments are important.

## **Recommendations**

An institution of higher learning should consider the following recommendations which may assist in planning for using a continuous assessment in a specific module.

Relook into module review and rethink assessment

Continuous Professional development to train on how assessment practices should be carried out

Module size and number of academics is a determining factor

Spacing assessment activities determines feedback and feedforward

Adjust teaching style after marking assessment

Allow resubmission of assessment for students to address gaps in learning

It is important for academics to know the types and examples of assessment forms that can be used in continuous assessment before a model can be proposed. Table 1 below has just outlined a few examples there can be many other assessment forms which allow creativity from academics. With the use of Artificial Intelligence there can be many other examples that allow students to solve problems and to be creative. The following table provides examples of assessment forms that can be used:

Table 1: Examples of Continuous assessment forms that may be used when implementing Continuous Assessment:

<p>Quizzes</p> <p>Minute papers to indicate threshold concepts</p> <p>Mind maps to demonstrate understanding</p> <p>Summaries of class discussions</p> <p>Reflective journals</p> <p>Video presentations</p> <p>Peer assessment</p> <p>Tests</p> <p>Examinations</p> <p>Projects</p> <p>Reports</p> <p>Essays</p> <p>Multiple choice questions</p>	<p>University seminars</p> <p>Workshops</p> <p>Forums</p> <p>Group assessments</p> <p>Observations</p> <p>Take home assignments</p> <p>Oral presentations</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Portfolios</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Self-assessments</p> <p>Peer assessments</p> <p>Design based assessment</p> <p>webinar</p>
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### **Proposed Model on the Implementation of Continuous Assessment in an ODeL institution**

In guiding a step-by-step implementation process of continuous assessment in an ODeL institution the following steps below may be of help:

Table 2: A proposed Model outlining a Step-by-Step Implementation process of Continuous Assessment in an ODeL institution:

<p>STEP 1. Teach Content in a chunked way from February (record lessons) give informal activities, then Formative Assessment. Upload the Assessment number 1 on Learning Management system after teaching on module site after effective engagement</p>	<p>STEP 2. Mark Assessment 1 note gaps, give individual feedback, modify your teaching. Engage markers/tutors give clear guidelines on what and how they should engage students. Allow resubmission if students did not achieve the outcome. Teach the next chunked content, give informal activities then upload Assessment number 2 onto the Learning Management system after teaching related content.</p>	<p>STEP 3. Mark assessment no 2 meets with external markers identify gaps, give individual feedback to students. Allow resubmission or an alternative assessment to allow learning. Teach the content after completing considerable chunks with relevant informal activities then upload Assessment no 3 onto the Learning Management system. At this stage this may be a summative assessment and may be proctored (if it is a semester module).</p>	<p>STEP 4. Mark Assignment 3 identify gaps, meet with external markers Tutors give individual feedback to students. Allow resubmission or an alternative assessment to allow learning. Then Teach the next content with small informal activities. Then upload Assessment no 4 onto the Learning Management system</p>
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<p>STEP 5. Mark Assessment no 4 identify gaps, engage markers and tutors. Give individual feedback to students. Allow resubmission or an alternative assessment to allow learning. Then teach the next content with small informal activities. Then upload Assessment no 5 onto the Learning Management system</p>	<p>STEP 6. Mark Assessment no5 identify gaps, engage markers and tutors. Give individual feedback to students. Allow resubmission or an alternative assessment to allow learning. Then teach the next content with small informal tasks. Then upload Assessment no 6 onto the Learning Management system. This may be a Summative Assessment which may be proctored</p>	<p>STEP 7. Mark Assessment no 6 identify gaps, engage markers, tutors. Give individual feedback to students allow resubmission if there are students who did not do well.</p>	<p>STEP 8 Before finalising the final mark check students who might have missed a submission give an elective assessment. Then after marking the elective finalise all marks for moderation following guidelines in Assessment procedure manual. Then request sign off</p>
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The proposed model above in Table 2 step 1 to step 8 of implementing continuous assessment to the latter can assist an institution in having an assurance that all academics who want to follow continuous assessment approach have the know-how. Furthermore, the regulatory bodies such as Council on Higher Education, SAICA, HPCSA, ECSA, SAVC etc. professional stipulations in specific qualifications must not be compromised. In addition, not all assessment tasks should be proctored. It is important that high order questioning should be used to ensure that students are not regurgitating answers but are compelled to think critically and apply knowledge gained in their learning process. In implementing the continuous assessment model successfully small modules are suitable which will allow an academic to provide timeous feedback before issuing the next assessment task. Also, small modules will enable mixed forms of assessment to be used. A semester module may be a challenge

due to a short duration of achieving all the learning outcomes and the resubmission of assessment tasks may be a challenge. Therefore, continuous assessment is easily implemented in year modules.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study could not have a large sample size of participants and also the student voices are missing. Further research is needed where a large sample size will be used capturing both academic and student voices with a mixed method approach.

### **Conclusion**

The study clearly demonstrates the need for training on what continuous assessment is and how it should be implemented in an institution. A call to have modules following continuous assessment was an afterthought and not part of curriculum planning which should be avoided by any institution of higher learning. Furthermore, the findings reveal an important element of feedback and feedforward which provided motivation for the students in any learning process. In addition, the rationale to have small modules using continuous assessment is also supported by literature and the notion of having all assessments marked before students attempt the next assessment. Also addressing gaps in learning prior to doing the following assessment task is beneficial in the learning process. The proposed model also outlines teaching content first before administering assessment which can be coupled with adjusting teaching strategies when gaps in learning have been identified. Therefore, implementing the use of continuous assessment does not benefit students learning process only but also academics benefit in seeing how they can adjust their teaching approaches and have better student engagements. Therefore, the use of the theoretical framework of intellectual wellness was appropriate for this study since the focus was on the learning and wellness of the students and that academics also have a structured approach, well thought out implementation process of continuous assessment which will not impact negatively on their wellness.

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## **Characteristics of Urbanization of Albania in Transition: from the Unplanned and Informal Development Model to the Statist Model of Territorial Planning and Development**

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### **Abstract**

In 1991, Albania entered the post-socialist transition with an urbanization level estimated between 32% and 36% of the total national population. This figure increased to 42% in 2001, 44% in 2003, and reached between 53.7% and 58.2% by 2011. The urbanization process can be divided into four distinct phases, differentiated by (i) the nature of societal interaction with the territory and (ii) the evolving role of governance in territorial development. The first phase was characterized by spontaneous, informal, and rapid urban growth. Attempts to legalize informal settlements reflected statist inertia, while liberal legislative efforts for formal urban development largely failed to achieve their objectives. Nonetheless, this phase marked the introduction of representative democracy at the local level. The second phase saw the consolidation of informal construction alongside initial government interventions, resulting in sectoral legislation with statist features and increased powers for local governments in urban management. During the third phase, informal construction declined as urbanization accelerated, accompanied by efforts to enact liberal and democratic legislation, although decentralization processes stagnated. The fourth phase introduced a governance discourse focused on legality and formality, yet the urban and territorial realities remained largely unchanged. This period was marked by new legislation, intensified enforcement actions against informal buildings, and centralized planning projects, coinciding with a resurgence of informal construction. Overall, governance during this phase exhibited a marked concentration of power within territorial development.

**Keywords:** transition, urbanization level, urbanization process, urban and territorial planning, formal and informal construction, legalization, territorial governance, statism, concentration of power, hyper-legislation, land restitution.

## **Introduction**

This paper aims to present and analyze the characteristics of Albania's urbanization during its transition years by synthesizing existing research on two main dimensions: (i) the interaction between citizens and the territory, and (ii) the role and scope of state governance in urban and territorial development. The study begins with an overview of the preconditions for urban and territorial change, followed by an analysis of urbanization phases and levels throughout the 33-year transition period, highlighting accelerated urban growth.

The paper then focuses on citizen-driven urban interventions and the governmental response during the first phase (1992–1997), characterized by informal settlement expansion and efforts to legalize these areas. This informality emerged primarily due to mass internal migration and the state's incapacity to adequately address housing needs through planned development. During this phase, legislative attempts aimed to introduce democratic and liberal frameworks for territorial planning, accompanied by the extension of democracy to local governance.

Subsequent sections analyze the second phase (1998–2005), which retained many characteristics of the first phase, particularly rapid informal construction growth, but also introduced formal construction and legislative reforms addressing legalization, urban planning, and administrative-territorial restructuring, albeit with limited decentralization success.

In the third phase (2005–2013), efforts to legislate formal and informal construction continued, with informal construction declining and formal development predominating. Despite advances, statist governance tendencies persisted, such as exclusionary land restitution policies and extensive legal amendments (hyper-legislation).

Finally, the fourth phase (2011–2024) is examined, highlighting new legislation on territorial planning and local government reform, increased discourse and projects on urban and territorial issues, and further changes in informal construction legalization laws. This phase is marked by a strong centralization of power in territorial governance.

The paper concludes with key findings and modest recommendations for future research on Albania's urbanization and governance processes.

## **Purpose and Methodology**

This study aims to compile, analyze, and synthesize information regarding the interactions of individuals and families with the territory, shaped by massive internal migration triggered by the political, social, and economic transformations following the collapse of the socialist regime.

Additionally, the paper seeks to examine the concrete role of government in urban and territorial development throughout the period under study. This encompasses political discourse and state actions, including legislation, programs, projects, and regulatory measures that reflect a spectrum from unplanned informal growth to renewed statist approaches in planning and governance.

A further objective is to provide a foundation for future studies that integrate demographic, urbanization, and governance phenomena for this or other periods of Albania's development.

Methodologically, the study adopts an analytical and qualitative approach, deemed suitable for systematically detailing the phenomena within the study's temporal scope. The research is grounded in a theoretical evaluation of the dynamics between society and territory and the state's role in urban and territorial development, primarily through secondary sources authored by experts in related fields.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

This study employs several key terms that require a clear operational definition to ensure conceptual clarity and consistency. These include:

#### **Territorial Governance**

This term refers to the set of governing activities related to the legal functions, duties, and responsibilities associated with the territorial and urban development of a country. It encompasses:

the drafting and approval of territorial planning and development instruments (including territorial and urban policies, plans, and regulations, according to their typology and level of governance);

- development control (construction permitting processes);
- territorial control (the prevention and enforcement against informal construction).

In the context of this study, the term *territorial governance* includes both central and local levels of government, unless a specific level is explicitly identified.

#### **Centralized (Statist) Governance**

This term refers to a model of governance characterized by:

- a broad scope of state intervention and activity;
- a high degree of concentration of governing functions at the national/central level;
- a limited degree of decentralization of governing responsibilities toward local government;

- and minimal involvement of citizens, communities, and interest groups in political decision-making processes.

The term *statist governance* is used interchangeably with centralized governance throughout the text.

### **Transition of Urban Development to the New System and Phases of Urbanization During the Transition**

The transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented system in Albania was accompanied by profound social transformations, among which migration and urbanization had the most far-reaching implications for the population's daily life (Banka Botërore [BB], 2007, p. 22). To understand this impact, two key structural conditions inherited from the socialist regime must be highlighted, as they significantly influenced individual and collective interaction with the national territory.

First, the population was artificially distributed across the territory, with approximately 65% to 75% living in rural areas (BB, 2007, p. 43; Misja and Misja, 2004; Faja, 2008; INSTAT, 2004), and a considerable proportion concentrated in newly constructed, mono-functional cities developed without adequate regional planning (Faja, 2008, p. 16). This demographic arrangement was a product of state control over internal migration, institutionalized through Council of Ministers' Decision No. 361, dated November 1, 1977, "On the Residence Permit of Citizens" (PPL, 1979, p. 108).

The revocation of this control occurred through the 1993 Constitutional amendments, specifically Article 22, which legally recognized the right to free movement (Vullnetari, 2012, p. 66). This led to massive migratory movements, both inter-regional (from one region to another) and intra-regional (from one settlement to another), as individuals sought locations offering better living conditions (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Misja and Misja, 2004; INSTAT, 2004; Aliaj, 2008; Vullnetari, 2007, 2012).

Second, the housing situation prior to the transition was marked by (i) low per capita living space and poor quality housing (Fuga, 2004, p. 113; Aliaj, 2008, p. 93), and (ii) a state-owned housing stock accounting for approximately 70% of all dwellings (BB, 2007, p. 43; Misja and Misja, 2004; Vullnetari, 2012). The average living space per person in Albania was estimated at just 5 m<sup>2</sup> in urban areas, compared to 16 m<sup>2</sup> in Bulgaria, 15 m<sup>2</sup> in Romania, and 26 m<sup>2</sup> in Hungary (BB, 2007, p. 43; IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 56). This critical housing inadequacy prompted a significant demand for improved living conditions. As the World Bank observed, "a number of urban families living in small apartments... began to look for apartments with more space or houses built to more modern standards" (2007, p. 42).

The privatization of state-owned housing added approximately 230,000 new privately owned dwellings to the real estate market, enabling sales and exchanges that formed the basis for a nascent housing economy (Meksi, 2015, p. 137). Additional financial resources for housing improvement stemmed from remittances (Banka e Shqipërisë [BSh], 2018, p. 22), and revenues from private enterprises in the service sector (BB, 2007, p. 15). Corruption, particularly in construction and urban development, also facilitated informal channels of housing improvement. The World Bank noted that “corruption is perceived as especially problematic in the construction sector” (2007, p. 27).

Across all phases of transition, Albania’s urbanization process was driven primarily by internal and external migration, which contributed to the evolving urban form and increasing urbanization rates (Misja and Misja, 2004; Aliaj, 2008). External migration influenced the overall population size (Vullnetari, 2007, 2012), while internal migration was the dominant force shaping urban expansion (Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008).

Internal migration occurred in two main forms: inter-regional migration (between different regions) and intra-regional migration (between urban centers within the same region) (INSTAT, 2004, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2024). Initially, these movements led to increased population density and construction in rural areas, a trend that Fuga (2012) described as the “urbanization of the rural.” Over time, migration also intensified population densities in existing urban centers (INSTAT, 2004, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2024).

At the start of the transition, Albania's level of urbanization was comparatively low. Faja (2008, p. 16) estimated it at 32% of the total population, while Vullnetari (2012, p. 17) emphasized that, in the 1980s, two-thirds of Albanians lived in rural areas, making Albania one of the least urbanized countries in Europe. INSTAT (2004, p. 36) reported that the urban population rose from 35% in 1991 to 42% in 2001. The World Bank (2007, p. 1) observed a similar trend, noting an increase from 36% in 1990 to 44% in 2003.

Urbanization accelerated during the second decade of the transition. For the first time in the history of Albanian censuses, the 2011 census recorded an urban majority: “53.7% of the population lives in urban areas and 46.3% in rural areas” (INSTAT, 2011, p. 16). An alternative classification in INSTAT’s study *A New Urban-Rural Classification of the Albanian Population* estimated the urban population at 58.2% and the rural population at 41.8% (2014b, p. 23).

Although the third decade was also characterized by continued urbanization, INSTAT’s 2024 census report does not provide disaggregated data by urban and rural residence, making direct comparison difficult (INSTAT, 2024).

Across the 33 years of transition (1991–2024), Albania's urban development can be divided into four distinct phases, each characterized by the changing dynamics of (i) society's interaction with the territory (Fuga, 2004, 2012, 2019; Vullnetari, 2007, 2012; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008) and (ii) the role of governance in territorial development (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; BB, 2007; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008).

Individual and family interaction with the territory, often driven by the need for housing and economic opportunity in new settlements, led to large volumes of new, often unregulated, construction and significantly raised the urbanization level. Government involvement was reflected in legislation, policies, programs, and physical interventions implemented through various forms of territorial governance (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008; Fuga, 2012, 2019).

### **Urbanization and Territorial Governance of the First Phase (1992–1997)**

During the first phase of Albania's urban transition, informal settlements emerged as the only practical solution to the country's acute housing needs. As noted by the World Bank, "Land development and construction during the first phase of development was virtually all informal" (BB, 2007, p. 42). These settlements were typically located in the peri-urban areas of major cities such as Tirana, Durrës, Fier, and Elbasan (Aliaj, 2008; INSTAT, 2004). In Tirana, informal urbanization was particularly widespread; Bongwa observed that "currently, about 32% of Tirana's population lives in unplanned settlements" (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 36).

The intense pressure for housing, combined with new financial opportunities such as property privatization and remittances, spurred extensive private interventions in the built environment. In this context, the role of the central government as a regulatory and coordinating authority became critical. As the World Bank emphasized, it is precisely the government that "establishes the background and the legal and political conditions for unified urban development" (2007, p. 86). Yet, the response of the state was marked by legal and institutional unpreparedness, as well as reactive and coercive governance approaches.

At this stage, no formal legislation had yet been enacted to regulate informal construction. Instead, the phenomenon was addressed through executive actions, including sporadic demolitions carried out by police forces (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; BB, 2007, 2012). These interventions were often ad hoc, arbitrary, and ultimately unsustainable. As the World Bank (2007, p. 65) observed, such efforts "to establish order" through force may have been justifiable at the outset of the process, but they quickly became inappropriate once informal settlements expanded to include thousands of residents.

The failure of the 1995 attempt to demolish informal dwellings in Bathore marked a turning point. Following the resistance of local residents, "the government abandoned any attempt to limit informal construction" (BB, 2007, p. 63). In response, the World

Bank-funded Urban Land Management Project (ULMP) was launched. As Shutina and Sloomweg noted, the Albanian government secured a \$10 million loan from the World Bank to implement the \$16 million project, overseen by a dedicated Project Coordination Unit within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, pp. 126–127).

Although the ULMP had only limited success (BB, 2007, p. 65), it led to Albania's first formal legislative response to informality: Law No. 8398 of September 1998, *On Compensation of Former Owners of Agricultural Land in Lapraka and Bathore*. The World Bank described this as “the first significant effort” to address unregulated urban development (2007, p. 72). However, the law's core mechanism—granting land use rights to informal occupants while offering monetary compensation to original landowners—was heavily criticized. Kaprata (2021, p. 144) argues that the law privileged the interests of illegal builders over legitimate property owners, undermining constitutional principles of equality (QBZ, 1998). This imbalance raised long-term legal and social dilemmas for property restitution and urban governance.

Another key development in this period was the adoption of Law No. 7693/1993, *On Urban Planning*, which introduced democratic and liberal principles such as private ownership of land and buildings (Agjensia e Zhvillimit të Territorit [AZHT], 2025). The law opened the planning and construction sectors to private initiative, aligning with broader goals of market liberalization (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Meksi, 2015). However, the law underwent frequent amendments—via Decree No. 772/1994, Law No. 8015/1995, and Law No. 8249/1997 (AZHT, 2025)—a pattern characterized by IHS Alumni et al. (1998, p. 24) as hyper-legislation, reflecting institutional instability and a reactive policy-making culture.

In addition to frequent legal changes, territorial governance in this phase displayed a strong tendency toward centralization. Dharmo pointed out that, rather than empowering local authorities, the urban planning framework “chose the path of centralizing powers” (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 32). Bureaucratic inefficiencies further impeded urban development. As Misja highlighted, “investors faced numerous obstacles, including lack of information on land ownership, ownership disputes, unclear planning regulations, and delays in obtaining permits” (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 60). These conditions severely constrained market efficiency and urban management capacity.

Despite these shortcomings, the first steps toward decentralization were initiated during this phase. In June 1992, an administrative-territorial reform restructured Albania into 36 districts, 44 municipalities, and 313 communes (INSTAT, 2014b, p. 13). Law No. 7572/1992 established elected local councils and directly elected mayors, introducing representative democracy at the local level. However, this democratic framework was hampered by limited fiscal autonomy and weak institutional capacities. Aliaj and Aliaj noted that “although the central authorities

initiated a process of decentralization, in practice this process was frozen for political reasons” (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 103).

Concurrently, Law No. 7608/1992 established 12 prefectures, each comprising two to four districts and led by centrally appointed prefects. While the reorganization aimed to improve administrative coordination, no substantive structural changes occurred between 1992 and 2000 (INSTAT, 2014b, p. 13).

In summary, the first phase of Albania’s post-socialist urbanization was characterized by large-scale informal construction driven by internal migration and private initiative, a weak and reactive state apparatus, and legal uncertainty. While legislative efforts such as the 1993 Urban Planning Law and decentralization reforms marked significant symbolic progress, their practical impact was constrained by institutional inertia, hyper-legislation, and centralization. As Dhamo aptly stated, in the new political and economic context, the role of the state should have been to “guide individual decisions in the urban territory, ensuring that the cumulative result was a livable, vibrant city” (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 3). However, during this period, that vision remained largely unrealized.

### **Urbanization and Territorial Governance of the Second Phase (1998–2005)**

The second phase of Albania’s urban development was marked by the consolidation of informal settlements alongside the emergence of formal construction practices. While continuing many of the patterns from the previous phase, this period also introduced a series of institutional and legislative efforts aimed at managing urban expansion. These efforts, however, remained partial and inconsistent, reflecting deeper structural challenges in governance and decentralization.

Informal urbanization remained widespread during this phase. As Aliaj (2008) and Imami et al. (2008) observe, the expansion of informal settlements persisted in urban peripheries, driven by ongoing internal migration and the population’s unmet housing needs. Despite the introduction of formal construction mechanisms, informality still accounted for a significant portion of urban growth. According to World Bank estimates, by the early 2000s, informal settlements housed hundreds of thousands of residents nationwide (BB, 2007).

Yet, a distinguishing feature of this period was the parallel development of a nascent formal construction sector. This was driven by a more active engagement of private actors in land development, facilitated by property privatization and financial flows such as remittances (BSh, 2018; Meksi, 2015). The legal and institutional framework attempted to regulate both formal and informal construction, although results were mixed.

This phase witnessed the first coordinated legislative attempts to legalize informal settlements. The most notable milestone was Law No. 8405 of 17 September 1998, *On*

*Urban Planning*, which replaced the 1993 planning law and aimed to better align legal planning tools with the country's evolving urban realities (QBZ, 2010). The law formally acknowledged the existence of informal areas and provided mechanisms for partial recognition and regulation (Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008). However, as Fuga (2012) and Kaprata (2021) argue, these mechanisms were largely symbolic and failed to produce substantial changes on the ground due to limited institutional capacity and political reluctance to enforce land-use regulations.

Concurrently, the state adopted new legal instruments for the legalization and integration of informal construction. One example was Law No. 9482/2006 (drafted during this phase though enacted shortly after), *On Legalization, Urbanization, and Integration of Informal Areas and Buildings* (QBZ, 2018a). Though implemented in the third phase, its conceptual foundation and drafting process began during this period, revealing the growing recognition of informality as a central governance challenge.

Despite such efforts, the government's approach to informal settlements continued to reflect statist tendencies. Kaprata (2021) and Dharmo (IHS Alumni et al., 1998) argue that while legalization laws nominally aimed to regularize informal construction, they often marginalized legitimate landowners and institutionalized irregularity without resolving core property rights disputes. The legacy of socialist land collectivization and weak cadaster systems further complicated these processes (Vullnetari, 2012).

In terms of formal urban planning, this phase saw increased emphasis on territorial governance through national and sectoral strategies. Planning initiatives focused on infrastructure development and the provision of public services in newly urbanizing zones. Yet, according to Aliaj (2008), many planning efforts remained "sectoral and fragmented," often implemented without coordination across different levels of government. The resulting institutional overlap diluted the effectiveness of new policies.

A parallel development during this phase was the state's attempt to reform the administrative-territorial structure. Although more ambitious reforms would take place in later phases, this period laid the groundwork for redefining the role of local governments in urban governance. Legislation such as Law No. 8652/2000, *On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government*, (QBZ, 2018b) expanded municipal competencies in urban management. However, the decentralization process remained constrained by limited fiscal autonomy and the reluctance of central authorities to delegate real decision-making power (Biberaj, 2000; Aliaj, 2008).

As Aliaj and Imami et al. (2008) note, the decentralization envisioned in the early 2000s largely stalled, with local governments often excluded from strategic planning processes or dependent on central funds. The persistence of these issues underlined the systemic centralization of governance and highlighted the disconnect between formal institutional reforms and practical implementation.

In summary, the second phase of Albania's urbanization was characterized by three interrelated dynamics: (1) the continued spread of informal settlements, albeit with growing formal sector activity; (2) initial, but inconsistent, legislative and policy efforts to manage urban informality and land use; and (3) hesitant and partial decentralization reforms that expanded local competencies without sufficient resources or authority. While this phase marks a transition toward more structured urban governance, it also reveals the enduring tensions between statist control and emerging democratic and market-based approaches to territorial development.

### **Urbanization and Territorial Governance of the Third Phase (2005–2013)**

The third phase of Albania's urbanization, from 2005 to 2013, marked a critical transition in the spatial and legal dynamics of territorial development. While informal construction persisted, its intensity decreased compared to the previous two phases (Aliaj, 2008; BB, 2007). During this period, the urbanization process accelerated due to widespread internal migration, now affecting the entire national territory (INSTAT, 2004; Vullnetari, 2007, 2012).

This shift corresponded with the maturation of early economic reforms initiated in the 1990s (Meksi, 2015). The dominant trend in this phase was the replacement of informality by formal construction activity, reflecting improved institutional oversight and a stronger private sector presence in urban development (Aliaj, 2008; BB, 2007). Nevertheless, emigration remained a demographic force, though it no longer triggered mass informal settlements at the same scale (Imami et al., 2008; Vullnetari, 2012).

Despite reduced informality, the formalization and integration of existing informal areas proceeded slowly. As the World Bank reported, "despite numerous efforts by previous and current governments, the progress of the process of legalization and integration of informal areas has been slow" (BB, 2007, p. 76). This delay, coupled with frequent legal changes, inadvertently encouraged new informal development, as individuals speculated on future legalization opportunities (Aliaj, 2008).

By 2009, the number of informal constructions had reached a staggering scale. The director of ALUIZNI, Mr. Shaban Memia, stated in an interview that the number of illegal buildings likely exceeded 400,000 (BB, 2012, p. 4). Still, the increased prevalence of formal construction contributed significantly to improved living conditions. According to the World Bank, the average living space per person rose from 5 m<sup>2</sup> in 1991 to approximately 19.6 m<sup>2</sup> by 2007 (BB, 2007, p. 46).

This phase saw intensive legislative activity aimed at organizing construction, managing informality, and introducing modern planning practices. A key milestone was Law No. 9482/2006 *On the Legalization, Urbanization, and Integration of Unauthorized Constructions*, which institutionalized a national response to informality (Qbz, 2018a). This was complemented by several key administrative

decisions, including VKM No. 289/2006 on the organization of ALUIZNI, and VKM No. 259/2007 on minimum urban standards for informal areas (QBZ, 2018a).

However, Law No. 9482/2006 perpetuated statist legacies from earlier legislation such as Law No. 8398/1998, continuing the exclusion of former landowners from property restitution (BB, 2007). Instead, the law transferred ownership rights to occupants of informal buildings while promising monetary compensation to the original owners. Yet, limited budgetary resources meant that such compensation was rarely fulfilled (BB, 2007, 2012).

The result was a deepening of constitutional inequality among citizens, undermining both public trust and the legality of the process. As the World Bank noted, quoting a member of Albania's Constitutional Court, "There is a risk that failure to compensate expropriated owners will result in expropriation decisions being declared invalid" (BB, 2012, p. 10).

The trajectory of this law revealed the state's growing reliance on hyper-legislation—frequent and piecemeal legal amendments that increasingly concentrated power at the central level (Kaprata, 2021). Major amendments to Law No. 9482/2006 include Law Nos. 9786/2007, 9895/2008, 10099/2009, 10169/2009, 10219/2010, 141/2013, 50/2014, and 62/2015, among others (QBZ, 2018a). This legislative hyperactivity was mirrored in repeated revisions of VKM No. 289/2006, which underwent changes through several decisions between 2006 and 2016 (QBZ, 2018a).

This profusion of amendments hindered legal clarity and contributed to the bureaucratic inefficiency of the legalization process, while embedding a statist mode of governance into the institutional response to informality (Kaprata, 2021).

In parallel with legalization efforts, the government pursued formal planning reforms. These began with the 2006 *Policy Document for Spatial Planning in Albania* (MPPT, 2006) and culminated in the adoption of Law No. 10119/2009 *On Territorial Planning*, which represented a turning point in Albania's planning culture (QBZ, 2010). Inspired by European best practices, the law introduced principles of good urban governance, including transparency, public participation, and multi-level coordination (Kaprata, 2021).

However, the same pattern of centralization re-emerged. Law No. 10258/2010, which amended the 2009 law just months after its adoption, strengthened the role of the central government in approving local plans and issuing construction permits (QBZ, 2010). It also introduced a hierarchical classification of municipalities, reintroducing outdated spatial governance paradigms that contradicted contemporary theories of polycentric urban systems (Davoudi, 2003, 2008; Meijers, 2005, 2006, 2007).

The implementation of these laws faced significant technical and institutional challenges. Secondary legislation was delayed due to the limited technical capacity of

both public and private actors involved in its drafting (Kaprata, 2021). As head of the working group appointed by the Ministry responsible for planning, the author of this paper directly witnessed these difficulties. Consequently, the entry into force of Law No. 10119/2009 was postponed twice through "Normative Acts" issued by the Council of Ministers (QBZ, 2019).

In summary, the third phase of urbanization (2005–2013) was marked by a shift toward formal construction and an ambitious legal framework for addressing informality and improving planning practices. However, the dominance of a centralized governance model, legislative overproduction, and weak implementation capacity limited the effectiveness of these reforms. The growing institutional complexity and insufficient compensation for expropriated owners revealed a persistent tension between modernization efforts and inherited statist structures.

### **Urbanization and Territorial Governance of the Fourth Phase (2013–2024)**

The fourth phase of urbanization in Albania (2013–2024) continued to reflect the demographic and territorial dynamics of rapid urban transformation. However, the *Population and Housing Census 2024* (INSTAT, 2024) does not disaggregate demographic indicators by urban-rural classification. This omission stems from the administrative-territorial reform of 2014–2015, which dissolved the "Komunë" administrative unit—traditionally associated with rural territories—effectively preventing urban-rural comparisons (QBZ, 2014, pp. 6365- 6391).

Much like the previous phase, the fourth phase was characterized by a shifting ratio between formal and informal development. Nevertheless, as Fuga (2019) argues, this transformation did not result in a qualitative improvement of Albania's urban and territorial condition. The legalization process remained ongoing and politicized, used by all major political parties to garner electoral support, thus prolonging the process without a consistent strategic framework. As Aliaj (2008) presciently observed:

"The growing pressure from below due to political promises was the basic and decisive reason that forced policy-making and decision-making authorities to engage in an unprecedented race of promises for unconditional legalizations, without a clear strategy, which could degenerate into a massive process of speculation" (p. 98).

The central government increasingly emphasized three focal issues: (1) illegal constructions, (2) contested legal constructions, and (3) permits for formal development. National-level campaigns sought to crack down on unauthorized developments and enforce construction regulations (Zëri i Amerikës, 2013; Top Channel, 2013; Vizion Plus, 2015; Report TV, 2017; Dosja.al, 2021).

Paradoxically, despite these initiatives, informal construction surged. By 2022, the government itself acknowledged that the number of illegal buildings had doubled

during its third term in office (Ora TV, 2022). Critics, such as opposition MP Ervin Salianji, accused the government of selective enforcement and corruption, stating:

“The government is powerless, the law does not work the same for everyone! The escalators are raised with Rama’s blessing” (Shqiptarja, 2024).

Corruption within the legalization process became a central concern. In 2024, the Director of the Cadastre, Dallëndyshe Bici, publicly accused her own staff of systemic bribery (RTV Klan, 2023). Citizens also accused Bici of accepting bribes herself (Panorama TV, 2023), exposing deep contradictions within the institutional framework.

Informal buildings reached an estimated 500,000 units by 2024, up from 427,000 in 2015 (A1 Report, 2015; Shqiptarja, 2024). Meanwhile, formal construction accelerated, especially in Tirana and coastal tourism zones. Between 2020 and 2024, more than 11 million square meters of construction permits were issued—1.6 million m<sup>2</sup> in 2020, 2.3 million m<sup>2</sup> in 2021, 2.7 million m<sup>2</sup> in 2022, 2.1 million m<sup>2</sup> in 2023, and 2.5 million m<sup>2</sup> in 2024 (INSTAT, 2025).

A major legal milestone of this phase was Law No. 107/2014 *On Territorial Planning and Development*, which underwent several amendments: Law No. 73/2015; Law No. 28/2017; Law No. 42/2019; Law No. 119/2020; and Law No. 41/2024 (QBZ, 2019). The frequency of amendments introduced a pattern of hyper-legislation, also seen in VKM No. 408/2015 *On Territorial Development Regulation*, which was amended nine times.

This phase also deepened centralization in spatial governance. According to Article 7(1)(a) of Law No. 107/2014, the National Territorial Council (NCT) holds exclusive authority over the approval of all municipal territorial plans (QBZ, 2019), reversing prior decentralization reforms (Kaprata, 2021). Further, the law established the National Agency for Territorial Planning (NATP) under government control, giving it quasi-judicial oversight of planning compliance. This violates Constitutional Court Decision No. 29/2006, which asserts that such authority lies within the judicial system (GjK, 2006).

Construction permit issuance became another centralized domain. Between 2015 and the approval of General Local Plans (PPVs), only the NCT could grant development and construction permits (AKPT, 1993–2017). Although municipalities formally regained this competence after PPV approval, the practical authority remained with the central government, which controls the publication of planning instruments via the National Territorial Register (AZHT, 2018–2024). This violates Decision No. 29/2006 of the Constitutional Court, which emphasizes that urban planning is an exclusive function of local governments (GjK, 2006).

Centralized control was further institutionalized through VKM No. 231/2017, which required municipalities to follow urban conditions set by the NCT, while the NCT itself operated under a separate, preferential regulatory regime (FZ, No. 63, 2017). Although partially repealed by the Administrative Court of Appeal (GjAA, 2019), the government codified this centralization via Law No. 42/2019 (QBZ, 2019), exemplifying an Orwellian dynamic where “all are equal, but some are more equal than others” (Orwell, 2017, p. 113).

One of the government’s flagship programs during this period was the *National Urban Renaissance Program*, aimed at revitalizing the central squares and facades of cities (KM, 2013). While visually impactful, the program further weakened local governance capacity. According to Top Channel, “Over €2 billion were spent by the Albanian government on Urban Renaissance, €600 million of which went only to the facades and squares of ‘dead’ cities” (Top Channel, 2022).

A second major political initiative was the Administrative-Territorial Reform, operationalized through Law No. 115/2014 *On Administrative-Territorial Division* and Law No. 139/2015 *On Local Self-Government* (QBZ, 2018b). The reform reduced the number of municipalities from 65 to 61, preserved the 12 existing districts, and abolished 308 former communes. This consolidation reversed prior gains in decentralization (Fuga, 2019; Kaprata, 2021).

The reform emphasized efficiency over democracy. As Fuga (2019) argued, the state prioritized functional centralization at the expense of representative local governance:

“The reform is actually guided by the idea that between the principle of democracy and the principle of efficiency, the second principle is the main one: as if democracy had to be sacrificed for functional efficiency” (p. 228).

The abolition of commune-level elected bodies and their replacement with government-appointed administrators further eroded democratic accountability. According to Fuga (2019),

“Representatives of the inhabitants of a municipality are irreplaceable for expressing and representing the will of the local electorate before the central government” (p. 231).

Contrary to its intended goals, the reform failed to enhance economic performance. As the Supreme State Audit Office (2018) noted:

“The increase in personnel costs (in 2017 they are twice as high as in 2013) and operational costs is inconsistent with the major objective of the administrative and territorial reform, increasing operational efficiency and reducing administrative costs” (p. 81).

In summary, the fourth phase of urbanization in Albania (2013–2024) was characterized by rapid formal and informal development, widespread politicization of legalization, centralized governance, institutional corruption, and democratic backsliding. Legislative inflation and executive dominance redefined territorial governance, often at odds with both constitutional norms and urban planning best practices.

## **Findings and Conclusions**

The central characteristic of Albania's transition has been the accelerated rate of urbanization. At the outset of the transition, Albania's urbanization level stood between 32% and 36% of the total population. By 2001, it had reached 42%, rising to 44% in 2003 and 53.7%–58.2% in 2011. This rapid increase was primarily driven by two internal migration trends: (i) rural-to-urban migration, and (ii) rural-to-rural migration.

Two critical factors shaped the country's demographic and urban landscape during the systemic transition: first, the artificial spatial distribution of the population under the previous regime, which triggered significant migratory flows and contributed to the surge in urbanization; and second, the extremely limited housing stock per capita. The privatization of state-owned housing enabled broader access to homeownership and incentivized construction activity. Other major contributors to urban growth included remittances, the emergence of free enterprise, and corruption.

Over the 33-year period from 1991 to 2024, Albania's urbanization process evolved through four distinct phases. Each phase reflected shifts in the relationship between (i) societal interaction with space and territory, and (ii) the governance structure's role in regulating urban development.

**Phase I (1992–1997)** was marked by the dominance of informal urban development. Urbanization occurred rapidly and spontaneously, particularly in the central part of the country, with minimal government intervention. Private initiative and entrepreneurial construction efforts flourished largely without formal regulation.

During this phase, informal constructions posed a significant governance challenge, which was addressed with a heavily statist approach, characterized by: (i) arbitrary or selective interventions, (ii) the use of police force to demolish informal buildings, (iii) the adoption of hyper-legislation and centralized decision-making structures, and (iv) the exclusion of legal landowners from restitution rights for land occupied by informal development.

A key legislative milestone was Law No. 7693/1993 "On Urban Planning," which incorporated principles of private land ownership and opened planning and construction markets to private actors. However, frequent amendments rendered the law unstable and contributed to its classification as part of a hyper-legislative

environment. This phase also saw Albania's first post-communist administrative-territorial reform (1992), introducing elected local councils and mayors across districts, municipalities, and communes.

**Phase II (1997–2005)** mirrored the first phase in the continued expansion of informal construction, largely due to a persistent lack of effective state intervention. This period cemented the public perception that informal building was a natural outcome of transition, normalizing it as the dominant form of urban development.

Despite this, early liberal reforms paved the way for formal, state-sanctioned construction activity. However, the government's response remained uneven. While private sector development advanced rapidly, state planning mechanisms did not match this momentum.

Legislative attempts to regulate urban planning included Law No. 8405/1998 "On Urban Planning" and Council of Ministers Decision No. 722/1998 on urban regulations. However, these efforts failed to shift planning culture, and the legal framework itself contributed to fragmented and uncoordinated development.

This phase was also marked by notable administrative reforms, particularly Law No. 8652/2000 "On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government" and Law No. 8653/2000 "On the Administrative-Territorial Division of Local Government Units." These reforms deepened decentralization, though their intended impacts diminished rapidly.

Regarding informal development, Laws No. 9209/2004 and No. 9304/2004 aimed at regulating and legalizing informal buildings. However, changes in government led to their replacement before implementation.

**Phase III (2005–2013)** saw a partial reversal of informality trends, with formal construction overtaking informal development for the first time. While internal migration and emigration persisted, informal building rates stabilized.

Key developments included the adoption of the *Policy Document for Spatial Planning in Albania* and Law No. 10119/2009 "On Territorial Planning," which introduced modern principles of good governance in urban planning. However, subsequent amendments reverted the law to a statist model, marked by hyper-legislation and centralized political control.

Government efforts to manage informality led to a robust legislative and institutional framework: Law No. 9482/2006 "On the Legalization, Urbanization, and Integration of Unauthorized Constructions"; Council of Ministers Decision No. 289/2006 on the establishment of ALUIZNI; and Council of Ministers Decision No. 259/2007 on minimum urban standards.

These laws entrenched statist practices, notably by excluding land restitution to former owners, which raised serious constitutional and equity concerns. The proliferation of legal amendments reinforced centralized governance and eroded predictability.

**Phase IV (2013–2024)** introduced significant formal development, particularly in Tirana and coastal areas, but simultaneously witnessed a resurgence in informality. The legalization process stagnated, while informal constructions doubled, reaching over 500,000 units by 2024. Despite substantial public expenditure, these interventions yielded limited progress.

A key legislative initiative was Law No. 107/2014 "On Territorial Planning and Development," which further entrenched hyper-legislation and centralized decision-making. The law granted quasi-judicial authority to the National Agency for Territorial Planning (NATP), undermining democratic governance and the role of elected officials.

This statist approach conflicted with Constitutional Court Decision No. 29 (2006), which affirms the exclusive competence of local governments in granting development and construction permits. Nevertheless, through legal instruments like VKM No. 231/2017 and its later formalization in Law No. 42/2019, the central government consolidated control over the construction permitting process, weakening local autonomy.

An emblematic project of this phase was the *National Program for Urban Renaissance*, which aimed to revitalize public squares and building facades but was criticized for its aesthetic focus, high financial cost (over €2 billion), and centralization of authority.

Finally, the 2014–2015 Administrative-Territorial Reform, enacted through Laws No. 115/2014 and No. 139/2015, reversed earlier decentralization by reducing the number of municipalities and abolishing the commune level. This reform weakened democratic representation by replacing elected officials in smaller units with government-appointed administrators.

Despite the reform's aim of increasing operational efficiency, the economic performance of municipalities declined. According to the Supreme State Audit Office (2018), personnel and operating costs in 2017 were double those of 2013, contrary to the reform's objectives.

## **Recommendations**

Within the scope of this conference paper, it is recommended that more comprehensive research and studies be undertaken in the following areas:

The relationship between urbanization processes and government roles throughout the transition period.

The progress of transition across different governance phases concerning territorial development.

Comparative analyses of various governments in relation to the principles of liberal democracy that ought to guide the transition.

The findings of such research would provide valuable insights for identifying the most effective pathways for both society and government to follow in the fourth decade of post-socialism and beyond.

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## **Migratory Movements in Tirana During the Year 2020**

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### **Abstract**

This paper addresses urban development phenomena in Tirana, focusing on migratory movements during 2020 under the pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the number of residents who changed their residence during this year, the reasons for this decision, and official data on the number of houses sold during this period. This study used qualitative methods, including interviews and informal conversations. Data processing involved transcribing conversations and interviews, categorizing them by themes, and utilizing participants' quotes from the study. Qualitative data analysis reveals that most interviewees identified better educational opportunities for their children and improved living conditions as the primary reasons for leaving their place of origin and moving to Tirana during the pandemic. Additionally, the data show a decline in house sales in Tirana during the same period. This research emphasizes a small group of individuals expressing a sense of returning to their previous residences during the pandemic. This longing was motivated by the sense of security their hometowns provided. This is attributed to the low population density in their cities or villages of origin and the fact that families were united to cope with challenging situations.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, migratory movements, place of origin, adaptation, return to the place of origin, etc.

### **1- Introduction**

Given that Tirana is the capital of the country it has to and does indeed fulfill the function of a political and administrative center, as well as welcoming and accommodating international actors in business, culture, sports, diplomacy, science, and other spheres of life, as well as representatives of international institutions. This role has inevitably led to the development of urban and human capital that enables and facilitates professional and social interaction between these groups of individuals. The quality of life and standards of living, level of services, communication infrastructure, and other social amenities such as education, service facilities, shopping streets, recreational facilities, and entertainment mean that this is a fairly clearly defined social space in the urban context of Tirana with its own

territorial and social boundaries. Everyone can tell where the restaurants are, the food and industrial markets, the fruit and vegetable markets, and where the population of different kinds lives in the urban area of the capital (Mulita, R., 2013: 153-154).

Tirana is the country's central city and for the people from other cities and villages of the Republic of Albania, it is the "promised land". The migration process has increased after 1990 and is still ongoing in the present day. Families and individuals are still leaving their homes and settling in Tirana daily. The highest concentration of newcomers was observed in the most developed cities of Albania. In 2020, Tirana was the Albanian capital with the highest net internal migration with 5,226 people arriving than leaving the city. On the other hand, Dibra was the district with the lowest migration rate because 990 people left rather than moved in. (Tirana had the highest net internal migration rate in 2020 with 5,226 people arriving than departing while Dibra had the lowest rate with 990 people leaving than coming in. ([http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9432/vjetari-statistikor-2021\\_final-29122021.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9432/vjetari-statistikor-2021_final-29122021.pdf), p. 50, cited on 15.04.2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted urban development trends, especially migration patterns. According to data from the Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania, approximately 7,170 people migrated in 2020, a notable decline compared to 2019, when 20,753 individuals migrated. (<http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/migracioni-dhe-integrimi-i-migrant%C3%ABve/#tab2>, cited on 11.04.2022).

## 2- Methodological Aspects

This paper is based on an analysis of both primary and secondary data. It includes a review of the literature and studies related to COVID-19 and urban development. Furthermore, it examines statistical yearbooks and reports published by the Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania. These documents provide insights into migration patterns, housing sale prices, and building permits issued during the pandemic years.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews and open discussions, were utilized to conduct this study and present its findings. These methods aim to scientifically understand the reality, phenomena, or problems that are being investigated.

The interview is a specific type of verbal communication designed to facilitate data collection between the researcher and participants regarding the formulated research questions. This study will primarily focus on unstructured or open-ended interviews, as the aim is to explore the reasons why the interviewees left their place of origin to settle in Tirana.

### 3- Literature Review

Urban sociology focuses on the city and its social dimensions. These dimensions include aspects such as population, social movements within urban areas, organizations, and social connections. Internal migration is a significant phenomenon that has greatly impacted urban life. Large cities, which tend to offer more employment opportunities, attract migrants, resulting in substantial changes and transformations in urban environments. Conversely, some cities face depopulation as a result of migrants leaving.

Urbanization is the movement of the population into towns and cities, away from rural farmland, which results when cities grow in population, perhaps partly through natural increase but mainly through migration from rural areas by people in search of the economic opportunities associated with urban life (Giddens, A., 2021:770).

Internal migration refers to the ongoing movement of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries as they relocate to new residential areas and communities. Sociological research on migration is diverse and often intersects with broader topics, such as kinship studies, social networks, and economic development. In the analysis of migration, a common distinction is made between push and pull factors (Marshall, G., 2009: 247).

According to a study published by the Bank of Albania on the real estate market for the first half of 2020, market indicators suggest that more agents believe the situation has worsened than those who think it has improved. The total number of homes sold by the 165 entities included in the study was 825, which is approximately 176 fewer than in the previous six months. Around 35% of the homes sold during this period were purchased by non-residents.

The study also forecasts a decline in the number of properties sold in the next six months, while demand for rental housing and commercial properties is expected to increase. Additionally, rental prices for properties in the capital region, particularly in the city center, are anticipated to rise. ([https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/19102020\\_Per\\_publikim\\_Tregu\\_i\\_pasurive\\_te\\_palujatshme\\_6MI\\_2020\\_17708.pdf](https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/19102020_Per_publikim_Tregu_i_pasurive_te_palujatshme_6MI_2020_17708.pdf), cited on 14.04.2022).

#### 4. Discussion of Findings and Analysis

On March 8, 2020, the Republic of Albania confirmed its first two cases of COVID-19. In the following days, the number of cases rose, prompting the government to implement measures similar to those adopted by many countries around the world. On March 13, 2020, the closure of major cities, including Tirana, the capital, was announced. It was decided that school and university education would continue through online platforms. Movement was restricted to specific time slots for the purchase of essential food items.

The nearly two-month lockdown resulted in significant changes to lifestyle, social interactions, and urban developments in cities around the world. The urban landscape of the capital city was also impacted by the pandemic, leading to a decrease in the number of people choosing to settle in Tirana during and after 2020. Due to its high population density, the capital faced an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission. Additionally, the pandemic further highlighted issues related to the weakening sense of community in some cities, as messages like "stay at home" encouraged more self-centered behaviors. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7499053/>, cited on 14.04.2022).

M.N., a woman in her mid-40s, moved to Tirana in September 2020. During an interview, she shared, *"We decided as a family to move to Tirana to be closer to our daughter, who was starting university. Even though her classes were online, we wanted her to be near the school and not miss out on her education. It was a significant challenge for all of us, but we couldn't leave her alone in such a difficult situation."*

Migration potential is higher among men than women in Albania, which is attributed to the country's traditional society where men typically lead the migration process. Women often follow later through family reunification or marriage (Gëdeshi, I., King, R., 2018:41).

Sociologist Zyhdi Dervishi, in his book *"Vështrime të kryqëzuara në det"*, states: "Most young Albanians, especially those who emigrate, are not pessimistic. Although they currently experience lower economic well-being and have fewer opportunities for advancement compared to their peers in Eastern and Western European countries, the majority of young Albanians remain optimistic. Furthermore, if young people - and Albanians in general - were truly pessimistic and unwilling to make sacrifices for a better life, they would not undertake the 'hellish' journey to reach the 'shores of hope'. Instead, they would resign themselves to their fate in Albania" (Dervishi, Z., 2009:21).

Despite the global pandemic in 2020, young Albanians continued to relocate, driven by optimism and the hope for a better life in the capital city of Albania.

In 2020, a total of 961 building permits were approved for new constructions. In the fourth quarter of 2020, 306 building permits were granted for new developments, which is an increase from 202 permits approved in the fourth quarter of 2019. This represents a 51.5% growth year-over-year. (<http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime-njoftime-p%C3%ABr-media/>, Building Permits Q4 2020, cited on 11.04.2022).

S.F., a woman in her mid-40s living in Administrative Unit No. 8, shared her observations in an interview: *"In my neighborhood, there has been a significant increase in new construction projects since the second half of 2020. A group of private houses were demolished, and high-rise buildings are currently being built in their place."*

*In the former Dinamo Factory area, 10 and 12-story apartment complexes are nearing completion. What stood out to me is that construction work was only suspended in March 2020. After that, I consistently saw workers arriving in groups every day and working closely together, despite gatherings being officially prohibited."*

After the pandemic, an increase in prices has been observed across all sectors, including the construction industry. According to data from the Institute of Statistics in Albania, the Construction Cost Index for residential buildings - a metric that tracks the price trends of construction materials, labor costs, and other capital expenditures - showed a 0.1% increase in the fourth quarter of 2020. These costs are categorized into six main areas according to EUROSTAT's classification for the Construction Cost Index: material costs, labor costs, machinery expenses, transportation costs, energy expenses, and other expenditures. (<http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/njoftime-p%C3%ABr-media/>, Construction Cost Index for Residential Buildings, Q4-2020, cited on 11.04.2022).

In a casual conversation, R.T., a man in his mid-50s who works for a private construction company, said, *"After the pandemic, we noticed a rise in the cost of raw materials needed for construction, which inevitably led to an increase in the prices of apartments and houses."*

During the pandemic, some individuals chose to return to their hometowns for various reasons, including a desire to be close to family during difficult times and to minimize contact with unfamiliar people. J.L., a woman in her 40s, shared her experience: *"I moved back to my hometown of Delvinë and stayed there until September 2020. I continued working online for a private company. This was to avoid contact with strangers in Tirana and to be close to my parents and other family members so that if we were infected, we could support each other."*

H.Z., a man in his mid-60s, emphasized during an interview, *"I returned to my home in Elbasan to reduce my risk of infection, as Tirana had the highest number of cases from the very beginning of the pandemic. I'm grateful I didn't sell my house in Elbasan; it proved to be invaluable during these challenging times."*

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. The nearly two-month isolation period resulted in significant changes to lifestyles, social interactions, and developments across cities and countries worldwide. The pandemic also impacted urban development in the capital, leading to a decline in the number of people moving to Tirana during and after 2020. After the pandemic, a noticeable increase in prices has been seen across all sectors, including construction. During the pandemic, many people chose to return to their hometowns for various reasons. Some sought to stay with family to navigate challenging situations together, while others aimed to minimize contact with unfamiliar

individuals. In light of the changes brought about by the pandemic, healthcare institutions, local authorities, and the community need to collaborate in restoring a normal urban life. This collaboration is a key recommendation of this study.

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## **Conservative Treatment Approaches for Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis in Early Teenagers (13–15 Years): A Comprehensive Literature Review**

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### **Abstract**

Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis (AIS) is a complex, three-dimensional spinal deformity that typically emerges during puberty and can have lasting impacts on posture, muscular balance, and quality of life. Early diagnosis and intervention are critical to preventing curve progression and minimizing functional impairment. This literature review evaluates conservative treatment strategies for AIS in adolescents aged 13–15, with a particular emphasis on the Schroth Method, a form of Physiotherapeutic Scoliosis-Specific Exercises (PSSE). The aim is to assess the efficacy of these interventions in improving postural alignment, trunk stability, and functional outcomes. A comprehensive search of peer-reviewed journals was conducted using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and SportDiscus, focusing on studies published between 2014 and 2024. Selected studies addressed conservative treatment modalities for AIS, including postural training, muscle rebalancing, and respiratory techniques. Evidence strongly supports the use of the Schroth Method as an effective non-invasive intervention. The method has been shown to reduce Cobb angles, improve postural control, and enhance muscle symmetry. It addresses core muscular imbalances and promotes spinal stabilization through customized exercises and rotational breathing. Early and sustained intervention was consistently associated with better functional and psychosocial outcomes. Conservative rehabilitation strategies—particularly Schroth-based PSSE—offer significant benefits in managing AIS among early teenagers. These approaches can delay or prevent surgical intervention and should be considered as frontline treatments in clinical practice.

**Keywords:** Idiopathic Scoliosis, Schroth Method, Postural Control, Muscle Imbalance, Conservative Treatment, Cobb Angle, Adolescent Rehabilitation, Physiotherapeutic Scoliosis-Specific Exercises, Trunk Stability, Quality of Life.

## **Competition for Male Versa Female in August Strindberg's *The Stronger* and Ali Abdulnibi Al\_Zadi *Summer Rain***

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to analysis and discusses two different plays for two different playwrights who belong to different ages, countries, cultures and nationalities. The Swedish August Strindberg's *The Stronger* and the Iraqi playwright Ali AbdulnibiAl\_Zadi's *Summer Rain*. The study will depend on Frommian Humanistic Psychoanalysis. The two main characters suffer from the same dilemma (Mrs.X in *The Stronger* and Flana in *Summer Rain*). The paper will explain the situations and actions of both women according to the theory of Erich Fromm. It will examine the two characters competing to fulfill their human needs. The characters in *The Stronger* and *Summer Rain* are nameless. They struggle to maintain love, self-awareness and identity. The research will discuss the basic anxiety where the protagonists have experienced throughout the two plays. Otherwise, the study implies the sense of conflict, collision, gender role and women's self-realization.

**Keywords:** Fromm Humanistic Psychology, basic anxiety, *The Stronger*, *Summer Rain*.