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Matura's rocky road to success

As part of the educational reform, Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science is trying to implement Matura, a national secondary school matriculation examination. According to the Macedonian Bureau for Development of Education, the objectives of Matura are to control and to improve the quality and uniformity of secondary education, to create a link between secondary and tertiary education, and to create positive washback on instruction. However, Matura has provoked student protests and teacher resistance. Students are worried about the outcomes (e.g., graduation and university enrolment) if they fail the exam, and teachers fear losing their jobs if their students' performances are not satisfactory.

This paper will focus on the EFL exam, which is a part of Matura examination. The discussion revolves around the synergies and tensions between (1) the development and the implementation of the EFL exam; (2) the exam and the context in which it is administered and used; (3) the proposed and the perceived exam objectives by different stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and students); and (4) exam's intended and emerging influence on instruction. Data were gathered through electronic teacher and student surveys distributed across the country, classroom observations, interviews with administrators, and review of analyses and reports regarding EFL exam's reliability and validity. Results suggest that Macedonian Matura is in synergy with similar examinations in Europe; however, ineffective communication between the stakeholders at every stage of the testing process has resulted in escalating tensions. This presentation is relevant for those involved in the process of implementing standardized national examinations.