

# Integrity and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia

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УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ НА ЈУГОИСТОЧНА ЕВРОПА  
SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences

Third cycle

Title:

" Integrity and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia"

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Tetovo, 2021

I would like to thank my mentors for their guidance, patience and wisdom during my studies and while writing this thesis.

I would like to thank my family, especially Nita, Stina and Ajk for being endless source of inspiration.

## PROOFREADER'S STATEMENT

I, Kujtim Ramadani, translator/interpreter/proofreader from English into Albanian and Macedonian and vice versa, certify that the PhD thesis "Integrity and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia" has been proofread by me and all shortcomings have been eliminated. The paper in question meets all the language standards of a PhD thesis.

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**Declaration of Authorship**

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled "Integrity and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia" has been composed by me and is based on my own work, unless stated otherwise. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in this thesis. All external references, extracts, graphs, figures have been quoted, and all sources of other external information, have been specifically acknowledged.

Date:

29.11.2021

Signature:



AI - Amnesty international  
 ALLEA - All European Academies  
 BIRN - Balkan Investigative Reporting Network  
 BTI - Bertelsmann Transformation Index  
 CEO - Chief executive officer  
 CESCR - The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
 CNN - Cable News Network  
 CPI - Corruption Perception Index  
 CRC- Central Research Commission  
 ENAI - European Network for Academic Integrity  
 ES - Enterprise Survey  
 ETINED - Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education  
 EU - European Union  
 EU - European Union  
 FBR - Freedom Barometer Report  
 GCI - Global Competitiveness Index  
 GCR - Global Corruption Report  
 GLB - Global Corruption Barometer  
 GRECO - Group of States against Corruption  
 HDI - Human Development Index  
 H.E. - Higher education  
 H.E.I. - Higher education Institutions  
 IMF - International Monetary Fund  
 International Center for Academic Integrity ICAI  
 LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender  
 MDG - Millennium Development Goals  
 - Members of Parliament  
 OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development  
 PISA - Program for International Student Assessment  
 QA - Quality Assurance  
 SCOOP - The Center for Investigative Journalism  
 SDG - Sustainable Development Goals  
 SEE University – South East European University  
 SELDI - Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity  
 SPCP - State Commission for Prevention of Corruption  
 TI - Transparency International  
 UA- Universities Australia  
 UK – United Kingdom  
 UNCAC - The United Nations Convention against Corruption  
 UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
 UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
 UN-United Nations  
 US- United States  
 VMRO-DPMNE - Political Party  
 WEF - World Economic Forum  
 WJP - The World Justice Project  
 СОHK - Синдикатот за образование, наука и култура (Education, Science and Culture Union)

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## 1: Introduction

The purpose of writing this dissertation is to make a contribution towards educational literature on the effects of corruption which encompass the lack of academic integrity on quality of education and educational services in higher education.

By the term “corruption in higher education” it is also referred to the set of illegal practices which can be found within the higher education system. These illegal practices in education institutions require a specific legal definition and characterization (laws, articles, paragraphs) of what constitutes these practices and how are they punishable by law. This is not to say that there is a lack of what constitutes corrupt practices in general, however a field specific definition of corruption facilitates the prosecution of such cases in courts. This is not to say that the current laws do not fully encompass the illegal activities in educational institutions however, a clear cut definition of politicization of higher education institution is inexistent.

More specifically, this thesis uses qualitative and quantitative data to analyze the effect of corruption, transparency and integrity related issues on higher education institutions. For this purpose the thesis addresses the following questions: 1) what is the role of academic dishonesty and corruption in education? 2) Which are the characteristics of academic dishonesty and in which form does it appear in higher education institutions in North Macedonia? 3) Which factors contribute to the development of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education institutions across the state? 4) Which are the main educational implications of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia? 5) Which are the main legal implications of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia?

The analysis demonstrates that: 1) academic dishonesty and corruption affect the educational system in North Macedonia. However, this influence is dependent on the scale and scope of corruption in the country as the variables exhibit different levels of influence on the educational outcomes; 2) the existence of academic dishonesty which could be perceived as corruption potentially leads to further exacerbation of other patterns and degrees of corruption in the future generations. These corruption methods in turn reveal a systematic abuse of position for personal benefit; 3) In the fight against corruption, determining the factors that contribute to the development of the same is the key to solving the problem. Understanding the internal and external factors to such contribution curbs the level to which corruption spreads across the educational institutions on national level; 4) the main educational implications of corruption in educational institutions lower the educational attainment of students and staff therefore negatively affect the equilibrium of qualitative, fair and just educational institutions. By educational attainment here it is referred to a complex set of skills, knowledge, and

experiences that shape the level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the educational institution; 5) the lack of legal implications for the abuse of a position in higher education institutions has also been noted as problematic. Lacks of measures against wrongdoers are counter-productive and harmful because it demonstrates lack of repercussions and institutional good will to tackle the issue in legal bases. This can lead to an increase of perception of corruption and encourage corruption among the population as the consequences of engaging in such activity are not visible.

The other image that the inability to act against corruption portrays is that corruption is stimulated as the people who engage in such illegal activities face minimal or no repercussions at all. This study shows that; 1) the inability to act institutionally against forms of corruption exacerbates the quality of educational services; 2) corruption impedes the educational process by limiting equal access to educational services and resources thus disrupting the social cohesion by making it selective and discriminating; This type of governance favors only the selected and protected individuals who have judicial, political and economic power to withstand and overcome such cases by bribing their way through the system. This study also tries to exemplify the type of corruption that takes place in the higher education system in North Macedonia.

A qualitative and quantitative method of verification of hypotheses is applied in order to determine the level of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education institutions in North Macedonia. This means that this research will incorporate primary and secondary sources to prove the correlation exists between the analyzed phenomena.

The primary sources will be collected by:

- Different polls with students, teachers about the phenomena of academic dishonesty and corruption in education and to what extent they consider these phenomena take place in the institutions they represent.
- Interviews with policy makers, educators and the main actors who are responsible for the administrative branch of the institution they represent.

The secondary sources will be collected by:

- Reports, documents, scientific papers, original papers, credible internet sources which deal with auditing higher education institutions as well as other institutions in the country.

Institutional transparency also plays an important infighting against corruption and academic dishonesty. A permission to inspect findings from the auditor's office of the respective institutions enables to determine the level of institutional openness and the degree to which institutions obey the law on Free Access to Public Information. Obeying this law is of immense importance in the context of the Macedonian educational system as it provides access to

information which then can be used and interpreted in the attempt to measure the degree to which corruption and academic dishonesty takes place at institutional level. That is why Transparency International highlights Institutional transparency as a key factor to fight corruption.

Today's democratic societies are built around four pillars, such as; legislative, executive, judiciary and media. These pillars interact with each other through a complex set of rules, regulations, norms that define the nature of the society. This type of exchange and communication of institutions represented by different people, government officials, representatives, CEOs and interest groups overlap or contradict their ways to realizing what is best for them, thus paving the way for corruption to appear. The overall consensus among researchers, governmental and nongovernmental organizations who study corruption as phenomena cite the definition that corruption encompasses any use of public funds or trust for personal gain. (Heyneman, 2004), (Bhargava, 2005). A more detailed definition of corruption was developed in 2001 by Petrus C. van Duyne (2001) who writes :

“Corruption is an improbity or decay in the decision-making process in which a decision-maker (in a private corporation or in a public service) consents or demands to deviate from the criterion, which should rule his decision making, in exchange for a reward, the promise or expectation of it.” (p. 3).

Limiting the analysis of corruption only as an economic phenomenon downsizes and limits the existent harmful effect it has on the society. As stated by Rose-Ackerman in Johnes handbook on the economics of corruption (Johnes & Johnes, 2004), corruption is also a legal category because all states have laws against bribery and fraud in the public sector and most regulate campaign contributions, campaign spending and conflicts of interest.

Okumu specifies which government officials are prone to such deviant behavior, by stating that: “corruption typically involves the abuse of office by either the executive or legislature or the bureaucrat in a way that is not consistent with the generally acceptable rules and regulations to enhance self-interest” (Okumu, 2014)

Jain classifies corruption into three different categories;

- 1) grand,
- 2) bureaucratic/petty and
- 3) legislative. (Jain, 2001).

According to this classification, Jaine characterizes grand corruption as the type of corruption that may have the most serious consequences on society due to the fact that is most difficult to identify except in cases where money is exchanged. Jaine implies that this type of

corruption foresees a misuse of public trust and funding by the executives in order to influence a decision which in turn will be in the interest of both, the initiator and the beneficiary of the service.

Petty corruption or bureaucratic corruption as suggested by (Jain, 2001) is the most common form of corruption which involves three conflicting interests; that of a public good, for private purposes which ultimately leads to personal gain. In a case of petty corruption, a common citizen with a corrupt mindset who in order to achieve a certain goal or speed up a procedure would bribe a public official in order to privately benefit him and the corrupt official. The private interest of the clerk or politician is in direct conflict with the public interest as bribery becomes a method of stimulation and a delivery method for private or personal gains. But bribery is not always seen as the only method of petty corruption. Providing exclusive rights and services to individuals who are not commonly available to all citizens is another form of petty corruption. Such examples are especially visible and delivered through the judiciary system in which case bribery is used to lower the cost of judicial penalties.

'Legislative corruption' as the last category of corruption refers to the "manner and the extent to which the voting behavior of legislators can be influenced. Legislators can be bribed by interest groups to enact legislation that can change the economic rents associated with assets." (Jain, 2001) As stated by Rose-Ackerman and mentioned in Jain 'vote-buying' is the most common method used by legislators in order to be re-elected. This also includes officials in the executive branches in their efforts to enact certain legislation.

It is worthwhile to mention that there are many variations to the definition of corruption. Defining corruption with such broad terms might be challenging for the applicability of corrupt behaviors across fields. This is due to the fact that the corrupt officials demonstrate a variety of ways of engagement in complex and ever evolving corrupt practices that might vary in form, size and method in other sectors. However, the common denominator of all these practices remains within the term *for private gain*.

The term *state capture* is also applicable when describing corrupt practices in one country. (Greycar, 2015) The process involves using political power to bring legislation and bend laws which will ensure sustainability for kleptocrats to dominate the business environment in one country. Powerful corrupt politicians through this type of practices misuse political trust to acquire public assets by protecting their own interest to increase their wealth. Although this is characteristic for countries defined as countries in transition, transitioning from communism to capitalism the term is not exclusive only for these countries. State capture is also used to describe countries which although independent, sovereign, and democratic with free and transparent election process can be captured by a network of politicians which was the case with The Republic of North Macedonia. The 2016 European Commission Report which



evaluates the country's success in the EU accession raised concerns about the state capture status of the country. (European Commission, 2016) The tendency here however is to focus on defining corruption in education, especially higher education in which the same definition applies. (Heyneman, 2004) (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018)

### Scope of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to characterize the academic dishonesty and corruption in Macedonian higher education system. In addition, this thesis aims to analyze the factors which contribute to the development of these phenomena in the context of higher education academic and non-academic circles. Also, this study aims to scrutinize the implications of academic dishonesty and corruption in the education sector in North Macedonia.

A previous study based on media reports on corruption cases in Macedonian higher education conducted by (Hajrullai, 2015) detects various patterns of corrupt practices taking place in higher education institutions across the country. The analysis shows that 10 different practices have been identified as part of the corruption pattern scheme detecting phenomena such as: Bribery, extortion, misappropriation, abuse of position, fraud, patronage, nepotism, shirking and politicization. With the exception of patronage and politicization, similar patterns have been detected by (Pajaziti, Gerguri, 2012). Furthermore, *Ethical Problems in Higher Education* (Ali, n.d.) highlights criteria bypass, pay offs and traffic of influence as crucial ethical problems in higher education in North Macedonia.

However, this characterization does not fully encompass how these phenomena are connected with pedagogical or educational solutions at university level. By pedagogical or educational solution it is mainly referred to the lack of training, instruction, coursework, and content, related to engaging in academic work with integrity at university and pre-university education.

Through qualitative and quantitative data this study attempts to prove the existence of corruption and academic dishonesty related activities in higher education institutions by first testing the openness and transparency in revealing information regarding corruption cases in respective institution, and then, by capturing the extent of corruption cases estimating the frequency as well as the nature of the same found in auditors reports or featured in any other report in one year. This study also aims to collect data at public and private HEI institutions to determine the level to which staff and students are engaged in corruption and academic integrity related activities. A questionnaire was used to indicate the level of research integrity related academic preparations by the staff and students through content, courses, instructions

and preparations offered by the institutions to avoid cheating, plagiarism and other anti-corruption and integrity related activities. This study aims to demonstrate that lack of transparency, lack of anti-corruption efforts and lack of education and preparation on issues such as research integrity and impunity ultimately results with higher level of academic dishonesty and corruption related activities.

Apart from indices or composite indicators which dominate the field, global, cross-country measurement of corruption and anti-corruption efforts, policies and practices, a more detailed and specific measure is needed to be applied in the case of analyzing a specific field such as education. In that case, creating datasets with various methods enables more trustworthy information for the analyzed phenomenon resulting in a more accurate reflection of corruption. Measuring corruption requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. (Feigenblatt et al., 2015) This study used holistic approach such as detection-prevention-reaction framework, as well as implemented a hybrid approach in order to reveal the extent of institutional corruption and the anti-corruption practices applied or not applied in the efforts to combat corruption in higher education. Apart from composite cross-country indicators, the narrower methods which were used in this study are: 1) Experiential data, which comprises specific citizen experiences in order to measure the quality-of-service delivery, such as in health, education, law enforcement, and transport. For the purpose of this questionnaire, two sets of questionnaires were disseminated among students and staff and the results were cross-compared. 2) Administrative data or otherwise known as “hard data” in essence comprises a set of documents, policies and audit reports which potentially highlight the weaknesses or inadequacies in the overall functioning of the system. For the purpose of this study, internal and external reports of potential cases which involve embezzlement, fraud, misappropriation were reported adequately.

This study aims to cross compare experiential data on corruption cases in the analyzed and potentially highlight the gap between the perceptions of corruption in higher education as seen by the students and staff through the questionnaires versus the administrative data from internal and external audits to determine the extent of corruption.

The study covers three universities with approximately 10.000 students and 500 teaching and administrative staff. For the experiential data portion of the study, the student body which included a total number of 126 student responses is on average 18-22 years old and involves two genders. The staff members questioned, which included a total number of 25 individuals are of various ages and include individuals from mid-thirties to mid-sixties and belong to both sexes. For the auditors' reports, internal audit reports for the past 10 academic years were requested by the analyzed institutions via emails, (See Appendix). Other relevant external reports such as State Commission for Prevention of Corruption from 2018-2019 and

relevant documents such as the Public Prosecution Office and other media reports which provided details on the type of the misconduct that was discovered.

This study in no way attempts to construct a massive, universal and cross country method to analyzing, measuring and reporting corruption in higher education institutions around the world. Corruption is deeply rooted in the cultural and social norms of each society and as such has different dynamics and progress.

This analysis shows that wherever the importance of academic integrity protocols or code of conduct for staff and students are violated, corruption will flourish more likely. In addition, this study indicates that wherever there is lack of preventive measures to fight corruption, the more difficult it is to control or decrease it. This is not only be reflected in the perception index but also in the actual engagement in corrupt activities by the individuals, in this way contributing to the increase of the level of corruption and damaging the credibility as well as the quality of educational services of the educational institutions in one county.

Therefore, the recommendations section intends to provide the development of a wide-ranging strategy to fight corruption with a firm stance against corruption in higher education. This includes fighting corruption not only through academic research such as papers and conferences but also introducing a holistic approach with pedagogical solutions as well as awareness-raising activities on and off campuses around the country for the importance of fighting corruption on all levels.

On the legal aspect, enforcement of legal provisions and against corruption in higher education are recommended by introducing an overarching definition to how corruption in education is defined and which corruption activities in higher education are considered punishable by law preferably supported with practical examples. Moreover, by introducing full transparency by the ministries, inspectorates and auditor's reports on examples of corruption cases in H.E. institution as well as how many have been followed by lawsuit and how many have been solved.

## 2: Corruption

### 2.1 Historical Overview of corruption

The word corruption has an old Latin base *corruptio, corrumpere*, i.e., to distort, pervert (Pajaziti, A. Gërguri, Sh. n.d.) From a historical and socio-linguistic perspective, the word corruption is a well-documented phenomenon. The Bible condemns corruption as it is referred to as a great sin: "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent."

However, even earlier records have been discovered prior to the record in the Bible. The archeologists have been able to document the earliest documented records on how and who accepts bribes. The record dates back from the thirteen century BC in the ancient Assyrian civilization. During the ancient Rome, corruption was defined as giving, receiving or claiming benefits in order to influence an official in connection with his work. (Šumah & Štefan, 2016). Although condemned by the Bible and the Roman law, corruption did not help alleviate corruption; on the contrary, it continued to flourish. The unequal distribution of taxes and lack of money in the Treasury of the Roman Empire was partly due to the level of corruption. France during feudalism represents the epitome of helplessness in the fight against corruption. Although having established a special court in 1716 to deal with the ever-increasing cases connected to bribery, extortion and embezzlement, the court was so overwhelmed by the cases that one year later the court was abolished and general amnesty was introduced.

Historically, corruption was also popular among many writers and intellectuals. Namely Italians, such as Machiavelli and Dante Alighieri condemned corruption and corrupt individuals. In 1472, Dante Alighieri in his epic poem reserved a special place for the corrupt people- the lowest circles of Inferno. Machiavelli similarly was not fond of republics, he considered them more corrupt than other regimes, and according to him, corruption leads to moral degradation, bad education and bad faith. (Šumah & Štefan, 2016) Corruption is represented in chain events in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Claudius, the well-known character, led by his greed uses manipulation and blind loyalty to spread corruption across Denmark, resulting in countless deaths as well as revenge and madness.

Today however, corruption and researchers are more objective and less melodramatic as in the writers in literary works. In today's fast, interconnected and highly globalized world, exchange takes place at a speed that is hard to follow. A glimpse of that exchange can be seen at [www.worldometers.info/](http://www.worldometers.info/) where you can find the details of this exchange in numbers in real

time. However, these are the official numbers, with no hidden or covered background. It is inevitable to ask the question, would this web site ever be able to provide statistical data of the cost of corruption worldwide. Hardly so. If ever attempted, it could be at a pace that would be hard to follow in numbers as the same would be changing before anyone is able to notice.

## 2.2 Corruption in numbers

Similarly, Heller, (2009); Galtung, (2006) questions the accuracy of how corruption can be measured. They note the major deficiencies of the CPI to today's practices of measuring corruption internationally and across countries due to the fact that trends, political will and leadership are not measured and the index fails to capture genuine reforms therefore resulting only with partial presentation of the overall cost of corruption.

The cost of corruption is however measurable. According to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 the international anti-corruption day declared that the annual cost of corruption is 3 trillion, "One trillion dollars are paid in bribes annually, while another 2.6 trillion are stolen; all due to corruption." (United Nations, 2018) and The GLB-Africa (Global Corruption Barometer) found more than one in four people who accessed public services, such as health care and education, paid a bribe in the preceding year and this equates to approximately 130 million citizens in the 35 countries surveyed. (International/Afrobarometer, 2019) By a certain coincidence, North Macedonia along with other countries from the African continent such as Egypt, Algeria and Cote d'Ivoire is ranked 106<sup>th</sup> on 2019's Corruption Perception Index. In comparison to the 2018 CPI, North Macedonia has seen a decline of 13 places. This group of countries is characterized by "separation of powers, abuse of state resources for electoral purposes, opaque political party financing and conflicts of interest." (Transparency International, 2019) Moreover, strong political influence over oversight institutions, limited press freedoms and insufficient judicial independence enables the creation of an over-concentration of power resulting with state capture and the concentration of power in private hands. (Ibid.)

For this reason, Transparency International recommends corruption to be addressed effectively by the political leaders in a way that will prioritize public interests and will set an example for transparency. (Diplomat online, 2020).



### 3: Definition of corruption

Transparency International<sup>15</sup> defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, furthermore classifying it as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs. (International, 2020) While, grand corruption is consisted of acts committed at a high level of government that breaks policy rules or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good, petty corruption refers to the everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interaction with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies.(Ibid.) Political corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth. (Ibid.) The prior definitions provide an overall set of activities which can be challenged by the fact that they lack the essence of what it really means to be engaged in corrupt activities as the same differs across sectors in the government and in the society. But, as (Shacklock, Arthur; Galtung, Fredrik; Sampford, Charles; Connors, 2016) argue,

“the term corruption is not in itself problematic.....the problem arises in the application of this to politics. Definitional problems are legion because there is hardly a general consensus on the “naturally sound condition of politics’.... One line definitions of political corruption are inherently misleading because they generally obscure the extent to which the concept and its components are rooted in ways of thinking about the distinctive character of public office [to say nothing of private office], and the distinctive ends to which political activity is directed.”

In addition, Tanzi highlights the limitation of the definitions of corruption *for private benefit* by emphasizing that this definition does not necessarily encompass all the possible options of abuse and that private benefit can benefit family members, political party, friends, class, tribe and so on. (Tanzi, 1998)

However, the character of corruption, the ever-evolving nature of the phenomenon and the cultural variation of the act itself makes it impossible to find one general encompassing theory to all the varieties of corruption practices that may occur around the world. For that reason, there are more specific terms which refer to specific activities related to corrupt behavior. The

categories vary from conventional versus unconventional, public versus private, systemic versus individual and/or isolated.

A 2019 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index has ranked Singapore the 4th least corrupt country. Singaporean Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau defines corruption as receiving, asking for or giving any gratification to induce a person to do a favor with a corrupt intent. (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, 2019)

Begovic(Begovic, 2015), provides yet another promising definition of corruption in which "Corruption is the intentional non-compliance with the arm's-length principle aimed at deriving some advantage for oneself or for related individuals from this behavior." This definition thus focuses on the rather economic parameters of corruption than its morality and the moral aspects as well as the acceptance of the same in the society.

Theobald in his book *Corruption, Development and Underdevelopment* provides various dictionary definitions as well as conceptual definitions of corruptions among which states: "Corruption is behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (Personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence." (Theobald, 1990)

The Department of Safety and Preparedness of Canada provides various definitions on the typology of corruption as they occur in society. (Boisvert et al., 2014)

- "Supply-side corruption" more often described as the process of payment of is a term used to describe the act of offering an illegal payment or given an advantage in case which the "demand-side corruption" enjoys the advantage .
- "Active" and "passive" corruption are terms that are used to symbolize the offering and the receiving side of each illicit action.
- "Conventional corruption" very often occurs among political circles involving political elites of all levels who work to improve their chances in certain processes, may it be involving tenders, projects all while disregarding the public interest. In conventional corruption, there is the usual exchange between the offering and the receiving side.
- "Unconventional corruption" is considered a more indirect abuse of public trust for private benefit in a way that there is no direct transaction involved between the giving and receiving side in the form of money and cash. This type of corruption is often direct appropriation of material public property.

- “Political corruption” as the word itself implies, involves high-ranking officials, prominent political figures such as members of the government, ministers, leaders of political parties. This type of corruption is characterized as grand corruption because of the high profile involved in it. This category of politicians, even though entrusted and expected to enforce the law on national level, work contrary to the national interest and are corrupt themselves.
- “State capture,” is a definition that is applied to organizations which has a major influence in the states’ legislation or policies of the government and whose main method of delivering is through payment. These organizations are powerful players which control every aspect of spending and make sure that any possible public investment is put to their own personal interest and/or for the personal interest of the organization. State capture is not such a distant term in Macedonian context as one of the political parties, based on the property it owned, was found to be among the richest political parties in Europe. (SCOOP Macedonia, 2016)

Similarly, Tanzi (Tanzi, 1998) classifies the act of corruption in the following 6 categories:

- (1) Bureaucratic (or "petty") or political, i.e. corruption by the bureaucracy or by the political leadership.
- (2) Cost-reducing (to the briber) or benefit-enhancing.
- (3) Briber-initiated or bribee-initiated.
- (4) Coercive or collusive.
- (5) Centralized or decentralized.
- (6) Predictable or arbitrary.

As for the level of corruption, there are many variations to corruption in one society; it ranges from rare which is the case with Nordic countries to widespread and systematic. The easiest one to control is the rare type of corruption due to scale, the incidents are isolated, are applicable to one field and prevention with the good will by the authorities is easily manageable. The more difficult types of corruption in society are widespread or even worse systemic. The correlation between widespread corruption and the way it affects other fields is that in a state of widespread corruption institutions, attitudes, procedures, regulations and judges and teachers readjust their mindset to become corrupt because that is the only way to make things work in the society. So, the way corruption is related to H.E. and vice versa is in a way that they



have an exacerbating effect on each other. According to (Osipian, 2007) in cases of increased public perception about corruption in H.E.I. leads to further increase in corruption because it highlights the benefits of corruption obtained by the university staff on administrative and academic level. So, high levels of corruption bring more corruption.

One of the most important approaches to solving corruption as a social issue is understanding it, understanding how it operates and what it causes which might potentially lead to preventing it from happening. For that reason, the emerging question is why (cause) and when (consequence) is corruption happening? Corruption occurs where there are adequate preconditions for it to thrive, and more likely to happen under the following conditions:

1. Starting with the most obvious reason which is economic reason, as the concept of consumerism expands the need for more means increases and so does the pressure to own more. This is a particularly important incentive for the developing countries and post-Soviet bloc countries because these societies emerge from usually low economic positions with high poverty rates.
2. The second reason for the emergence of corruption is centralized decision making which allows a high concentration of power in a way that increases the possibility for potential private gain.
3. Lack of accountability leads to more oversight (regardless whether intentional or unintentional) and less risk of being caught. No repercussions about the wrongdoing are one of the leading reasons for the corruption to thrive.

In the following two chapters, a more detailed outlook will be presented on the causes and consequences of corruption.

### 3.1 Causes of corruption

Analyzing factors which influence corruption is a precondition for building an effective strategy to fight corruption. The same strategy should take into consideration and potentially address the main causes for corruption. Therefore, fully understanding the scope and the reasons for this phenomenon, defining such an issue especially in cases as complex as corruption, it is merely a very small attempt to fully understand the effects of the same.

As stressed by (Enste, Heldman, 2017; Montinola & Jackman, 2002) salaries of public officials can play an important role in causing corruption. Besides that, Enste and Heldman provide a comprehensive list of causes and results of corruption.

**Figure 1:**

*Cases and effects of corruption*

Cause	Effect
Size and structure of government	Unclear
Democracy and the political system	Strong when combined with other factors, e.g. duration and quality of institutions
Quality of institutions	Strong
Extend of competition	Strong
Recruitment and salaries	Weak or none at all
Press freedom and the judiciary	Strong
Cultural determinants	Strong effect of trust, religion and power distance
Percentage of women in labour force	Weak or none at all
Former colonies	Strong only for British heritage
Endowment of natural resources	Strong

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Source: *Causes and consequences of corruption: An overview of empirical results* Dominik E. Heldman, Ch. 2017

According to Table 1, the size and the structure of the government remain unclear as to how it affects corruption. However, political systems combined with democracy and other factors such as efficiency, professionalism of public and private services present a strong asset in the process of stimulating corruption. Although recruitment and salaries are estimated with weak to none at all, this can be argued mainly because earlier research have cross-compared measures of corruption and <sup>13</sup> *per capita income with the United Nation Human Development Index (HDI)* and have found *that* that there is a positive relationship between high HDI and index of TI's index of corruption.

"Richer countries, on average have, less reported corruption and better functioning governments, the same holds true for the countries with high level of the HDI, a measure that includes estimates of heal and educational attainment as well as logarithmic measure of income" (Bjorn Lomborg, 2004)

Another factor which contributes to higher levels of corruption is lack of freedom of press. This indicator has lately seen an increase in pressure as the informative role of the media widens making it an inevitable tool to keep the politicians under pressure about potential illegal activities by them, clerks or other representatives of the same political party. This is seen as a threat mainly because the media can certainly influence the public opinion about the efforts of the government toward revelation of specific large or minor corrupt cases.

According to Transparency International the media play a key role in exemplifying the catastrophic effect of corruption around the globe. This enables citizens to become more aware about the consequences to their lives and stand up against corruption. "An independent and free media is a cornerstone of democracy and a vital pillar of national integrity and good governance. It is a public watchdog on the abuse of power." (Transparency International, 2012) Moreover, (Ibid) "A high quality, uncensored press sheds light on misuse of power and makes it more difficult to engage in it undetected". This long-term link between the free and independent media and the reduced level of corruption is also well documented in many studies (Besley & Prat, 2006; Ahrend, 2002; Färdegh, 2007) including Brunetti and Weder (2003) whose indication predict less corruption in countries with high level of freedom of press.

According to Boris Begovic, (Begovic, 2015) one of the main reasons for the increase of corruption in one country is state or government intervention. The less the state is involved in the process of coordination of regulations and its applicability through specific mechanisms to regulate the relations in the given sector results in less free-markets operations, and as a result, more corruption. Therefore, the key to such intervention is deregulation and a decrease in the role of the government. The rationale is that the core role of the government is to enable a proper functioning of the rule of law, whereas the market itself, in market driven economies will prove itself by acting evolutionary, by selecting and enabling the survival of the fittest, as it does with the companies, where some bloom and some go bankrupt.

The International Monetary Fund executive summary goes along the similar lines with Begovic who calls for elimination of excessive regulations, but instead the notes on corruption costs mitigating strategies which refer to IMF's previous experience with countries that stresses that the key to addressing corruption requires effective institutions. In other words, the lack of effective institutions, lack of professionalism by the civil servants is the reason for increased corruption.

Country's penalty system also plays an important role as one of the main contributors to causing and encouraging corruption. In reality, except for countries with the highest level of independent judiciary, punishment of a corrupt individual is very difficult to demonstrate. This is mainly due to the fact that this legal vacuum in independence of the judiciary is usually used

by politicians, high ranked officials and influential businessmen to engage in corrupt activities because hardly anyone is punished. The rule of law implies that the game has to be equal for everyone, unless this equality is achieved, the efforts to curb corruption will be diminished. As implied by Gupta and Abed, in precise citing Tanzi (Sanjeev Gupta, 2002) “the penalty structure existing in one country is an important factor in determining the extent of corruption in one country.”

### 3.2 Consequences of corruption

In order to avoid confusion between cause and consequence of corruption, the latter is being referred to as the effect or the aftermath it has on society once the level of corruption is so high that it disables the proper functioning of the major societal pillars and destabilizes the country. The cause of corruption here is analyzed as the major factors that might lead to high levels of corruption whereas the consequence is the analysis of the cost or the downfall of high level of corruption in one country. The cause in this case is having a preventive role, prior to event horizon or the peak in corruption perception index ratings (CPI), whereas the consequence having a curing effect of high level of corruption to the society.

As to the effects of corruption, the annual global cost of bribery alone is estimated at a staggering amount of around \$1.5 to \$2 trillion dollars a year. (International Monetary Fund, 2016)

Moreover, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that the effects of corruption are important “because it impedes the IMF’s basic objectives of promoting global economic stability and helping our member countries achieve strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth .” The IMF stresses that the 3 key economic parameters where corruption mostly affects the society are:

- Revenue side—e.g., loss in public revenue is a result of given bribe evade tax
- Expenditure side—e.g., effect on scale, composition, quality of public spending
- Indirect costs—low tax compliance, impedes foreign and domestic investment

(Weeks-brown, 2019)

Gray and Kaufmann in their article *Corruption and Development* concluded that:

- In countries in transition and developing countries, bribery is widespread with slight variations within wider regions.
- Bribery has a significant effect on increasing costs and as a result creates insecurity in the economy.
- Bribery has a detrimental effect on the economy as it paves the way to poor economic results. In the long run, this encourages companies to opt for illegal solutions which are not part of the official legal or economic policies or regulations. This weakens a country's capacity to realize revenues thus making it more and more difficult to provide basic goods, including implementation of laws.
- Bribery is unfair towards small business because it *imposes regressive tax* which in turn heavily burdens the overall business performance of the company.
- To sum up all of the above, there is one common denominator which *destroys the legitimacy of the state*, that is corruption. (Gray & Kaufmann, 1998)

*The Copenhagen criteria* present a set of rules which in turn determine the level of preparedness by a country to achieve a full member of the European Union. These rules are based on fulfilling different criteria such as geographic, political, economic and legal in order to become a full member of the EU. The political criteria are particularly useful while analyzing corruption as it incorporates pillars which are particularly susceptible to corruption. The political criteria of the Copenhagen criteria include: democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. (European Commission, 2021) Similarly, Transparency International categorizes the cost of corruption in four different categories: political, economic, social and environmental. Therefore, the analysis will be based on the consequences of corruption on these pillars. (Transparency International, 2017)

Politically, corruption is a major obstacle to the rule of law because in a democratic societies institutions and offices work hard to justify and maintain the legitimacy and accountability in the society. This is particularly challenging in cases when institutions are led by corrupt officials and that particular person becomes the representative of an institution. It is hard for citizens to understand the way corrupt politicians become high priests and tell them what is corrupt or not corrupt, or is it moral or immoral. Hardly anything more cynical can happen in the society than having a politician who is preaching how not to be corrupt goes back in his custom made Mercedes which costs 700.000 euros bought with tax-payer's money. The challenges here are also applicable for the established democracies but especially to the emerging ones which is the case with North Macedonia. This country being ranked 106 with an

average score of 35 (Transparency International, 2019) a group of countries which are characterized as *state captured* with concentration of power in private hands certainly reflects the cost of corruption in this country.

In regards to the rule of law, the cost of corruption has a major toll on the independence of the judiciary. The group of countries ranked 35, which is the case of North Macedonia, are characterized by insufficient judicial independence, failure to preserve checks and balances and decline in implementation of laws and regulations. According to the Council of the EU, "Corruption undermines citizens' trust in democratic institutions and the rule of law in particular, as it negatively affects the principles of legality and legal certainty." (European Union, 2019)

Since corruption has become an international problem due to the connection associated with the development of nations, GDPS, HDIs, as well as the global exchange of goods and services, the multilateral approach to analyzing corruption has become imminent. Brought in 2004, The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the only global legally binding anti-corruption mechanism which mobilizes actions for more honest, transparent and accountable governance. (UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004)

According to Article 1 of this document, the purposes of this Convention are:

- (a) To promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively;
- (b) To promote, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and fight against corruption, including in asset recovery;
- (c) To promote integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property. (Ibid.)

Although the convention is perceived as a triumphant act, a multilateral agreement that echoes determination by the States to fight corruption with dozens of innovative provisions, one might argue that the standards, measures and rules foreseen in this convention suffer from basic weaknesses that prevents it from having a real impact on corrupt behavior. (Webb, 2005)

Many other initiatives to combat corruption which include calls for stricter mechanisms speak about the seriousness of the issue of corruption not only on national level, more so on international level. Corruption is an emerging priority for the international community. The widespread corruption and organized crime influence in the former Eastern bloc have made the problem difficult to ignore – as have similar problems in other parts of the world. (Rose-Ackerman, 1999)

The UN's Convention against Corruption, as of August 2018 being signed by 186 parties and 181 UN members, is not the only internationally binding document which requires



countries to abide by the provisions. Other important initiatives include, <sup>12</sup> Organization of American States Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, Council of Europe's Criminal Law Convention on Corruption and Civil Law Convention on Corruption, The 1995 Convention on the Protection of the European Communities', African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption <sup>31</sup> as well as United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

The UN launched a campaign against corruption according to which "Corruption is a major bottleneck to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and a global concern. It is found in both rich and poor countries and hurts poor people disproportionately. It contributes to instability and poverty and is a dominant factor driving fragile countries towards state failure." (United Nations, 2020).

According to the UN factsheet, corruption affects everyone and leads to weak institutions and injustice and vice versa, threatening the safety and security structures of the country, stifles economic growth, undermines democracy, governance and human rights, denies basic services and reduces employment opportunities. (Davies, 2017).

The fact that corruption affects people politically, economically and educationally makes one wonder how come more urgent, more radical global initiatives to fighting corruption are still missing or lack visibility or why the anti-corruption instruments are still ineffective? The seriousness of this issue is reflected in UN treaty bodies and UN special procedures that have come to a conclusion that countries where corruption is widespread cannot comply with their <sup>21</sup> human rights obligations. <sup>12</sup> (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2009) The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials specifically require states to take steps to prevent corruption and enhance relevant accounting and auditing standards. These measures however, in practice can be difficult to implement. (OECD, 2014) In addition, Peters agrees that the detrimental effects of corruption on an international level ought to be considered as a violation of human rights. Peters implies "framing of corruption not only as a human rights issue but even as a potential violation can contribute to closing the implementation gap of the international anti-corruption instrument and can usefully complement the predominant criminal law-based approach." (Peters, 2019) Connecting education to human rights issue requires a more comprehensive legal definition in which corruption will not be referred only to a group of criminal acts, more so, the definition of corruption as a criminal should reflect the type of crime on commits and that ought to be reflected in the laws of one country.

The biggest preconceived notion about corruption is that this phenomenon is only found in the developing world or countries in transition. According to the UN Convention against Corruption, there is no exception when it comes to corruption, it is found in all countries

regardless of the size, development and political system. However, it is worthwhile to mention that the literature suggests that negative effects of corruption in the developing world are far more damaging as the recovery is limited due to the limited legal and financial resources. (United Nations, 2004; Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Menocal, Fritz, & Rakner, 2008)

Poor governance is among the main examples of detrimental effects that corruption can have on states. Such cases are more evident when cross-country <sup>13</sup>measures of corruption and poor governance are correlated with per capita income and the United Nation Human Development Index(HDI) the data demonstrates <sup>38</sup>that richer countries have less corruption due to better functioning of the governments. (Rose-Ackerman, 2006) When the HDI is compared to that of the corruption index developed by Transparency International, countries with high levels of human development index have low levels of corruption. On the contrary, the high level of corruption is connected with countries with low levels of HDI. (Ibid.)



## 4: Corruption in North Macedonia

### 4.1. Scope of corruption through indicators

This chapter of the thesis focuses on relevant documents which reveal the scope of corruption in North Macedonia. The goal of this chapter is to address the limitation of many studies in the process of estimating corruption in one country focusing only on the indexes published by Transparency International. TI has been and still is among the most reliable perception indexes, however, in order to understand the scope and complexity under which corruption operates and thrives including additional indexes, reports, estimations up to credit ratings of the country can provide more in-depth information about how corruption affects the democratic processes and civil liberties in one country. Namely, the high level of corruption can be detrimental to democratic processes and values due to erosion it causes on the judiciary, economy, healthcare, human rights, media and last but not least education. The case of North Macedonia can serve as a textbook example of the negative effects of corruption. Through an unprecedented chain of events, corruption in North Macedonia achieved its peak when a massive wiretapping scandal of around 20.000 citizens was made public. The scandal revealed the extent to which corruption had gripped the pillars of what once was a democratic country, such as: the judiciary, the elections process and even revealed plans to destabilize and lead the country in war. After these dramatic events, marking the peak of corruption, The former Prime Minister resigned and later fled the country and is in exile to the present day. This of course led to the EU granting North Macedonia a status of a captured state, a status which “implies a state of widespread corruption and exploitation of public resources for private gains, while neutralizing control mechanisms, whether by legal or illegal means.” (Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, 2019)

In order to better understand the complexity of corruption in North Macedonia this chapter will reveal the most relevant documents which highlight the need for immediate attention from all relevant institutions in the society. One is based on the perception index and the other is based on the publication in the form of a report about the country's progress towards implementing international governmental and non-governmental standards to fight corruption.

Since its independence, North Macedonia has faced one of the biggest challenges of modern societies. Even the most rigid political systems in history have not been able to prove superior to corruption. North Macedonia, since its independence had faced existential

challenges such as the Balkan war in the 90s which pretty much left the country bankrupt. Followed by the internal political struggles over expanding the rights of the minorities towards the end of the 90s, the peak of events in the country culminated with an armed conflict in the early 2000.

North Macedonia is a signee of important international instruments which in turn have improved the legislative framework to fight against corruption. During the 2000s, crucial instrument and anti-corruption laws were adopted, among which:

- Criminal Law Convention against Corruption (1999)
- The Civil Law Convention against Corruption (2002)
- The Law on Prevention of Corruption (2002)
- The Law on Financing the Political Parties (2004)
- The Law on Elections (2006)
- The Law on Following Communications (2006)
- The Law on Free Access to Information of Public Character (2006)
- The Law on Conflict of Interest (2007)
- The Law on Public Procurement (2007)
- Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Other Proceeds of Crime and Financing of Terrorism (2014)
- The Law on Financial Inspection in the Public Sector and (2014)
- The Law on Protection of Whistleblowers (2015)
- The Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Criminal Offence Related to and Arising from the Content of the Illegally Intercepted Communication(2015)

In the meantime, many more laws and instruments were brought and adopted, however, it is not the legal framework that is lacking, it is the implementation and enforcement of laws, regulations and mechanisms that are lacking, followed by concrete results in practice. The lack of implementation of laws is due to extensively widespread corruption in the judiciary as well as the poor functioning of the governance system. (Nuredinoska E. et al. 2014) (Worth & Dymishi, 2017) This is particularly relevant since circumstances where 'law enforcement cannot be effective anti-corruption tool unless judiciary is independent both of the rest of the state and the private sector' (Rose-Ackerman, n.d.)

Although North Macedonia ratified the UN Convention against Corruption in 2007 (GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal, 2019) the state has since failed to make substantial progress toward improving the fight against corruption. On the contrary, as noted in the latest corruption perception index published by Transparency International, North Macedonia, alongside Albania,

present the most corrupt countries in the European continent. (Transparency International, 2020)

Transparency International also publishes yearly report progress chronologically. Chronological comparison of this data from the CPI is important because it demonstrates that North Macedonia, since 2014 has seen a significant drop in the score in the perception of corruption. In the table below the CPI overall score is presented by year.

**Figure 2**

*Macedonia Corruption Index*



Source *Macedonia Corruption Index*. Trading Economics. Copyright 2021 by Trading Economics

North Macedonia has underperformed in yet another important index, that of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) whose key concepts rely on advocating for the main goals of democracy, that of rule of law and market economy secured by the principles of social justice. The biannual BTI report publishes country ratings from 1 to 10, 1 for the worst and 10 for the best. The 2018 report on North Macedonia's level of democracy which according to the BTI index cross-compares the data on the democratization level and the rule of law has a score of 6.5. For comparison, this score is the second lowest score in Europe and the South East European region after Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Similar to the Transparency International CPI, the BTI country assessment detects a significant decline in the level of democracy for 2018. The 6.5 score is worse than the score of 6.7 from 2016 and worse than any other rating since the BTI gathers data on North Macedonia. Country's highest BTI score is from 2010 when the country was assessed with 8.0. The second highest scores with 7.6 for 2012 and 7.2 from 2014 also correspond to TI's CPI. These results emphasize a strong correlation between these two indexes which highlight the connection and

the effect that lack of democratic capacities have on development corruption. The 2018 country report concludes that the rule of law has eroded and corruption has become prevalent.

(Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018)

In addition, the World Economic Forum (WEF) through the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) assesses the country's performance based on 98 variables. These variables are divided into twelve pillars and the institutional pillar covering private and public institutions is among the most important as it is of particular interest because it includes relevant information on the level of corruption. According to its 2015-16 report (World Economic Forum, 2015) on institutional pillar, the chapter on ethics and corruption registers a decreasing trend in the use of available resources in public institutions making the institutional pillar the only one with a declining trend. The institutional pillar in the ethics and corruption chapter of the public institutions, has also received the lowest scores out of all chapters within the pillar, demonstrating yet another blow to the effort to fight corruption in the public institutions. Compared to public institutions, ratings of the private institutions from the institutional pillar, the chapter on corporate ethics has a significantly higher rating, however, it has a declining trend too.

If we are to compare the overall results from the GCI report from 2015 which ranked North Macedonia 60<sup>th</sup> out of 140 countries and the GCI report from 2019(82<sup>th</sup>) or 2018(84<sup>th</sup>) the results clearly demonstrate a significant drop in the assessment of the country's performance. These two years are purposely chosen as they demonstrate the most dramatic drop in efforts and measures to curb corruption and are reflected in the CPI report, BTI report and GCI report.

The sudden drop in overall democratic ruling in the country in 2015 and 2016 was also reflected in other important global credit rating agencies which downgraded the credit rating for North Macedonia. Fitch's credit rating for the above-mentioned consecutive years was downgraded to negative (Trading Economics, n.d.)

The World Justice Project (WJP) through The Rule of Law Index produces yet another annual set of data which combine the experiences, perceptions as well as in-country experts' measurements of the rule of law in one country. Scores of the index range from 0 to 1, with 1 presenting the highest level to the rule of law. Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project, 2019) rates North Macedonia in the 56<sup>th</sup> place out of 126 countries, and among lowest in the region. The report namely notes that the two of the lowest scores for the absence of corruption are in the legislature and the executive branch, thus proving another fact for the high level of occurrence of corruption in the key branches of the society in North Macedonia. Similar results are noted in the report from 2018 (Ibid.) showing that despite the change of government, the rule of law has been a struggle for the current government too.

The released Freedom Barometer Report (FBR) from 2018 notes that in terms of corruption, although a lot more was expected from the new government who took over in 2016, it still “failed to implement enough of the promised institutional change” (Despotović et al., 2018). The (2019) report which covers chapter on the rule of law in 45 different countries in the world concludes that overall, countries have a visible stagnation in the application of rule of law. In terms of North Macedonia, the report records a slight improvement in the fields of human right and fight against corruption compared to 2018, however, notes that the judiciary persists to be a huge obstacle due to the “transitional justice”. (Despotović et al., n.d.) Similarly to previous indexes, the score for the rule of law chapter in the FBR 2019 report is second lowest in the region, after Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, corruption received the lowest score of 3.70, comparing to independence of judiciary 4.7 and protection of human rights 5.91 out of 10. (Ibid.)

North Macedonia fails to decrease corruption in applying rule of law in another relevant report. Freedom House report grants North Macedonia a “partly-free” status and with a score of 59 out of 100. The report provides setbacks regarding corruption in 2016/2017 (4.50 to 4.75), while stagnation in 2017/2018. (Freedom House, 2020) Its 2019 the report grants North Macedonia’s efforts against official corruption 2 out of 4 and warns that “corruption remains a serious problem, and there has been widespread impunity for corrupt government officials”. (Freedom House, 2019) The 2020 report ranks North Macedonia on the 63<sup>rd</sup> place and sees a slight improvement; however, the status “partly free” remains to be applicable and very worrying for the country. (Ibid.)

World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank, n.d.) also publishes ratings based on performance indicators. These ratings more specifically include performance of the country based on many variables but in terms of corruption and its control as well as government effectiveness and rule of law, the 2017 country snapshot for Macedonia indicates very low performance in these key areas. Namely, the countries are rated from 0 to 2 based on their performance and ratings on **control of corruption and rule of law** have the lowest ratings indicating another lack of effort in the fight against corruption in North Macedonia. Government effectiveness is slightly higher, however, not enough to demonstrate a mismatch between the low performance in **control of corruption and rule of law** and governments effectiveness reinforcing the correlation that the root of high level of corruption is as a result of governments ineffectiveness.

Additionally, World Bank’s Enterprise Survey (ES) (World Bank, 2019) on business enterprises in North Macedonia investigates the presence of corruption in the business community. More specifically it investigates the extent to which companies are expected to pay bribes in order to receive a public service. The results of the survey imply that the bribing

incidence in North Macedonia across six different transactions such as obtaining permits, licenses and taxes request at least one bribe payment.



## 5: Reports

The focus of this chapter will be on various governmental and nongovernmental reports which instead of providing scores quantitatively, the reports focus on the qualitative overview and assess country's performance. The following reports thus emphasize the lack of will in the government's efforts to curb corruption over the past 5 years. The following reports will precisely showcase the discouraging indicators which disable the proper function of rule of law thus stimulating an environment where corruption and selective justice can flourish.

Similarly, the AI Annual Report for 2015/16 notes that the massive wiretapping reflects major deficiencies in political and social life of the political elite. The report notes on "government corruption, abuse of office, electoral fraud and a lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law, including interference in the independence of the judiciary" and an overall action which resulted with a significant decline of democratic capacities of the country. (Amnesty International, 2016)

Amnesty international (AI) in their Annual Report for 2017/18 addresses the level of concerns over corruption level in North Macedonia and their report call upon the request by the European Commission for "to implement measures including ensuring the rule of law, the right to privacy, freedom of expression, an independent judiciary and an end to government corruption" (Amnesty International, 2018)

### 5.1 European Commission Progress Reports

The Republic of North Macedonia wants to become a member of the European Union. In doing so, the country has to fulfill requirements which come in form of reports and recommendations which guide the country to prioritize as to which issues are important for the citizens of R. of North Macedonia as well as The EU. In order to achieve full membership, the EU applies measures which scrutinize and define the terms of this transformation of the country towards full membership. The standards address different sectors of the society including: overall democratic capacity of the country such as political criteria and rule of law, governance, reform in the judicial system, public administration, respect for basic human rights and fight against corruption. (The European Union, 2013) Every year, the EU publishes reports which address these issues and they are submitted to the North Macedonian Parliament. Regarding the fight against corruption, for the purpose of this analysis only the last two reports from 2018 and 2019 of the EU will be the subject of further analysis to demonstrate the lack of significant progress to curb corruption. It is worth noting that the previous reports are more critical and



exemplify a more blatant violation of human rights, rule of law, abuse of power which present an obstacle for economic, social and democratic development.

The EU report (European Parliament, 2018) within the chapter on Rule of Law reports on the actions needed to undertake in prevention of further corruption in North Macedonia. On that matter, the report notes that the EU remains highly concerned about level of corruption in the country and that the discouraging results remains due to low level of court ruling on cases related to and “calls upon the authorities to intensify the fight against money laundering and conflicts of interest by establishing and strengthening the capacities of anti-corruption, counter-crime and financial investigation cells, and through freezing, confiscation, recovery and management of assets”.

The European Commission (2019) report for North Macedonia acknowledges the efforts of the new government to curb corruption, praises “the new legal framework to prevent corruption as well as the transparent selection of the new members of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption.” However, defines the efforts as “some level of preparation” and recommends that the authorities have to further step-up efforts to demonstrate that fighting against corruption is a national priority at all levels of powers. However, **corruption is prevalent in many areas and remains** an issue of **concern**.<sup>53</sup>

The State Department also issues yearly reports on the human right practices of the country. The report dedicates an entire chapter on corruption and lack of transparency in the government and therefore presents a valuable source for the occurrence of corruption across sectors. The State Department report in 2017 report (US Department of State, 2017) **on human rights practices** of R. of North Macedonia notes the existence of corrupt officials with impunity as well as that the NGOs reported that the position of the government which had a dominant role in the economy created opportunities for corruption. Similarly, the 2018 State Department report (US Department of State, 2018) on North Macedonia notes numerous government officials have been engaged in corrupt activities, thus the capacity of institutions to effectively tackle corruption showed structural and operational deficiencies followed by political interference. Comparing to 2018 State Department report on Human Rights Practices which points out high level of corruption as the only significant human, the US Department of State, (2019) report emphasizes high level of corruption and violence against LGBT individuals as two different significant human rights yet demonstrating that the country not only maintain the level of corruption but added another practice which violates another human right. The report noted that the government generally implemented the law which enables criminal penalties for conviction of corrupt officials, but despite that there were reports that officials still engaged in corruption. Among other things, an ineffective Public Prosecution Office, together with a slow<sup>15</sup>

and highly politicized judiciary system is among the main issues noted to disable the fight against corruption.

## 5.2 GRECO

Moreover, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) reports present another valuable source of information on States' compliance to anti-corruption standards. Established in 1999 by the Council of Europe, its primary goal is "to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with Council of Europe anti-corruption standards through a dynamic process of mutual evaluation and peer pressure." (Council of Europe Portal, 2020) "The process itself helps detect shortages in national anti-corruption policies, and stimulate the necessary reforms which cover legislative, institutional and practical samples. " (Ibid.)

Similar to the EU commission reports, these reports come in the form of recommendations which States are expected to implement in their efforts to prove their will to curb corruption. Since 2000, North Macedonia has been an active member, during which process, has gone through 5 different rounds of evaluation. The First Round has recorded a high degree of implementation: 88% of the recommendations were fully implemented, 6% were partly implemented and 6% were not implemented. The Second Round of evaluation has recorded the highest implementation of recommendations from which 93% of recommendations were implemented and 7% partly implemented. The Third Round of evaluation has registered a somewhat "less encouraging" implementation of GRECO recommendations, 77% fully implemented and 23% partly implemented. As for the Fourth Round of evaluation of recommendations, as of date of publication 27 June from 2019, only 31% were fully implemented, 42% were partly implemented and 26% were not implemented at all and a non-compliance procedure was initiated and the results are yet to be published. The lack of implementation of GRECO recommendations by a State demonstrates the various ways that authorities can fail to implement measures against corruption. This also shows States' inability to establish and maintain a proper functioning of the government, a determination to curb corruption and succumb to the effects of corruption by not acting to minimize the negative effects that it can have on education, health, welfare and overall well-being of the society.

**Table 1***GRECO Compliance Reports*

<b>GRECO COMPLIANCE REPORT</b>	<b>FULLY IMPLEMENTED</b>	<b>PARTLY IMPLEMENTED</b>	<b>NOT IMPLEMENTED</b>
<i>FIRST ROUND 2004</i>	93%	7%	0%
<i>SECOND ROUND 2007</i>	88%	6%	6%
<i>THIRD ROUND 2010</i>	77%	23%	0%
<i>FOURTH ROUND 2014</i>	31%	42%	26%
<i>FIFTH ROUND 2019</i>	17%	39%	43%

Source GRECO *Interim* Compliance Reports on North Macedonia. Copyright 2021 by Council of Europe Portal.<sup>1</sup>

The results of the Fourth Evaluation Round published in 2018 conclude that R. of North Macedonia “has implemented satisfactorily or dealt with in a satisfactory manner only six of the nineteen recommendations and of the remaining recommendations, eight have been partly implemented and five have not been implemented.” (GRECO Council of Europe, 2018) Despite the pledge made by the government to return the corrupt money back to the citizens and its institutions, the same fails to fulfill the majority of the criteria set by GRECO and in this become an obstacle to the whole process.

In addition, during the fifth evaluation round of GRECO for 2019, the organization wrote 23 recommendations. The majority of the recommendations focus on two sectors: 1) central government/top executive functions and 2) law enforcement agencies. In terms of determining the State’s lack of determination to fight corruption thus contributing to the stimulation of the same two recommendations stand out in this regard. Recommendation number nine which calls upon a more practical analysis of the system of sanction in regard to violations of conflicts of

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<sup>1</sup> Note\* The missing 1% in some recommendation is due to the decimals when total numbers are transferred into % .

interest, integrity and anti-corruption legislation/regulation. (GRECO Council of Europe, 2019) The recommendation demands that sanctions become proportionate and dissuasive in which case would not be selective only towards the lower echelons government officials but this measure will be applicable to all equally.

More, the second recommendation which stands out in GRECO's final report for 2019 (GRECO Council of Europe, 2019) in regards to the law enforcement agencies are generally all the recommendations regarding the Police Department as well as respect of regulations for the declaration of assets and fulfilling the criteria for the open positions in the police department as well as making information available for eventual complaints by the public. These recommendations are quite symptomatic due to the fact that the same can significantly influence public's trust in one of the key sectors of the government upon which the citizens rely to enforce law.

GRECO's compliance report for North Macedonia will be published once the government has submitted their report and once GRECO has finished reviewing them.

Furthermore, another important country report comes from The Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) which presents an anti-corruption and good governance coalition. The corruption report findings for North Macedonia (SELDI, 2019) suggest that corruption perception has remained unaltered when compared to 2014 results and report deterioration. Among others, the findings suggest that the decline was reflected "in almost all analyzed segments, i.e citizens are increasingly experiencing corruption pressure and consequently engage in corrupt activities. If in 2014, 21.5% of citizens gave bribes, in 2016 that share increased to 29%."

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2011) survey estimating the direct bribery experienced by the population found out that "on average, 10.8 percent of citizens aged 18 to 64 have been exposed – either directly or through a household member - to a bribery experience with a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey." The survey also found that citizens consider corruption to be the third most important issue in the society after unemployment and poverty. (Ibid.) But the low standard of living and high unemployment rate do not necessarily mean low payments for bribes. In fact, according to the survey, the average cash bribe paid in North Macedonia is 28,813 MKD, an equivalent of 525 Euros in 2019, this is slightly above 26,836, the average salary in the country for 2019.

Another United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (2013) survey report exploring the business, corruption and crime in North Macedonia reassures the equally high level of corruption in the country in the business sector. In fact, the report notes that extortion, fraud, embezzlement, vandalism and assault are among the main criminal operations. The effects of high level corruption present a considerable threat to the business community in the country

causing serious damage to the business environment resulting in fear among investors, insecurity and lack of willingness to invest in expansion and future operations in the country. Most importantly, the UNODC report calls upon the implementing stricter measures to protect businesses from corruption, these measures would not only reduce corruption in general, but also lower the burden that it bears on the business community. This report clearly demonstrates the detrimental effects that a high level of corruption has on one sector only. An overall estimation of the true negative effects of corruption might never be able to be discovered mainly due to the evolving nature of the phenomenon as well as because of the complex secretive operations that can never be materialized. Part of this immaterialized cost of corruption is described in the BIRN article (Judah, 2019) which states that people do not see money as a main reason for migration. "It is education, healthcare and services too — and increasingly it is because people have lost hope that they will ever live in normal, democratic and as uncorrupted societies as possible." So, corruption shatters hope, destroys meritocracy, vanishes reason and stimulates brain-drain and minimizes equal opportunities and causes desperation.

In 2016, North Macedonia recorded an important U-turn in another crucial field of public and political life in the fight against corruption. The newly elected **State Commission for Prevention of Corruption** (SPCP) enjoyed a high degree of trust among the citizens due to many new circumstances under which this commission started to operate. The process of electing candidates was open and transparent. After the election of the candidates, the other important step of the commission was hosting open meetings and making their decisions and reports public. The Commission's swift and professional reaction towards suspicious practices gained the trust of the public and helped improve the fight against corrupt officials and citizens. However, the highly politicized judiciary, followed by the political bargaining for amnesty of several MPs and the slow and ineffective Public Prosecution Office take their toll on the visibility of the charges initiated by the commission. The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SPCP) for the period of March to September 2019 has issued only one public warning. (Илиевска, 2020) The Commission has also found corruption and conflict of interest in only 4% of their decisions. The findings of the report summarizing the achievements of the SPCP conclude that the SPCP does not have enough resources to investigate cases of grand corruption between business and politics. This is particularly difficult to explore mainly because the names of people who win these tenders are not made public, making it increasingly difficult to detect corruption and conflict of interest among politicians who use their influence to win a tender offer. The commission called upon lack of resources to fight corruption due to lack of infrastructure. According to the A10N report, the commission is incapable of further investigating corrupt practices of politicians due to lack of software which will easily detect the

connection between the business and politics. (A1 ON, 2020) According to the 2019 TI CPI index, North Macedonia received the lowest score for the influence of politics on business.

A positive step forward in the right direction is enabling a legal and practical infrastructure for the fight against corruption that would present enabling full transparency in bidding. All bids, as who wins the bids, who the company belongs to which in turn will enable them to investigate potential connections to political parties and influence in winning the bids. In addition, cross-institutional cooperation among governmental institutions which are responsible for investigation of corrupt practices and implementation of tough and effective measures is vital. This is necessary in order to detect and speed up the gathering of facts on potential corrupt cases and adding significant dynamics to the whole process.



## 6: Corruption in education

### 6.1 Conceptualizing corruption in education

Tertiary education plays a crucial <sup>56</sup> role in the development and maintenance of social and economic development in <sup>one</sup> country. This is done by fulfilling its four main goals:

- 1) formation of human capital
- 2) building of knowledge bases
- 3) dissemination and use of knowledge
- 4) maintenance of knowledge. (OECD, 2008)

Pajaziti & Gerguri-Rashiti (n.d.) citing Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) claim that corruption hurts students by:

- Undermining educational quality
- Reducing educational resources
- Providing inequitable access to educational services
- Diminishing student optimism about fulfilling their potential
- Limiting career prospects
- Devaluing degrees

Corruption hurts institutions by:

- Leading to high dropout rates
- Lowering the quality of education
- Leading to lower prestige of institution
- Devaluing degrees
- Redirecting public resources to individuals
- Creating a cycle of incompetence

Hallak and Poisson define <sup>7</sup> corruption in education as “the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and, has impact on access, quality or equity in education.” (Hallak & Poisson, 2005)

<sup>23</sup> Osipian identifies three key universal issues in higher education which are access, quality and equity and corruption, which negatively affects higher education, causes and increases inequalities. (Osipian, 2007) And although Osipian agrees with the broad definition of corruption “for private gain” he addresses the limitations of this definition when it comes to



corruption in higher education and adds that the fact that education is a public good, other professional standards ought to be included which are not limited only to material goods. Since education is a public good and professors are entitled to authority through this public good, corruption in H.E. is also an abuse of authority for personal and material reasons. (Ibid.)

(Miller et al., 2006) claim that there is amoral dimension to being corrupt in H.E. and add that:

“The notion of a corrupt official or other role occupant exists only relative to some notion of what an uncorrupted occupant of that morally legitimate role consists of. The notion of an academic has at its core the moral ideal, or at least, the morally legitimate role, of an independent truth-seeker who works in accordance with accepted principles of reason and evidence, who publishes in his or her own name only work that he or she has actually done, and so on. So an academic motivated by a desire for academic status who intentionally falsifies his or her experimental results or plagiarizes the work of others is corrupt relative to the ideal or morally legitimate role of an uncorrupted academic. On the other hand, a person occupying an academic position who paid no heed whatsoever to the truth or to principles of reasoning and evidence and who made no pretense of so doing would at some point cease to be an academic of any sort, corrupt or otherwise”

The importance of tertiary education has increased and will increase even further significantly as societies, especially countries in development move towards knowledge-based societies. More than ever, globalization has enabled easy access to tertiary education in other countries with greater tradition in research, teaching and learning, something unimaginable for people who live in less developed countries. This resulted with greater exchange in knowledge, improving diversification and democratization of education. With internet access at the fingertips of millennials and generation Z, today's higher education faces new challenges. Lack of funding, knowledge gap between nations, digital divide, brain drain, migration, integrity, consolidation of teaching and marked needs being among the biggest challenges for today's higher education institutions preclude the mission of these institutions. (World Bank, 2002) Perhaps the sharpest warning of the toll corruption has on higher education comes from *Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2013* as mentioned by Mohamedbhai (2016) where it says “Corruption for resources, fame and notoriety places extraordinary pressures on higher education institutions (...). In some instances, corruption has invaded whole systems of higher education and threatens the reputation of research products and graduates, regardless of their guilt and innocence.”

Higher education through teaching, training and competition develops new sets of skills and opportunities which in turn enable an easier transition to the labor market. There are many reasons why education cannot fulfil its mission if corrupt practices are allowed to take place in the society. The effects of widespread corruption in the society are undeniably reflected towards other sectors of the society and more so in education. On an international level, including the US, higher education has been particularly vulnerable to major corrupt scandals which shocked the world, more so because it involved celebrities and their children buying their way into the prestigious Ivy League universities. These scandals nonetheless revealed the more disturbing truth about H.E.I. institutions and the fact that neither the countries with the most advanced systems of education, judiciary, laws, regulations and severe penalties are not immune to corruption. Revealing corrupt practices, investigating corruption patterns in H.E.I. institutions in one country are essential in the fight against corruption. Today's societies are built in a reactive model, so the more corrupt practices are revealed the stricter measures will be implied and the wrongdoers will face more repercussions which will eventually result in less corruption. Anti-corruption efforts and appropriate policies to prevent further increase of corruption ought to be incorporated more effectively on international level regardless of states' size and level of development and governance. (Osipian, 2008) (Osipian, 2014b) (Osipian, 2014a)

Corruption in general is complex by nature, in higher education equally so. Why would that be the case? That is because of the complex network that corruption has, but more than ever, "Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately – by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid" (Annan, 2003)

Education sector is usually among the top 5 most important sectors in one country. In North Macedonia, education is the top 5 sectors by number of employees. Primary and secondary education in North Macedonia are mandatory and in economic terms this presents a heavy burden on the budget of the country, especially since for 2020, it is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest sector according budgetary spending, and it is worth 10% of the budget (Ministry of Finance of Republic of North Macedonia, n.d.). With such a large flow of public resources, makes education a target for manipulation. Providing services at large, with employees who offer amenities to such a large population through tenders for new and maintenance of old schools, books, facilities and employment opportunities enables all the criteria to become a breeding ground for corruption.

Corrupt private and public H.E.I. in one country involves multiple levels of well connected, well-organized and well covered and protected tertiary education institutions which are affiliated with politicians, leaders of political parties, MP, ministers, wealthy donors and

interest groups. In worst cases these institutions are used for advancing the personal and professional careers of people in politics, the career of their immediate family members, ministers, members of political parties, employing ex-diplomats and MPs. (Апостолов & Трпковски, 2020) (See Figure 4.)

But what makes higher education so vulnerable to become corrupt as opposed to primary or secondary education? Although, primary and secondary education are not excluded from corruption, tertiary education receives more attention because at this stage, the potential students are adults and access to higher education can make an enormous difference in the life of a person. It is an access to more knowledge, more research, more funds and ultimately more opportunities for social and economic prosperity of the individual. It is perceived as the key to the future.

Corruption in education does not differ immensely from the definition of corruption, however, few additional variables ought to be added to “for private gain” or “professional misconduct” in order to complete the meaning and specify the types of misconduct which might take place in academic settings as opposed to other sectors in the society. In the quest to define the corrupt practices in H.E.I. in any country it is important to detect and define the nature of these actions. Braxton and Bayer (1999) in their study specify the elements of professional misconduct in education which consist of:

- Gifts being exchanged as rewards for positive grade as well as acceptance of material gifts for positive grades;
- Grades or assessment being ascribed based on students cultural, religious, racial sexual, ethical and other attributes;
- Imposing personal teacher’s values to their students ;
- Publishing student’s confidential information;
- Any type of exploitation, form of harassment, or discrimination against students;
- Endorsing textbooks of low quality due to prior agreement with the manufacturer;
- Enforced purchase of a book whose author is the course conveyor;
- Minimizing the effects of inadequate teaching by fellow coworkers, treating students preferentially, any other form of misconduct of employees in the institution;
- The use of public property such as schools, universities, kindergartens for one’s private purposes.

It is important to analyze corruption patterns comparatively across countries and nations in order to find differences and similarities. Although differences in scale and depth can be

detected, the most frequent patterns of abuse of position seem to appear in cyclical methods in other countries as well. Reported corruption patterns detected in the 2012 national survey of academic corruption in Nigeria highlight the similarities in which corrupt practices emerge across corrupt education systems. These are the following practices detected in the survey:

- Cheating while taking the exams; expressing favors while marking in particular for financial, sexual or other reasons;
  - Cyber-attacks with the purpose of changing personal or/and other grades, or other data related to academic achievement of a student;
  - Plagiarizing dissertation, essays and other assignments ;
  - Student and teacher absenteeism from classes;
  - Lack of coverage of course syllabus in the course of the semester or until the final exam; academic exploitation such as thesis, papers, projects
  - Engaging in pseudo-science related activities(fake journals, publishing); planned and purposeful obstruction of work such as damaging results, pages and similar activities.
- (O'Malley, 2018)

It would be hard to argue that such practices are only isolated cases to Nigerian higher education system, and that these practices do not appear in similar fashion in other countries. From India to Slovakia, from China to the Australia, many similar cases are reported on weekly bases around the world (Schultheiss, 2018) (Chen, 2018) (Andrew MacAskill, 2015) (Contract Cheating and Assessment Design Project, 2018) with an only difference for the necessary mechanisms to prove its existence, otherwise the practices are there, waiting to be researched and revealed.

Denisova-Schmidt in Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of other <sup>7</sup> forms of corruption in higher education. Having in mind the dynamics of corruption, this list does not fully encompass all the deviant phenomena taking place in higher education and one would be mistaken to analyze corruption in H.E. only from these terms, the list however provides an excellent example of major types of misbehaviors in academic setting.

**Figure 3**

Terms/TI definitions <sup>a</sup>	<b>Bribery:</b> The process which involves exchange of favors. Receiving, accepting and offering a certain advantage which in turn breaks the institutional or other forms of codes of conduct and involves monetary compensation for the favor. The favor can be installed in a form of cash, gifts, donations, tax release and other forms of financial rewards.
Examples	A professor receiving cash by a student for a higher grade; Bribing a professor to alter a grade already assigned grade. An academic staff involved in ghostwriting to increase the number of publications. Administrative staff charging for services which are otherwise free of charge.
17 Terms/TI definitions	<b>Collusion:</b> A well thought prior plan between different parties which involves a secret agreement to execute fraud with the goal to secure material gain. "cartels" is among common terms associated with these parties.
Examples	Purposefully ignoring and not reacting to students' misconduct; Academics involved in unnecessary consecutive citations. Careful selection of bidders by the administrator in order to secure a winning deal.
Terms/TI definitions	<b>Conflict of interest</b> Presents a scenario in which an individual regardless whether an academic or administrative clerk, a businessman faces situations where they make the decision based on his personal interest rather than following the institutional ethical code.
Examples	An active or former staff member responsible for accreditation put as a head of a commission for accreditation of institution he works or recently worked for; Naming a family member as supervisor for a thesis; Exclusive use of external services from a company to whom a staff member is related to.
Terms/TI definitions	<b>Favouritism:</b> Favoritism can come in two forms. Patronage: A purposeful selection of a candidate for a position because of his/her political affiliation or connections disregarding his/her qualifications. Nepotism: is another form of favoritism based on the family connections whereby a candidate is selected specifically because of the family relation that the candidate has a specific member of the academic community who is very powerful.
Examples	Opening and filling positions are specifically aimed at hiring a family member.
Terms/TI definitions	<b>Fraud:</b> The sole act of cheating/falsification of data which enables a candidate/student/staff to gain an unfair advantage in comparison to other candidates
Examples	Students cheating during exams. A member of staff falsifies information about their CV; Allocation of research grants for other purposes not included in the research proposal;



Terms/TI definitions	<b>Lobbying:</b> Activities which influence any type of governmental or institutional actions or policies to encourage outcomes which are in favor of specific intuitions, individuals or organizations.
Examples	Staff members lobbies for his project to be awarded in the selection process.
Terms/TI definitions	<b>Revolving doors:</b> Individuals whose role varies based on their preference to work for public or private companies exploiting their tenure in the public office for the benefit of the companies which they used to/or regulate
Examples	A powerful state official seeks employment as a rector.

Selecte 17 rruption patterns in higher education  
Source Corruption, the Lack of Academic Integrity and Other E 6 al Issues in Higher Educatio: What Can Be Done Within the Bologna Process?. Denisova-Schmidt, E, 2018. European Higher Education Area: The Impact of Past and Future Policies. 61-75. Copyright Denisova-Schmidt, 2018. (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018)

1 Other forms of corruption in higher education are also well known and well documented. Although in the example of the TI Language Guide examples are not given in the context of 25 higher education institutions, the act itself, the misbehavior is well documented in many cases around the world (Parr, 2013) including North Macedonia. Therefore, defining and exemplifying these terms beyond the examples given by TI will help to identify unethical behavior taking place in H.E. institutions.

**Embezzlement** is the illicit act of appropriation and material gain of funds and goods that are trusted to individuals who uphold public positions in a governmental and nongovernmental sector. Example: Staff member, regardless whether academic or administrative, allocates funds which are destined for project implementation to his/her personal account. Such allocation of funds might include internal, such as national programs for implementation of projects, or international ones such as the case of World Bank/EU funded projects.

Similarly to *TI Language Guide*, (Osipian, 2009) published *The Glossary of Higher Education Corruption with explanations* in which he defines the following phenomena:

**Extortion** is the act of demanding a bribe in a way that a method of coercion is involved. Such cases involve staff members who intentionally coerce students to pay bribes. Such corruption patterns are not necessarily connected to higher education only. Extortion is a well-documented phenomenon 72 present in all spheres of public life, especially in cases of municipalities and countries where corruption is pervasive. Such practice is not foreign to medical practitioners where patients are coerced to pay a bribe in order to secure an appointment at a doctor in a public hospital.

**Cronyism** in higher education is yet another phenomenon where a certain advantage is given to students, candidates or employees because of their connection to powerful staff members of the university. Cronyism is one of those deviant phenomena in higher education which is omnipotent and with its versatile nature can potentially be present on all levels of academic life. Institutional operation of cronyism is, but not limited to employment, promotion, graduation, financial assistance and bursary.

**Diploma fraud** is a purposeful change in the educational data which are issued by higher education institutions. This falsification is a well-established practice which involves issuing false diploma credentials to candidates who are interested in buying a diploma rather than earning one. These businesses have a well-established web of academic and administrative staff who contribute to the development of this unlawful practice by providing insight on the ways that such documents would be less differentiated from an original.

**Unethical behavior** is referred to behavior which is contrary to the institutional codes for ethical conduct. However, when such institutional ethical codes are not drafted, published and made accessible, corruption persists to be a demonstration of unethical behavior.

**Kickbacks** is a form of a bribe which is received after the favor is done. Are bribes paid ex-post. Kickbacks come in the form of percentage from the total budget of the transaction. Such examples involve keeping staff members on payrolls while the percentage of the payroll is transferred at the end of the service.

**Negligence** can involve both academic and administrative staff. The way this phenomenon is demonstrated is by being negligent to performing duties in a timely and professional manner. Negligence can also breach the terms of agreement between the employer and employee. Negligence among members of the academic staff is related to showing up for classes, meetings and other important events hosted by the institution. Other forms involve late submission of academic duties towards students such as writing recommendation letters to hosting institutions. This type of breach of confidence is without a doubt an academic corruption.

## 6.2 Degree Mills

Degree mills present yet another form of manipulation of H.E. institutions. These institutions are used to spread corrupt practices where fake university degree certificates are awarded or sold without any presence. "A degree mill offers a credential purely in exchange for payment and nothing else" (UNESCO, 2009) Another characteristic of these institutions is that they operate without accreditation by the respective Ministries of education, or they have an accreditation by "bogus accreditation bodies which are known as accreditations



mills".(Mohamedbhai, 2016) Degree mills are scattered around the world, but more so in countries in transition or the developing countries taking advantage of weak regulations, corrupt politicians and judiciary systems, dysfunctional educational systems where bribery and other forms of corruption are prevalent. Despite the belief that with modernization of these countries corruption will decline, on the contrary, corruption in these countries especially in the post-Soviet bloc is constantly growing. (Elena Denisova-Schmidt, 2017b)

The UNESCO's Council for Higher Education Accreditation (Ibid.) characterizes diploma mills as following:

- Absent permission by legal authorities to operate as a higher education institution by national authorities.
- Lack of student or staff attendance requirement for presence either on campus or online.
- Low student engagement in coursework or course content, with even fewer requirements to fulfil the criteria for obtaining specific title.
- Information about the location, structure, status, permits disclosed.
- Lack of means of ways to communicate with the institutions other than phone number and email.
- Falsify information of internal and external evaluation such as QA reports, accreditation and similar documents which increase the qualitative review of the institution.
- Degrees that are issued are not recognized and therefore accepted in other higher education graduate programs on a national level.
- Lack of list of lecturers and their credentials, qualifications or achievements and whether this staff is related in any way to degree mills. The underlying assumption is that the teaching staff has received their credentials at the same institution and therefore contributing to the institution.
- Copy content from other higher education institutions only to be found at the diploma mill's web page. Plagiarize material from legitimate institutions for inclusion on degree mill Websites.
- Contain websites with suspicious domains different from the domain of most of the institutions in the country. Many such examples include universities which are based in UK and the degree credentials with UK based university names are sold in China. UK MPs firstly expressed their concern over this phenomenon back in 2014, which resulted with a government opening an investigation in 2015 on *fake university degree websites*, only later to launch a *Crackdown on fake universities* whose primary goal was to "to prosecute and take down fraudulent websites masquerading as genuine degree-awarding institutions". (BBC, 2015) The UK government also set up a special agency named HEDD (Higher Education Degree Datacheck)

to further investigate the issue and take action against this phenomenon. As a result, in 2017, more than 40 bogus web pages were shut down. (BBC, 2017)

<sup>1</sup> Corruption in higher education is also defined by <sup>2</sup> the principles of research misconduct. *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* defines research misconduct as “fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism (the so-called FFP categorization) in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results”. (ALLEA All European Academies, 2017) <sup>2</sup> The code continues by being more specific as to what the FFP categorization means. Fabrication refers to inventing results and presenting them as if they are real. “Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment or processes or changing, omitting or suppressing data or results without justification. Plagiarism is using other people’s work and ideas without giving proper credit to the original source, thus violating the rights of the original author(s) to their intellectual outputs.” (Ibid.)

While discussing the most appropriate definition of corruption in education it is worth asking the question, what are some of the characteristics of a corruption free education system? According to (Heyneman, 2004) a corruption free education has the following characteristics:

- An open and equal access to all educational opportunities;
- Fair distribution of content and other educational materials;
- Non-selective, fair and transparent criteria for professional advancement.
- All higher education institutions undergo an accreditation process which is equally applied to all institutions without preference given to certain public or private institutions.
- Fair distribution of acquired educational goods;
- Positive, careful and encouraging context for national minorities;
- Academic and administrative staff at public and private institution demonstrate a high level of integrity by respecting the institutional, national and international standards for ethical behavior at workplace;

<sup>15</sup> *Transparency International's Global Corruption Report* (GCR) which brings together most prominent experts to tackle corruption based on the field in the society where corruption is most prevalent addresses corruption in education, more specifically in higher education. According to the report (Transparency International, 2013), four factors contribute significantly to the increase of corruption in academia.

The first contributing factor as mentioned in the report is the lack of government funding. The lack of funding has resulted not only in the decrease of the financial and professional part, but also a decrease in the ethical part too. Professors in order to secure a

more decent living decide to choose an easier and faster way to balance the loss of income caused by the lack of funding by offering services that are illegal and with a low risk.

The second contributing factor as mentioned in the report is lack of government support. This lack of government funding leaves the universities with no choice but to expand their services across wider areas of the society with hybrid business models which in turn increases their funding and enable the academic staff to use the same to fund research projects. Of course, this “expansion of services” involves for-profit managerialism and often comes with more pressure to be financially thriving. For the academic staff this usually means longer working hours, teaching during weekends and/or preparation of application for joint projects such as Erasmus+ programs.

Third contributing factor has to do with the immense pressure that is put on H.E. institutions and that is the need for international recognition. The most reputable rankings such as The Shanghai <sup>1</sup> Ranking and Times Higher Education World University Rankings evaluate <sup>66</sup> the institution based on the number of publications that have been published by the academic staff, as well as other factors which include the quality of educational services of the institution.

Since the reputation of the institution is heavily dependent on the number of publications by staff members, apart from teaching hours, conducting research and publishing seems to present an additional burden to the professoriate.

The fourth reason contributing to increased corruption among H.E. institutions according to the GCI (Ibid.) is decentralization. In order <sup>1</sup> to meet the needs of the local community, the tertiary education institutions are granted more autonomy by the state. This can be used for different purposes and sometimes not with good intentions. The increased decentralization leads to lower degree of oversight, centralized quality control and enables more freedom and independence for experimentation with the funds and academic content but also the quality of examination method, entrance exams which are perceived as hotbeds for corruption.

### 6.3 CORRUPTION AS A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Beyond numbers, corruption is not only an economic obstacle, but it is a legal and political obstacle for states on national and international level. Education is a fundamental human right. This is true regardless of one's race, gender, religion, disability, political preference, ethnicity or country where <sup>43</sup> you live, everybody is entitled to access to education protected by law. Engraved in 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* presents one of the most important achievements of legal representation in the history of humankind. The

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Universal Declaration of Human rights today serves as a common standard measuring the achievement of nations towards fulfilling the basic human rights. Signatory countries are obliged not only to respect this right, but to promote and nurture these rights in a way that will benefit the citizens of all Member States. (The United Nations, 1948)

Education as a human right has the following connotation:

- “the right to education is legally guaranteed for all without exceptions or discrimination” (Ibid.)
- “states have the obligation to respect, fulfil and protect this right” (Ibid.)
- “existing mechanisms enable states to hold states accountable for violations of the right to education” (Ibid.)

The importance of education is because it presents a powerful tool for socially and economically marginalized citizens to rise above poverty and cherish freedom and equality with other citizens of the society.

The right to education, being part of this equality process, the further development of which was enabled by many international normative instruments, including: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960). The right to education continues to be a key principle of the Millennium Development Goals(MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and lately, the Education 2030 which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR & UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, 1999) dedicates two articles to the right to education, articles 13 and 14. Article 13 (2): The right to receive an education of this covenant specifically defines the essential features and forms under which education shall take appropriate application:

- **Availability** – foresees educational institutions which are functional, implementing functional educational programs with limited capacity, which are in accordance with the national and international laws, overlooked by the State.
- **Accessibility** – foresees educational institutions which are accessible to citizens regardless of their religion, ethnicity and race and sexual orientation.

- **Acceptability** – includes the core of all educational programs, the teaching, the books, the content to which students are exposed making sure that the content is culturally relevant and respectful, accurate and appropriate for all, students and parents likewise.

- **Adaptability** – is about the educational evolution of the system, where the system needs to demonstrate resilience and flexibility in order to address, meet and adapt to the ever changing cultural, religious, social and economic environment of the country. In this way meeting the needs of the communities of the state.

54  
(CESCR & UN Committee on  
Economic Social and Cultural  
Rights, 1999)

While *Availability* obliges states to ensure free primary education to all, secondary and higher education shall be generally available and accessible by progressively introducing education to all. (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2009) *Corruption* in education particularly harms the availability because while this feature specifically requires safe buildings and safe water and teaching materials the appearance of any form of corruption restricts the availability of these facilities. Such examples would include embezzlement where a state official illegally acquires funds allocated for building a new school or reconstruction of an old one.

*Accessibility* featured in the Article 13 suggests that education shall be accessible to everyone regardless of the physical or economic conditions to which a student is a subject. In the context of all level of education, corruption again infringes this right by limiting the access to education to student who cannot bribe the corrupt official to secure a bed in the dormitory and can't afford to cover the expenses of renting an apartment in this way restricting access to the educational institution for potential pupils or students.

Corruption is not limited only to the above-mentioned *Availability* and *Accessibility* features that education must have as a legal obligation in a Member State. The analysis of the effect of corruption on human rights however, should be expanded beyond accessibility and availability since corruption operates on more levels. Since the *right to education* encompasses the right to quality education both in public and private schools, the presence of corruption affects the schooling system in a way that compromises its core values. Corruption in human resources in a given educational institution affects standards by which the new staff is hired



and, in that way, harming students who miss a chance to receive a qualitative teaching from a teacher who is more qualified, more knowledgeable, and more enthusiastic. Another example which affects the *Availability* of educational material has to do with books. Since 2009, as part of the project “Free course books for every pupil” The Ministry of Education has the obligation to provide pupils in primary and secondary education with books for all subjects. However, according to media reports, only in one municipality (Gostivar) in North Macedonia, 10.000 books are missing in the primary education and another 10.000 in the secondary education. (360° Alsat M, 2020) According to the source, Arbëria Design, which prints these books, is the second most profitable company from the Ministry of Education budget and the company is also listed as the biggest donor to the political party to which the one of the minister Arbër Ademi belongs to. As if this is not convincing enough, during the process of procurement for printing and securing books (most susceptible areas to corrupt activities) the Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science has repeatedly reached agreements for procurements in four-eyed principle. One company is usually favored and dominates all other major procurement agreements of the ministry, and that is the same company responsible for the securing books for schools that is mentioned above. (Трпковски, 2018)

Books and other educational material should be available in sufficient quantity in order for an educational institution to deliver its primary role, that of an accessible and available institution open for all. Any relocation or abuse of funds harms the education sector immensely, not only because it limits an access to education to a certain generation, but also because of the corrupt culture under which these generations are exposed.

The effect of the relocated funds from the state to enrich individuals or groups like political parties is a well-documented harmful effect on multiple levels in the society. First and the utmost, the state will fail to ensure the building pillars of human rights such as: to use the *maximum of its available resources* to achieve the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR, Article 2(1)). Educationally, such practices threaten the quality of educational services which in turn become less effective and more instrumental for the politicians. Politicization as another form of corruption of Macedonian educational institutions occurred in such instances in which the course books that otherwise provide access to qualitative education based on facts, end up being used as a political tool to spread false information, xenophobia, language of hate against minority groups which do not necessarily correspond with the political ideology of the party, whatever that might be. In this way promoting a distorted set of values while committing another violation of human rights. Namely, *Article 14 of The European Convention on Human Rights* and *The Human Rights Act* prohibit discrimination and sets forth rights and freedom *without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority,*

*property, birth or other status.* (European Court of Human Rights & Council of Europe, Article 14)

Overall corrupt practices in the education sector are as complex and wide as the sector itself. The evolving nature of the sector makes it difficult to trace corrupt practices because these practices fill in the emptiness of lack of national and international legislation to specifically incorporate corrupt practices in education, each one separately in the legislation systems of the states. In doing so, states risk downsizing the harmful effect of each one of these practices and contribute to higher perception of corruption among the population.



## 7: Corruption in higher education in North Macedonia

In order to understand why corrupt practices take place in H.E. systems, we need to investigate the possible reasons for the university students to decide to accept corruption as part of their pathway to getting a university education. This leads us to the roots of the problem. Namely, several reasons can be mentioned.

Corruption has a significant effect on the quality of the higher education sector in North Macedonia. Several prior studies have reported and alarmed the incidence of the degree that has encapsulated education.

(Pajaziti, Gerguri. 2012) in their paper *Toward University Ethics and Academic Excellence: Addressing and Fighting corruption*, using analytical approach conducted a research with alumni (Pajaziti, 2018) and concluded that “other forms of corruption (favoritism, book buying, sexual services) are more present than bribery”.

Along the same lines, the book *Res Societatis* (Pajaziti, 2015) explores the relation between the values and the academia and the way corruption affects the education system in the county. Among other conclusions, the book claims that students have been exposed to corrupt practices, that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the students have used the help of their friends to pass the exam and that  $\frac{1}{4}$  used bribe as a method to pass an exam.

In his book *Etika Publike*, the author (Pajaziti, 2005) analyzes in details the effects of corruption in other spheres in the society and he claims that the conventional legal definition of the term corruption does not encompass the anti-corruption efforts. The author highlights that the legal approach of corruption is narrowed because it does not encompass other anti-corruption efforts and therefore calls upon a wider approach to analysis of corruption in other fields because it violates not only the criminal code but also other codes such as the administrative code, as well as social, economic and educational norms of the society.

In relation to corruption, if considered as moral and legal anomaly, (Zarevski, 2015) takes a more philosophical approach to the analysis of the role of education in the society. The author points out that the most important mission of education is to rise above the societal turmoil and that such thing is only possible if the society incorporates rationality and objectivity as the main drivers of the societal transformation. Hence, corruption, among others, being an educational problem, requires wide, serious, objective, rational and systematic efforts in overcoming the harmful effects of this societal problem.

The first reason why corrupt practices take place in H.E.I. is the politicization of education in North Macedonia. In the recent history of the country, and especially in countries in transition, bringing many laws can be problematic. Although these groups of countries are expected to change their laws in order to adapt to the needs of the market economy, this transformation needs to be at a reasonable pace. The government and the political parties in order to push forward their political agenda will vote for laws that are sometimes even hard to implement. North Macedonia has a good track-record of laws that lack implementation. The issue with the new laws is that the implementation falls behind and sometimes takes a whole year for HE institutions to successfully implement the law. This sudden and frequent implementation of law on HE is sometimes even pro-forma so the H.E.I. can avoid repercussions.

Apart from bringing new laws and implementing them in the society in a reasonable time-frame to allow H.E. institutions as well as other bodies to adapt to the new circumstances is the inclusivity in the process of drafting the law. *Professorial Plenum*, which included students and professors organized massive protests in 2018 across the country and among the main reasons behind this massive protest which eventually lead to the occupation of a public university building was a rebellion against the implementation of newly proposed law on higher education which lacked inclusivity from students and professors and therefore saw it as another breach of the academic freedom in the country.

Although expectations about the HE were high from the new government which extensively promoted the return of the academic freedom back to the HE institutions, professors and students, that promise might have to wait for now. BIRN reports that multiple Trade Unions, including The Trade Union of Education, Science and Culture Workers, SONK, and the Independent Trade Union of Academic Workers, who represent the interest of HE workers including the academic and administration of HE institutions have experienced increasing pressure by the government and particularly by the Ministry of Education as they have accused the latter to stand behind the will to replace the existing unions with parallel unions which will best serve their interest. (Marusic, 2020)

The threat of political interference influencing education in North Macedonia and other countries in development presents a powerful tool for manipulation which is hard to ignore. This is mainly due to the power and the ability to bend reality beyond facts. The country certainly has an impressive record of practicing political pressure to influence prosecution, courts, judges and lawyers which are well documented in the *EU Country Progress Reports* as well as the *State Department Country Reports on Human Rights*. Also, *BIRN* documents an impressive record about the political reality in which holding a political position can save you

from any wrongdoing and any court decision regardless whether it is reported by a state institution such as Financial Police or by common citizens. BIRN (Димитриевски, 2020) reports claims that out of 186 officials who have served different ministries in North Macedonia since 1998, 97 did not receive any criminal charges, 44 were prosecuted by the state, 45 received criminal charges from citizens, companies and other. Out of 10 criminal charges initiated by state institutions only 4 have actually resulted with criminal charges out of which two against ex-ministers of education. (Ibid.)

There are positive examples where the wrongdoings have been properly sanctioned in the courts of R. of North Macedonia. The most recent as well as the most shocking one in the recent history of the country is the prison sentence for three university professors at the Faculty of Economy-the oldest and most prestigious public university. The sentencing was on the basis of bribery, fraud and asking for sexual favors from students. According to the court records, the students could pass the exam by bribing the professors with 1000 euros or meet them in person for sexual favors. (Ландов, 2020)

This certainly is not the only case that has ended in courts. The other equally controversial case involves the faculty of Pedagogy in which through a complex network of administrators, mainly through the head of the Student Affairs office have issued falsified documents to employees of the Ministry of Interior based on which they were further promoted.

Many more cases have been repeatedly striking the public with news about obstructing educational inspectors to have their usual unannounced controls at private and public H.E.I. The underlying problem with the dichotomy of private vs state H.E. in North Macedonia is the politicization of some of these institutions. Private H.E. institutions and their owners are closely associated to powerful members in different political parties who despite everybody's surprise still continue to operate in the country although being subject to many corruption scandals.

*The International University of Struga*, the owner of which is a former MP, Minister and as of 2021 a re-elected Mayor for the third term, has attacked and expelled inspectors from the university building. The inspectors reported the case to the *Police* and *State Inspectorate for Education*. A similar incident occurred in 2016 when the Inspectorate found that many professors engaged at the same institution without holding a diploma or a state recognized diploma. (Николовска-Ризбановиќ, 2018). This practice of unqualified and unauthorized staff teaching at the International University of Struga has been followed by students too. The inspection report states that students without previous diplomas or state recognized diplomas were accepted and were active students at the university.

Claimed by the inspector Gjorgji Ilievski and later confirmed by the State Commissions for Prevention of Corruption as illegal the Deputy Minister of Interior, Agim Nuhiu, while serving the government has been awarded teaching-scientific titles at the State University of

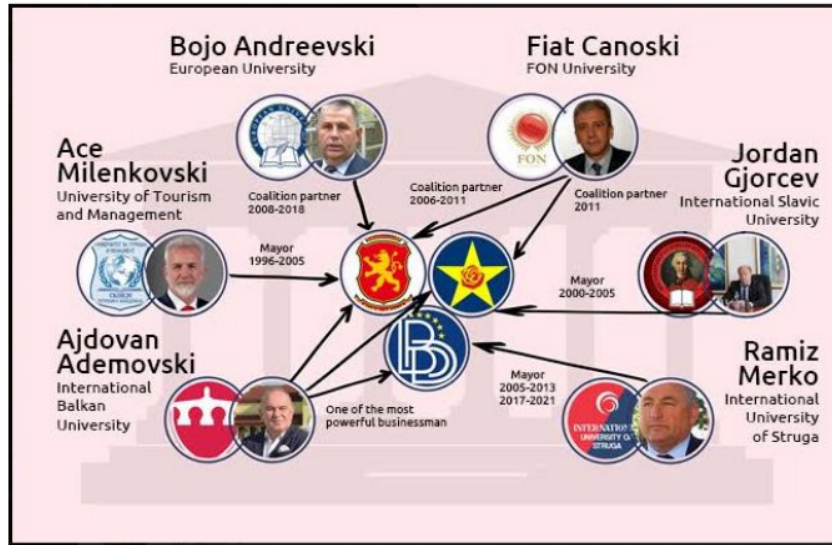
Tetovo although his status as professor was dormant. (Атанасоска-Манасиева, 2019b) The same inspector, through official documents revealed that the Minister of Education Arbër Ademi has been involved in similar practice where while his position at the university was dormant he has been awarded teaching-scientific titles. (Атанасоска-Манасиева, 2019a) The State Commission against Prevention of Corruption is further investigating the case but declared that due to the workload they have not been able to make any progress. (Ibid.) This is quite indicative due to the fact that the Commission has not been able to make a progress since 2019 about a case which involves a high level official and as such raises doubts of political pressure to further investigate the case against an official who is currently holding the position of minister. In a country with high standards of integrity and functional judiciary, the cases would have been closed with resignation and further investigation by the prosecution office would be initiated to investigate the case and eventually sentence everyone who is involved. Contrary to the expectation, none of the officials mentioned resigned and the inspector who revealed the documents and made the scandal public has been downgraded to a lower position where he will not be able to inspect the work of H.E. institutions in the country. (Телевизија Телма, 2019).

Other forms of politicization of H.E.I. institutions in North Macedonia have been reported and they all seem to follow the same pattern. Leaders or powerful people within the political parties are owners or stand behind the private HE institutions through which they refuse to cooperate with the officials to either publish relevant data regarding their students or any information regarding their staff. Most importantly, these institutions are able and have been able to remain open even though failing at fulfilling the minimum standards set by the ministry of education and they have been around for decades. It is no secret among the citizens that these universities were established to serve four purposes. The first one is to provide diplomas and qualifications for the members of their own political parties in order for them to be employed or be promoted at a workplace. This is particularly the case when another high ranked official of their political party is given the opportunity to employ them. Second, provide employment opportunities for members of political parties and youth councils of the same party as staff at the universities such as teaching assistants, administrators, janitors, security and so on. Third, while providing services to the members of political parties the universities remain open to other potential students who come from other countries, such is the case with students coming from Albania and Turkey and “provide” qualifications for them and fourth, the enrichment and other financial and political benefits from tuition and other “administrative” procedures. The following Figure 4, as published by BIRN (Апостолов & Трпковски, 2020) exemplifies this pattern of wealthy and powerful leaders of political parties associated with private universities in North Macedonia. Figure 4 demonstrates the complex network of party

leaders and businessmen and the universities they represent, the parties they are associated with as well as the coalition or rank that they held while being in the government.

**Figure 4**

*Secret business model with diplomas without learning*



Source Тајниот бизнис-модел со дипломи без учење (The secret business model of diplomas without learning). Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Macedonia 2020. (Апостолов & Трпковски, 2020)

Out of 26 H.E. institutions registered in North Macedonia, 19 are private and 7 are public. Apart from issues which are related to accessibility and quality of control of private HE institutions in North Macedonia, the public institutions have not been spared of controversy. This controversy consists of introducing “innovations” to the H.E. landscape and “forward thinking” processes which will lead the education system forward and will result in a more inclusive and qualitative education process in the country. That hardly was the case with H.E.I., especially when public universities were obliged to multiply their services to other cities all over the country.

Due to the number of people that are affected, proposal and implementation of new laws and new policies in H.E. can also be financially demanding especially since the budget has limited means to fund such a large scale transformative projects. This can be a particularly sensitive issue to the public especially when you live in one of the poorest countries in the continent where students live in dormitories which have not been renovated for decades and are seen by students as miserable conditions with lack of basic sanitary conditions. Such was the case with the decision to have dispersed studies where a university will be open in minor cities around the country in order to stimulate employment and migration to the capital. However, this government's decision came with a high price tag. The hiring and transport of staff, new locations, and new supplies for new classrooms almost doubled the expenditures in the education sector. This was also perceived by the public as another attempt by the government to increase their wealth because all the new calls and hiring that ought to take place to fill in the newly created positions for the new branches of the public universities offered new possibilities for corruption practices to take place. The ruling political party at that time, VMRO had already bad reputation about the ways they achieved to increase the wealth of the political party which SCOOP-The Center for Investigative Journalism found that total assets of VMRO are 60 million euros and presents the richest political party in the European continent.(SCOOP Macedonia, 2016) Certainly, another inevitable question is how did a political party from one of the poorest countries in the continent become the richest political party in whole Europe? This leaves very little to imagination. For other well informed citizens "political parties are the basis for corruption" in North Macedonia. Prof. Abdylmenaf Bexheti (Ibid.) states that "Corruption somehow springs from here, if springs from political parties that are a platform where staffing decisions are delegated across institutions, you can imagine how that corruption penetrates and multiplies on all grounds in the institutions".

The government's decision to implement dispersed studies and scatter the study programs in other cities around the country brought another issue to light. Namely, the quality of the educational programs became at the center of the critique of students, university professors and non-governmental organizations. The *Pro forma* studies which hosted study programs which had very little control mechanisms to quality control, and since it was a government project, the controls of the ministries were less strict because they would emphasize the deficiencies of the system and therefore question and harm the government's ability to bring the right decision. Students started complaining about the quality of the courses, the content and the practical hours from the very beginning. They usually addressed the core

issues with the coursework such as the lack of space, offices, laboratories and material which will ensure a smooth transition. Other complaints about the dispersed studies was a lack of presence of professors because the same university professors who taught in the capital had to teach the classes the same day at another city in the country which is 2-3 hours drive from the capital. These dispersed studies quickly became a hotbed for ghost teachers and mentors, dissatisfied students and frustrated tax payers for their wasted opportunity for a much-needed reform in education.

The decision to implement the dispersed studies was controversial because it lacked inclusivity. While bringing the decision, the government hardly ever consulted the bodies that represent the HE sector in the country. Universities, Students bodies, professors, education specialists were hardly consulted while drafting the law. The process of drafting and implementing the law was solely a governmental project, an agreement between party coalitions which enabled passing the law in the parliament. Such an exclusive process no wonder took its toll when it had to be implemented. The universities lacked finances and had to stretch their budgets to meet the new reality, the staff was unprepared to teach in improvised classrooms without conditions and students had to attend classes in improvised classrooms in different buildings and locations around the cities which were not match to real classrooms. The dispersed studies quickly became a point of mockery among the population calling them dispersed studies in every village. In this context of being excluded from the whole process *The Youth Educational Forum for Deutsche Welle* in the article titled *Dispersed studies or imitation of studying* stated:

"We never found out what the action plan for dispersed studies was or what the expected goals were... as there has previously been a lack of public debate on the issue. Neither the youth nor the professional public have been given the opportunity to influence this decision".

(Блажевска, 2017)

The saga with the dispersed studies ended with the election of the new government which decided to suspend the dispersed studies and all activities related to H.E. who were involved in it. This type of political experimentation with educational institutions is particularly counterproductive in countries in transition due to the fragile nature of the institutions which can easily result in loss in public trust and question the skills and the efforts of students, teachers and administrators who work in this sector.

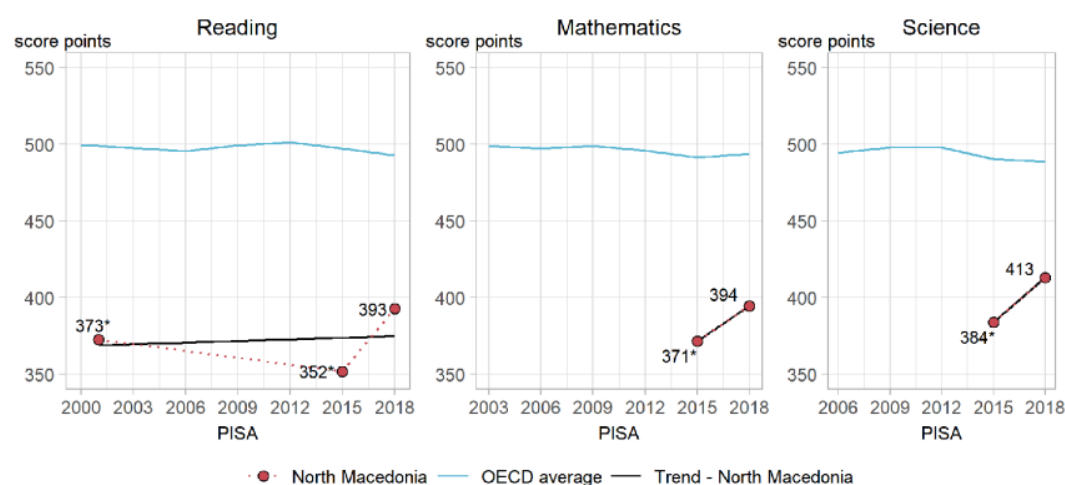
Correcting past mistakes and their repercussions is not the only issue that the education system is undergoing currently in North Macedonia. Other factors which influence the fragile



balance of qualitative education in times when budget allocation is scarce in education is the issue with the maintenance of the quality in the long term under the current threats. One of those threats is the devalued secondary education. North Macedonia has a mandatory primary and secondary education. This was the other decision which was brought by the same government who also introduced dispersed studies. This mover was symptomatic because it was connected with the need for a larger student body in the dispersed H.E. institutions. Even in conditions where the secondary education is mandatory by law this is quite contradictory because the results that North Macedonia received from 2000 to 2015 in the international standardized testing such as *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)* has registered a falling trend in reading, mathematics and science. Despite a slight increase in 2015 to 2018, North Macedonia still falls behind the average score of OECD countries. (OECD, 2019).

**Figure 5.**

*Trends in performance in reading, mathematics and science.*



Source The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) PISA results from 2018. Copyright OECD 2021

This is particularly symptomatic because there is a student body in the country which consistently underperforms on international standardized testing, and this student body who despite having lack of skills in reading, science and mathematics is obliged to complete the secondary education. Apart from this, the majority of this body who lack skills in reading, math and science end up registering in H.E. institutions in North Macedonia. According to the data from the State Statistical Office of Republic of North Macedonia for the year 2017/2018 a total number of 71.944 students completed secondary education, out of which 56.941 got registered

in HE institutions in the country. (State Statistical Office, 2019). These statistics lead to the following question: How does such a small country, among the poorest in Europe, have resources to accept such a large student body in H.E. institutions? In comparison to Macedonia which has around 80% acceptance rate in H.E. institutions, Switzerland has barely 15% of acceptance rate. The answer lies in the entrance exams in H.E. institutions. While private H.E. institutions accept students without requiring any entrance exams, in public higher education certain faculties have an entrance exam but calls usually have first, second and third calls if the places are not filled and therefore barely any student is left outside the system. While these students have underperformed in primary and secondary education yet are able to register at any H.E. institutions in the country as long as they have the will to do it. This is problematic for H.E. institutions on many levels. It creates a huge gap between students who perform well during studies and underperform. Those who underperform are particularly capable of finding other ways to beat the system by engaging in alternative forms of passing courses. That usually is through bribery, nepotism, favoritism and other corruption patterns in H.E. in North Macedonia as found in (Hajrullai, 2015) (Pajaziti, n.d.)

## 8: Academic Integrity

It is imminent to address academic integrity while tackling issues related to corruption in higher education in one country, especially since education and awareness of students and staff on academic integrity is regarded as a key tool in the fight against academic corruption at institutional level. The importance of proper application of academic integrity does not lie only in transformative power to make better, more responsible citizens, its power lies in the ability to change the behavior and the culture of the way the next generations are educated. Hardly any field in society can be found in which academic integrity does not matter. It matters to schools, universities, business society, to sports and politics.

However, there is overwhelming evidence around the world that highlight the emergency to address this issue on all national levels of education, as the academic malpractice in higher education is on the rise. For example, in 2016 CNN published an article of the most famous public figures who are accused of plagiarism. The list includes the current President of The United States, Joe Biden, Vladimir Putin, ex German ministers of defense Guttenberg who resigned, and of education Schavan who was stripped of her title because of plagiarism. (Fawdy, 2016). In the same year, The Guardian reported that top universities in the UK have caught 50.000 students cheating (The Guardian, 2016) and in 2018 have seen an increase of 40% of cheating and academic misconduct (Marsh, 2018) which has put the University of Cambridge and Oxford *under scrutiny*. Heyneman found that from 18-20 percent of students from these Easter European countries such as: "Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia and 40 percent of ... students in Moldova reported that they had used some illegal method to gain admission to their university." (P. Heyneman et al., 2007) The Moscow Police, similarly reports approximately 30 to 40 cases annually where professors are caught for bribes at Russian universities. (Mohamedbhai, 2015) Being engaged in malpractices affects the performance of the future generations because it affects the way they behave in their personal and professional lives. In fact, (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2009) concludes that the consequences of exposure to dishonest practices as students will more likely continue to demonstrate dishonest behavior in the course of their lives by further being dishonest to personal and professional circles, and, if academic dishonesty is widespread, it only becomes worse. (Pavela, 1997)

More and more institutions, both governmental, nongovernmental, as well as the business sector, large corporations and small and medium sized enterprises have become more aware of the harmful effects of corruption in their trades, deals, agreements altering the concepts of “laissez-faire” and “business as usual”. Hardly any sector in the society can be found without being affected by corruption. Business corporations, media, various watchdogs such as Transparency International and national commissions for prevention of corruption play a crucial role in implementing and enforcing laws on national and institutional level. All of these call upon more successful integration and implementation of concepts of integrity within the institutional level regardless of the nature of the institutions, be it governmental, non-governmental or coming from the business sector.

An important moment for ethics and integrity in any institution is drafting, adopting and implementing ethics and integrity principles on all levels. Using a hybrid approach of top-down and bottom-up approach to analyzing issues related to ethics and integrity appears to be the most promising. Developing a strategy to improve ethics and integrity on an institutional level requires a coherent and inclusive system, the approaches of which will eventually enable financial and other long-term strategies to be executed in the way they have been predicted initially.

Institutions at first express interest in drafting and adopting strategies to implement ethics and integrity principles because of the need to build a meritocratic institution, hoping that by adopting this approach, the company will demonstrate its proactive role in promoting qualitative services regardless of the nature of the services they offer. Determination to promote integrity within institutions, both public and private, has become an essential component for efficiency. Expressing an interest in integrity and maintaining the same are two different things. Institutions eventually need to move forward from interest to drafting their own code of ethics and values; however, drafting the values and codes requires commitment. By committing, the author mainly refers to drafting codes, measures, long-term and short-term strategies to improve ethics and integrity on institutional level. Committing is more demanding than drafting as it requires constant revision and re-evaluation of codes of ethics which the company or the institution drafted originally. Besides that, commitment to improving ethics and integrity institutionally requires the implementation of transparency, objectivity and fairness as key principles within the organization regardless of the subject or the case who might be under investigation, and that is easier said than done. Once one member of a group –in this case, a member of PR office or finance office- becomes the point of an investigation within the

institution- is when drafting the code of ethics is being put to the test. The initial of what seems to be a simple drafting of policies or regulations which specify the guidelines of what exemplifies an ethical behavior brings the management to the following questions: How effective are these measures, how successfully are they implemented, what results do they show, how transparent are these institutions in publishing these results, how these results are used by the management to draft new policies, propose and implement new measures as well as how this revision gives results in the fight to eliminate the cases of petty and grand corruption.

## 8.2 STRATEGIES

Most common strategies of implementation, management, policies and practices of ethics and integrity in literature revolve around two main pillars. These pillars include, law-abiding, which involves more rigid control by respecting laws, codes and ethical norms of the institution and value-based which encourages exemplary conduct based on high personal values. All the aspects of these strategies have been widely discussed in the works of Trevino & Weaver, (Treviño, L.K., 2003), Michaelson, 2006, Weibel, (Weibel, 2007) and Pyman, M. and S. Eastwood, (Pyman, Marc. Eastwood, 2018) OECD, (OECD, 2000b) All these strategies may result with simple but effective measures on ethical issues, which require objective, impartial revision through an open dialogue which includes understanding the essence of the codes of ethics and open an opportunity for more inclusive process where employees will not only be passive law-abiding citizens, but active agents in promoting values. The inclusive process here is at a center of the institutional transformation that is strived to be achieved through an objective, honest, and compassionate dialogue between management and employees. These two strategies are complementary because they complete each other. Remove one and the effects of the other will be diminished shortly after. Introducing external factors such as the law-abiding strategy is important because it defines the rules of the company or institution which the same is ready to defend even in cases where there is a need for legal resolution and all citizens are equal in front of the law regardless of their professional position. So these legal obligations for an ethical conduct within institutions quite coincidentally act as an egalitarian and protective measure, ensuring fairness for all. While the value-based approach is a motivational factor which ensures a sustainability of the corrupt-free institutional model based on incorporating values system based on honor, integrity and pride.

Of course, while talking about adopting a unified method to demonstrate higher values of ethics and integrity in workplaces one needs to take in consideration the vast cultural differences across countries and nations. The Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International exemplifies the differences among countries regarding how

corruption is perceived and how corruption is practiced. These countries also demonstrate the vast differences in how one single act can be perceived as highly corrupt in one country while in other countries casual and mandatory for simple tasks such as medical checkup. Strategies for successful implementation of ethics and integrity values are more easily applicable in countries with developed democratic societies based on rule of law and independent judiciary. This is because the rule of law enables formal investigation and sanctions malpractice while ensuring fewer violations. While the law-abiding and value-based ethics and integrity model presents an important milestone in defining and executing strategies to foster ethical behavior, they also present an important incentive for countries to adapt to national conditions and suit the strategies to their own circumstance.

<sup>31</sup> Regardless of vast differences across nations on the perception of corruption, the OECD *Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service* (OECD, 2000a) provides a comprehensive guide envisioned for different countries to adjust based on national variations and possibilities for the implementation of these principles. These principles of integrity management include 4 main roles.

- Determining and defining integrity
- Guiding towards integrity
- Monitoring integrity
- Enforcing integrity. (OECD, 2000a)

These 12 principles of OECD include:

1. Clear and concise ethical standards for public service
2. Ethical be standards should always be in accordance with the legal framework
3. Additional guidance for ethics for public servants should be made available
4. When exposing wrongdoings, public servants should be aware of their rights and obligations
5. Commitment to ethics by the politics and by the politicians reinforces ethical behavior of public servants
6. Transparent and open decisions-making process.
7. Guidelines regulating interaction between the public and private sector should be clear
8. Ethical conduct should be demonstrated and promoted by the leading positions at the institution.
9. PPPs' management (Practices, Procedures and Policies) should promote ethical conduct
10. Human resources conditions and management should promote institutional principles for ethical conduct

11. Ethical conduct should be promoted through the conditions for public service as well as the human resources.
12. Adequate sanctions and procedures which deal with cases of misconduct should be  
Appropriate procedures and sanctions should exist to deal with misconduct. (OECD, 2000a)

Similarly, *The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* (OECD, 2011) provides the standards to which the multinational enterprises can practice and demonstrate responsible business conduct in international setting.

The commonality between fighting corruption and bribery in public and private institutions lies in its ability to undermine the democratic principles within these institutions. The principles of competitiveness and free and fair markets are being most directly affected by high levels of corruption in societies. In private business, they discourage investment, in public service, they discourage trust in institutions, and no greater damage is known to exist to these two sectors.

One of the main reasons why managing institutional ethics and integrity has an economic reason is because the organization or company is predominantly driven by and for economic reasons. (Paine, 1994) More so, the possible lack of compliance to institutional code of conduct in some public institutions issues verbal warnings followed by financial cuts. The *Business Harvard Review* perceives *organizational ethics as the work of the management* because *managers at all levels and across all functions are involved in the process and have a more holistic approach to treating possible cases of misconduct*. Paine provides one of the most important recommendations to tackle institutional ethics. Paine states that the best way to maintain institutional ethics is by demonstrating exemplary positive conduct. "Creating an organization that encourages exemplary conduct may be the best way to prevent damaging misconduct." (Paine, 1994)



## 9: Corruption vs Academic Integrity

At this point, it is important to highlight what are some of the differences between corruption and academic integrity?

Corruption is a more general term which encompasses all deviant phenomena taking place in higher education institutions. Corruption in educational institutions encompasses several aspects.

**Detection-** the extent to which corrupt practices are present in one educational institution

**Quantification-** this includes identification of types of corruption present at the educational institution through internal and external methods and analysis.

**Consequences-** include legal repercussions for staff and students who engage in this type of malpractice within a higher education institution.

There are many other factors which influence corruption in higher education, they come in different ways and vary in scope and intensity depending on the nature of the problem. Corruption also varies because it is country based phenomenon mainly due to the level of the tolerance that one country can demonstrate on the issue of institutional corruption. Comparing to other forms of corruption in the society, corruption in education is specific by its nature because of these malpractices are usually difficult to detect as authorities, employees and students are reluctant to use the term “corruption” due to the conceptual and legal consequences that it implies. In cases where there is a corruption, or corrupt practices are point out as existent, the responsible governmental institutions such as ministries, inspectorates, prosecution and similar institutions initiate investigation, take legal actions and have the responsibility to show the results of such actions which in most of the cases results with penalization and incarceration of wrongdoers.

The term corruption also encompasses practices that are illegal but do not necessarily result in legal consequences because they appear as an external factor which influences the quality of education and educational outcomes of institutions. What determines whether actions are corrupt or not are legal provisions such as laws, articles, and regulations, and if these malpractices are not defined as a breach of these laws and regulations, then it cannot qualify as a corrupt behavior thus limiting the legal provisions to prosecute such cases in the courts. In this way, the wrongdoer enjoys a certain immunity who cannot be accused of corrupting the

system. An example would be politicization, where political figures and political decision-making affects institutions. In January, 2021, Turkish students and staff protested against the President's decision to appoint a rector of the most prestigious H.E.I. "Boğaziçi Üniversitesi" in Turkey outside the academic circles. Protest came as a result of violation of *senate's statement principles that the head of university must come from within academic circles*. Protesters were called "terrorists" by the president and were tear gassed by the police. Such events can be very harmful to the academic institution as it resulted with a drop in ranking of the institution and Academic Freedom Index. (Yackley, 2021). However, the drop in ranking and academic freedom indexes do not have a legal repercussions and criminal liability for any politician, but they demonstrate a clear and direct attack to the institution itself and exemplify the ways that the direct political interference in the education system can have detrimental effects on the overall quality of the educational institution.

The term corruption encompasses cases which are difficult to legally categorize as such due to the hidden mechanisms they are accomplished. For example, a rector wants to employ a person who is affiliated with a certain political party who he is a member of. This, of course, is not stated in the job advertisement for the open positions, but the preferences are channeled through commissions who are "randomly" selected for this specific task. To put it in the context in North Macedonia, an example of political influence was discovered by the educational inspectorate where certain ministers, while performing the duty as ministers, and while their position at the university was put on leave, they were still able to be promoted in their academic titles.

An important distinction between corruption and academic integrity is in the relativization of the term. Corruption due to the alarmist nature of the word implies immediate investigation and prosecution of wrongdoers and points fingers at authorities for lack of action to sanction such behavior. The benefits of the use of this term lie in its ability to demonstrate the urgency to take actions against it. This is important because what many institutions prefer to do, especially in countries in development, is simply refuse to acknowledge the existence of these phenomena and simply ignore the fact that these actions are illegal and deserve an investigation and preferably legal repercussions.

The term academic integrity in turn, relativizes the issue and offers a possibility to cultivate a positive transition by focusing on what are some troubling issues and more importantly how to overcome them. An academic integrity principle offers pedagogical solutions and focuses on developing positive traits and qualities in the fight against corruption. These practices, mainly implemented through learning outcomes of academic courses, focus on

how not to engage in academic dishonesty and will more likely lead to a more informed and a more educated citizen who will refuse to participate in demonstrating dishonest behavior because of his previous educational experience. Good academic integrity practices based on education, development, guidance through learning, progress and improvement are a tool to academic success.

Furthermore, the reason why so much emphasis is put on the educational component of academic integrity, as opposed to corruption, is the role institutional organization has as an agent for social change. While academic integrity can be taught in a constructive manner in an educational institution, corruption cannot be taught at educational institutions because it is not in their *interest*. Universities as an institution fulfil their mission based on the characteristics of their interest. Promotion and maintenance of academic integrity contributes to the distinctive nature of an academic institution because *learning* remains the main *interest* of the association. (Maciver, R. M, Page, 1959) Do not be misled by the fact that corruption, too, can be taught, but not in an educational institution and certainly not as an educational output. If otherwise, this will be against the *interest* of the educational institution itself.

Another important distinction between corruption and academic integrity lies in the fact that detecting and demonstrating the existence of corruption does not necessarily offer a solution to the problem because it lacks constructive components. Quantifying corruption in educational institutions is important because it serves as a catalyst for a major alignment that needs to take place within the institution. While corruption requires legal repercussions, academic integrity offers educational solutions. One of the ways to this major alignment from being perceived as a highly corrupt institution to intolerant and corruption free is by investing resources in educating staff and students about the phenomena, and work together to overcome the same. It is idealistic to believe that combating corruption in education through the legal system will solve the issue of corruption in one country. Norms, mechanisms and legal structure can partly cover the issue, that is why more needs to be done in order to consider corruption unacceptable on all levels of the society. Academic integrity has both a mediating role between corruption and education as well as enhancing role because it opens the possibility to fight corruption through education.

Regardless how complementary corruption and academic integrity can appear, in essence, values promoted through academic integrity stand in sharp contrast to corruption. Figuratively put, corruption through malpractices presents the long-lasting illness, whereas integrity is the cure for it. The way one prevents the other is best exemplified in the following definition: "Integrity stands for the continued commitment of education participants and

institutions to act in accordance with values and principles without engaging in corruption and describes a professional environment that allows them to do so.” (OECD, 2018a) Here, integrity meaning that acting in accordance to *values and principles* excludes the possibility of engaging in corrupt practices.

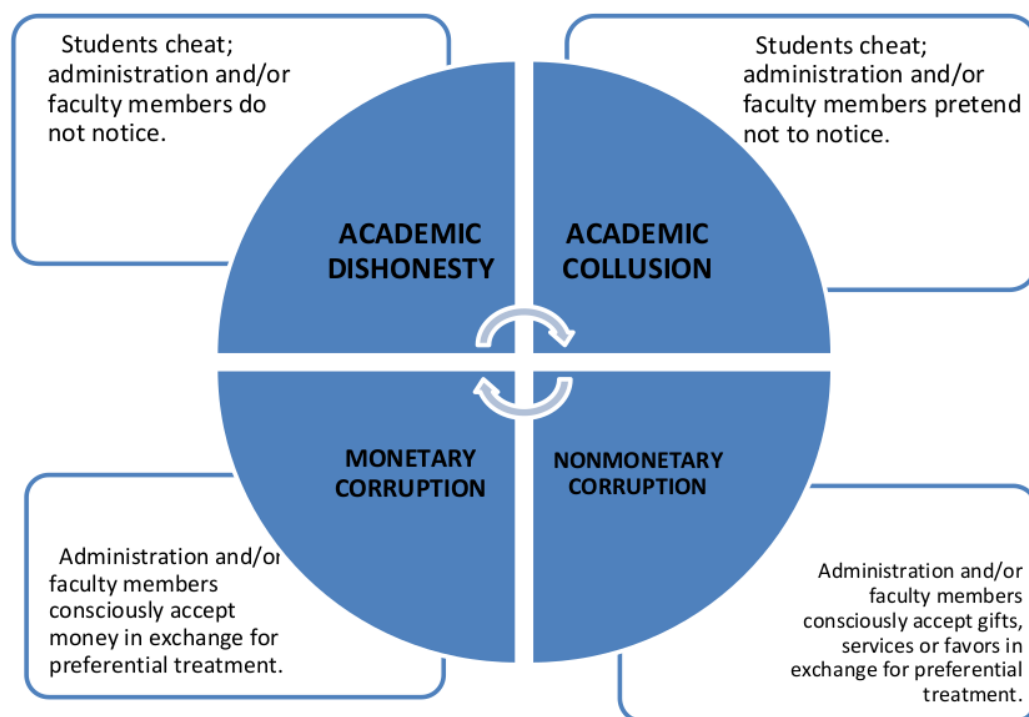
However, despite differences, it is worth pointing out that reports on corruption cases and integrity assessment policy analysis are both action-oriented as both provide feedback about the state of the **weaknesses of the education system as** an entity. (Ibid.)

Approaches to analysis of distinctions between what constitutes corruption and academic integrity practices remain difficult to identify due to the versatility of the practice itself. A contributing factor to this confusion is how the institutions use the term corruption interchangeably. Since there is no common agreement between H.E.I. institutions to use a common term for these types of malpractices, universities are left to decide the way they are going to name them. As a result, there are institutions which call these types of malpractices such as academic dishonesty, breach of code of conduct, ethical code, book of rules, whistleblowers and so on.

Scholars offer different approaches to the analysis of both phenomena, however the common denominator for such practices remains to be the inclusion of monetary vs nonmonetary practices and how the staff, administration and students act within the given environment, in this case, universities. A crucial process for students, staff and stakeholders in understanding and practicing academic integrity understands what practices are contrary to academic integrity. In Figure 3, (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017a) specifically defines practices that are opposite of academic integrity. On the students’ side, academic dishonesty is the most dominant practice of violating academic integrity because it infringes the ethical principles of the institution. It is false to believe that academic integrity relies solely on the behavior of the students. It is important to stress that academic integrity relies equally, if not more on the behavior of the staff, and in cases where the staff ignores the practices of academic dishonesty, in other words, if they do not report these cases, the staff, both academic and administrative they become complicit in devaluing directly the values of academic integrity and its educational outputs.

**Figure 6**

*Academic Integrity challenges in Higher Education*



6

Source The Challenges of Academic Integrity in Higher Education: Current Trends and Prospects. *CIHE Perspectives* 5, 1-25. Copyright 2017.

The question however remains, what other unethical methods beside cheating do students use to achieve the desired grade? The answer is, plagiarism. Plagiarism is most commonly understood as a simple copy-paste action. As suggested by (Walker, 1998), plagiarism is more than student copy-pasting the work of somebody else, instead Walter classifies seven different levels of plagiarism which academic staff can use to determine the level of academic dishonesty. In the context of promoting academic integrity, the same categories can be applied to serve as guidelines for educators to be aware about which aspects of these categories can be implemented in their course as a teaching outcome so students are aware of the ways they can avoid such behavior.

## 10: Definition of academic integrity

### 10.1 CONTEXT:

2 The research in academic integrity began in the United States. The study of issues related to academic integrity varied in focus and scope. The focus of these studies included “self-reported cheating behaviors” (McCabe, 1992) continued with “unpermitted collaboration on written assignments” (McCabe, Donald. Treviño, Linda Klebe. Butterfield, 2001) and followed by studies which explored students' motivation to engage in such activities (McCabe, Donald. Treviño, Linda Klebe. Butterfield, 2012) individual, peer, disciplinary, and contextual influences on cheating behavior (McCabe, Donald. Treviño, 1997) as well as the effect of students' cheating behavior on professional practice (McCabe, Donald. Treviño, Linda Klebe. Butterfield, 2012). Even though this innovative research to reconceptualize education took place for the first time across universities in the United States, commonalities regarding the widespread phenomena taking place at universities in other countries and continents came quickly with slight variations. These variations mainly reflect other underlying issues in the society which can have a serious impact on the acceptance of issues related to academic integrity, such as: the cultural norms, level of toleration of corruption, development, legal mechanisms against corruption and political will.

2 Another variation to the research of issues related to academic integrity has to do with the educational interpretation of scholars and how they define and perceive academic integrity. The United States approach focuses on self-reported plagiarism and cheating, the United Kingdom reflects the plagiarism mainly determined by technology, the Australian approach focuses on the issue as a teaching and learning problem which needs to be addressed by the governments, ministries, regulatory bodies, commissions and institutions in a process where staff and students will be supported to grow towards common good and that is the maintaining and cultivating high standards of academic quality while engaging in teaching and learning. The Swedish example focuses on a pedagogical approach to academic integrity where skills to good practices –more specifically how to properly do it- are integrated as a learning outcome of courses designed specifically to train students how to demonstrate behavior with integrity. (Razi, 2021). (Percorari, 2013) in her book exemplifies the ways that students can be engaged in the course of their university education on how to improve their knowledge on issues related to

integrity and ways to avoid plagiarism. By engaging students “with plagiarism intellectually it has an exciting potential to illuminate broad areas of the academic enterprise.” (Ibid.) “academic integrity must be clearly expressed as learning outcomes of a course”. That is why education is crucial in this process because by doing so an educational problem is solved with educational methods rather than with legal and disciplinary measures.

Tracey Bretag, the Australian author of the groundbreaking *Handbook of Academic Integrity* and one of the leading voices for academic integrity prefers to call *educational integrity* rather than *academic integrity*. It is important to make the distinction, namely the first one addresses the issue as an overall educational challenge of the educational institutions rather than as an academic problem which is limited only to individuals and its institutions. Bretag refers to it as “as a by-product of falling educational standards and quality in the context of internationalization.” (Bretag, 2019)

While the U.S. model and the U.K. scholarship model focus on the detection and quantification of the extent to which issues related to academic integrity place in H.E.I. institutions, the concentration is less on the educational part of the problem. The studies focus less on the cause, consequences as well as educational implications of such behavior. Leaving out the educational component to the analysis of the issue of integrity taking place in educational institutions limits the possibility of understanding the causes, consequences and possible solutions to the issue. Therefore, a more comprehensive model is necessary to be introduced, a model which crosses these boundaries and goes beyond plagiarism detection and cheating. (Prenshaw et al., 2021) propose *a holistic approach* to tackling issues in academic integrity. This comprehensive model must include a pedagogical component as it incorporates a more positive, educative, nurturing values which will appeal to students, staff and general public and it will be respected not because of fear of the consequences regardless of severity, but more because of the morality of the issue, a model where they, themselves exhibit behavior with integrity and become an agent and a model for integrity.

Having a common definition of all issues related to integrity in education, regardless of cultural, educational, scholarly conceptualization differences and regardless of one's preferences to call them academic or educational, is crucial in the process of shaping the conceptual framework of what academic integrity means. The concept of academic integrity evolves around the lines of personal and professional standards of the student, staff, authorities and management in performing everyday duties within and outside the campus. But what does morality and personal ethic mean more specifically in the context of integrity in H.E. institutions?



The most commonly used definition comes from The <sup>3</sup> Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) which defines academic integrity as:

“a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action.” (International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Similarly, (Bretag, 2019) citing “Universities Australia” provides a more detailed overview of the definition of academic integrity, with a slight focus on the importance it plays in the reputation of the university.

“academic integrity means acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. Universities consider that it is vital for students and all staff to act in an honest way and take responsibility for their actions and every part of their work. Staff should be role models to students. Academic integrity is important for an individual’s and a university’s reputation (UA, 2017).”

Compared to the idealistic and conceptual definition of the (ICAI), the University of Tasmania (*Principles of Paramedic Practice 2*, 2013) provides a more pragmatic definition. This definition encompasses the essence and key elements of what it means to have academic integrity while engaging in academic work.

“Academic integrity is about mastering the art of scholarship. Scholarship involves researching, understanding and building upon the work of others and requires that you give credit where it is due and acknowledge the contributions of others to your own intellectual efforts. At its core, academic integrity requires honesty. This involves being responsible for ethical scholarship and for knowing what academic dishonesty is and how to avoid it.” Ibid.

Following Tauginienė et al. for the ENAI (European Network for Academic Integrity), (Anohina-Naumeca, Ilze, 2020) mentions an equally pragmatic approach which defines academic integrity as “compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship”.

Education carries the burden of promoting and advocating these values even further. However, the education system needs educators for that, as it cannot fix itself. This is when the responsibility of education starts for anyone in the education community. Educators ought to be the role model (Bretag, 2019) and the messengers of the core values and have a guardian role between maintaining high academic standards and ensuring students' achievements by respecting the fundamental values of academic integrity. *Honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility* were first introduced in the 90s, however, the Center for Academic Integrity has revisited the fundamentals of academic integrity and added *courage* as a 6<sup>th</sup> fundamental value. This addition to the values was not unintentional. The addition was well thought, planned and relied on evidence from higher education institutions around the world. Changes come from within the communities therefore the higher education community including staff, students, researchers and administration has the responsibility to act and to be courageous about demanding the respect of these *fundamental values* within the institutions they operate. On the contrary, everything the academic community engages into loses value as the institution itself becomes complicit in the violation of these *fundamental values*. The benefits of higher education institutions embracing the principles of academic integrity as their *modus operandi* are countless.

East (2009), points out that in order to teach and promote academic integrity, universities need "to align policy, teaching and learning practices, AI decision-making and AI review processes". (Bretag, et al., 2011; OECD, 2018.) Only in this way can the universities maintain continuity in persistence towards implementation of educational standards that ought to be met by staff and students. Embracing the principles of academic integrity in the long term is favorable to the institution (East, 2009) because it improves the perception among the students and staff members (Prenshaw et al.) as a more meritocratic institution. The quality of the educational outputs relies on the quality of the selection process of the trusted university staff to perform everyday activities. This is crucial for the quality institution itself because apart from the legal provision that institutions need to implement, the university staff, -both teaching and administration- have more trust in fairly selected members of their own community to deliver the needed outputs.

H.E. institutions present a dynamic, reform driven segment of the society where qualitative transformation of the educational outputs rely on the people that these reforms are trusted to. It is difficult to expect the delivery of quality related reforms within an educational institution if it is led by a staff member with the poorest performance from the academic community.

Ensuring a meritocratic system of values within one educational institution does not only improve the internal quality culture of the institution but also acts as a motivational stimulator for the staff. Meritocracy validates the equal treatment based on performance for all staff members. In this way, the institution sets a model and a high standard that needs to be followed by the staff in the process of selecting staff members for the leading academic position. Once this type of causality is established, the staff will be more motivated to perform better, do more and to walk that extra mile in their career as the same will be counted beneficial to their selection in a leading position at the university.

The other contributing factor to the quality culture of educational institutions in one country is the perception that it has in the society. Building a strong academic integrity program requires informing the public about the academic integrity policies and procedures that are applied in the institution. This is because the educational institutions have the responsibility to demonstrate and prove to students, parents, stakeholder and its staff that they apply methods of impartiality, justice and fairness. Therefore, commitment <sup>63</sup>to the fundamental values of academic integrity improves the perception among citizens that their institution demonstrates a high level of self-critical and auto-corrective approach towards issues that rise in relation to integrity within their academic community. As such, not only acknowledges the eventual breach in the system, but also work toward improvement which will keep them free of malpractice. Demonstrating the high level of integrity of educational institutions in one society shows that the high-quality standards for performance has no double standards and it is not expected only from students, but from the staff and the management likewise. Building this kind of relation in one academic institution facilitates the process of building stronger, more coherent and equitable community culture.

Staff and students, as well as parents care about the reputation of the university that they become part of. A university that cares about reputation does not leave a possibility for any inconsistencies but rather puts an effort to resolve issues that arise from inconsistencies in a systematic manner. That's why universities should be open and allow students' and staff a possibility to develop their skills. Promoting and maintaining educational and pedagogic approach to solving the integrity problem in H.E.I. allows the staff and students to improve their academic skills by engaging in course in how to properly apply the academic integrity principles and be less involved in intentional or unintentional breaching. (East, 2009) highlights <sup>37</sup>that a university approach to academic integrity should be "multi-pronged and systematic": <sup>2</sup>Not acting against the breach has a high price upon education institutions because a breach of academic integrity is an inconsistency that increases the perception of corruption among staff and students. (Prenshaw et al. 2021) If not acted upon, the staff becomes more cynical and skeptical

about the solution of potential cases. Students' motivation and performance eventually drops because students achieve their desired grades through cheating and plagiarism and encourages others to pursue the same method in this harming and devaluing the established merit based system of the institution. This causes loss of trust in the institutions' ability to deal with such cases as it fails to properly address malpractices in a professional and ethical manner.

One way to demonstrate the institutional capacity to solve issues in regards to the eventual breach of academic integrity is to have and maintain standards through integrity assessments. (Bretag, et al. 2013) consider that having and *upholding a holistic approach to academic integrity* is crucial as the consistency of good practices cannot be regarded as student responsibility. Such holistic, institutional integrity assessment includes analysis of institutional policies, action plans which enact them and results as the final outcome of such evaluation. Produced reports from these analyses provide the stakeholders with a description of corrupt practices, "analysis of systemic weaknesses which promote such practices and recommendations for actions." (OECD, 2018a). A more comprehensive model which resonates strongly with the research aims of this thesis is proposed by Bretag et al. The proposed model evolves around 5 core elements of academic integrity policy.

**Figure 7**

<sup>2</sup>  
Pillars of academic integrity policy



<sup>2</sup>  
Adapted from Core elements of exemplar academic integrity policy in Australian higher education. T. Bretag, S. Mahmud, M. Wallace, R. Walker, J. Colins, M. Green, J. East, U. McGowan, L. Partidge. 2011. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*. 7. Page 3-12.

1. **Access:** refers to the location of the institutional policy document related to academic integrity. Other aspects included in the document are clarity, concision and simple and understandable writing.
2. **Approach:** refers to the content of the policy where the statement of the purpose is included, along with the values and the commitment of the institution to the academic integrity on all levels and in all processes.
3. **Detail:** refers to the appropriacy of the procedure related to *reporting, recording, confidentiality and the appeals process* while reviewing potential breaches

4. **Responsibility** includes a summary of responsibilities on all academic levels, management, academic staff, administration and students. This again, addresses the question whose responsibility is it to tackle issues.
5. **Support:** refers to the enabling strategies enacting the policy.

This model will be adopted as survey instrument in the process of revealing the internal institutional inconsistencies in regards to academic integrity implementation of policy, procedure and result as well as what are some of the gaps and improvements that need to be assessed. Having and not maintaining standards is equally damaging if those are not respected. (Prenshaw et al. 2021) point out <sup>37</sup> that an academic integrity policy can influence “the culture and social dynamics of the university”. However, <sup>3</sup> the rising question here is whether having a solid academic integrity policy necessarily guarantees a high level of integrity within an institution.

For the purpose of studying the extent to which academic integrity policies and practices take place in one higher education institution, International <sup>3</sup> Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) has produced recommendations which are applicable to every H.E.I. in regards to measuring its performance towards securing strong academic integrity programs.

**Figure 8**

16

*How to develop strong program for academic integrity*



16

Adapted from *how to develop a strong program for academic integrity*. (International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), 2020)<sup>2</sup>

This variation in conceptualization of academic integrity inevitably leads to the questions as to whether there are variations in the concept, is this also reflected in the

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<sup>2</sup> \*Note This figure was designed by the author based on the 7 recommendations

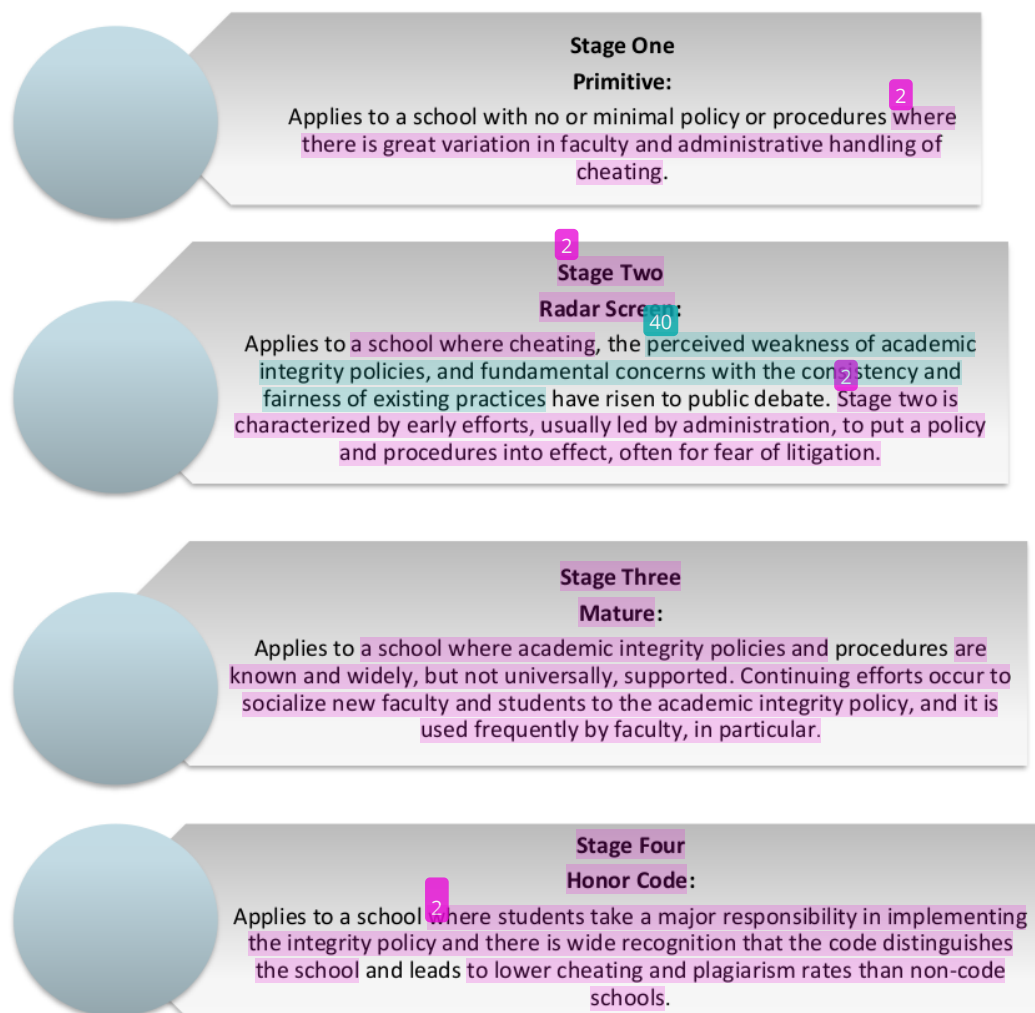


practices? Is there any model which can be applied to conceptualize, comprehend and measure the institutional practices so the staff, students and institutions have a model which can be referred to while tackling issues with academic integrity on campuses?

Gary Pavela, (Pavela, 1997) for The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) proposes 4 stages of institutional development in regards to the relative position of organization and the campus culture of academic integrity. These stages include:

**Figure 9**

*Academic Integrity Stages*



Source Academic Integrity stages of institutional development. (Pavela, 2021)

Pavela (2021) also notes that most institutions, even those with the higher level of awareness for academic integrity belong to the third stage. He points out that stage four is rarely awarded even more so maintained. Understandably so, stage four requires an excessive amount of logistical, intellectual and financial support by the institution. Having in mind the fact that higher education institutions usually present a big financial burden to the governments and are historically and systematically underfunded it appears that this development is less likely to take place with the current education system. This scenario of investing more intellectual, financial and logistic support to educational institutions is less likely to take place even in developed countries and less likely so in countries in development. This put in Macedonian perspective, with the current state budget allocation of 0.2% for education, investing in institutional development for the application of new methods to curb issues of academic integrity is almost impossible. However, that does not mean that no efforts by the educational institutions should be put into tackling these issues as some require no preparation, but require more serious and systematic political will to act on this matter.

## 11: Academic Integrity in North Macedonia

Namely, higher education institutions in North Macedonia exemplify a good basis for the further development of academic integrity into higher levels. This is mainly due to institutional preparation which already appears to have established practices for detection, prevention and reaction. By theoretical basis we mainly refer to policies published by the institutions as an official document which the institution pledges to apply once it encounters cases of violation of academic integrity. Higher education institutions demonstrate a high level of awareness of issues of academic integrity by publishing codes of conduct for staff and students. In addition, policies and codes of conduct are not only published as a document in the university web pages, but the terms and conditions as well as violations and consequences are well integrated in the course syllabi in most of the cases. Figure 11, 12, 13 and 15 in Chapter 12 on Research Integrity contains the specific information on the publication of codes of conduct, penalties and the languages they are published in. In this context, The South East European University is a leader in making accessible and available the codes of conduct, penalties and procedures for students and staff.

In addition, the universities in North Macedonia provide a well-established pattern of courses based on levels which are considered preparatory courses for junior students where students focus on the ways they can improve writing. These courses are offered in two ways. One as mandatory course, which includes courses which students are obliged to take in course of their academic career, and two, as a free elective course. However, not all universities apply the same model. Some of the courses offered are courses which include content focusing on the application of rules and regulations of writing in local languages, and although they follow an identical pattern of writing, the most problematic seems to be the application of the English standard model of referencing while studying in local languages. English language is offered at all university levels, however, that does not mean that these courses implement the English language standard while doing research. This is important to emphasize because whichever standard citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, Harvard, Turabian, Vancouver, OSCOLA) the students use to apply, the same citation style is evolving and the number of allocated hours per semester for the adequate application of these standards are simply not enough to learn all the citation styles in English.

Another limitation factor for university students who study in languages other than English is that not all are admitted with the same level of knowledge of spoken and written

English as to be able to successfully implement the citation styles. This is a limiting factor because, students with low proficiency level, who lack training on how to avoid plagiarism are less likely to be able to follow and apply the citations styles and, in that way, contribute to producing work which is plagiarized without being aware of it, also known as *unintentional plagiarism*. This is also limiting factor because these students are not trained to avoid plagiarism and therefore left without a choice then succumb to this practice unknowingly. A Wall Street Journal reports that foreign students in the U.S. are seen as a particularly more vulnerable group since they are more likely to cheat on exams, five times more than local students. (Jordan, Miriam. Belkin, 2016)

Regardless of handful examples of good practices to address issues of corruption and academic integrity at institutional level, the authorities, government and political elites and actors in North Macedonia still fall behind in fulfilling the basic criteria for a proactive role in tackling issues related to corruption (Камиловска Трпковска, Ивановска, 2019) and this is particularly the case with corruption in the field of education. This is due to several reasons.

*The Council of Europe*, Europe's leading human rights organization, advocates for freedom of speech and media, protection of minorities and equality through the adoption of international convention. It also monitors member states' and provides recommendations through its bodies. Full membership of a country in the European Union is impossible without the respect of the basic values of this council. Among other things, this council also helps member states fight corruption. The Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe, through the Directorate of Democratic Participation, which has the Education Department has led to The Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED). Its core mission is "to share good practices in the field of transparency and integrity in education, to define guidelines on the subject and to develop capacity-building for all actors." (Council of Europe, 2021) North Macedonia although it became a member of this council in 1995 and has since ratified many conventions regarding human rights, regardless of that, North Macedonia is still not a member state in the ETINED (as of 2021). Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia are the only countries in South East Europe not members of such an important platform which promotes integrity in education. There are usually two reasons why one country is not a member state in such important international conventions or platforms and it usually has to do with current values of the political elites. These come in the form of lack of political will and lack of interest for the specific matter. Considering North Macedonia's latest ranking (2020) on the corruption perception index, it is in the interest of the country to start addressing issues related to corruption and make it a priority. If otherwise, it can be very harmful in many ways and politically and educationally signals an underlying interest of the

political elites to maintain a certain *status quo* in relation to corruption and all enjoy the benefits it gives to the ones who engage in such activities.

Institutionalizing academic integrity in higher education would mean H.E.I. institutions ought to embrace academic integrity as a way to improve the level of educational quality that is being offered to students in the process of making them more responsible citizens which will contribute to the further development of all spheres of social life. Universities in general are institutions which are precautious to social changes due to the need for maintenance of objectivity and impartiality in the long-term. However, H.E.I. must not ignore the need for the implementation of AI values in their teaching and administration because in this way they risk their position as institutions which promote objectivity, truthfulness, impartiality and meritocracy.

It is important to acknowledge the existing issues on institutional level and analyze the risks of it before the scandals break out contributing to prevention rather than curing the consequences of not acting at the times when it was necessary to do so. In the media and is the most appropriate approach to solving the issue. Embracing AI values is not always the easiest task for researchers and academicians in the field, especially not in countries in development where countries have a serious issue with corruption which in many cases is very well embedded in the judiciary, politics and the interior (police) and under such circumstances, in a system which does not provide protection makes it impossible to do research in this field. Researchers and academicians are in these cases marginalized due to the “different way of thinking”, but not only that, they are under constant threat from the academic community itself because the community is built on the values which have not embraced AI values. Researchers and academicians are under constant threat of speaking out publicly and secretly in countries in development because of political, managerial revenge consequences of which are increased scrutiny which may eventually make the workplace more difficult for that particular staff member or even in some cases result with expulsion. Therefore, institutionalization is needed, because it will ensure that these members of the community will not be in the spotlight and be regarded as whistleblowers, but more as educators who want to improve the quality of educational services that are offered to the citizens and in that way produce more skilled, knowledgeable workforce and in this way companies, institutions will need to invest less in preventing misconduct and unethical behavior when they employ these graduates. HE institutions need to invest in mitigating and prevention more than in healing the consequences of lack of values.

## 11.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Another important factor which <sup>1</sup> can play a crucial role in increasing the awareness and efficiency in <sup>1</sup> the fight against corruption and improving the academic infrastructure within institutions of higher education is without a doubt quality assurance. Such practice of connecting the quality to academic integrity is a practice which is seen in many countries such as the UK, US, Australia and others. *UK's Quality Body*, presents an excellent example of a centralized system of national quality control for all universities. Through guidance and advice this body set the standards to which all higher education institutions need to adhere, in this way ensuring that the skills that are endorsed by this are met by all institutions equally. QAA <sup>2</sup> has published and is actively involved in the mentoring of the implementation of *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. (Quality Assurance Agency, 2018) The Code includes "principles such as emphasizing the role of providers in assuring the quality of the experience they offer to students, supporting student engagement, and ensuring external referencing is used to ensure the integrity of awards and the quality of provision." (Ibid.) QAA, issued a special report related to <sup>1</sup> *Plagiarism in Higher Education* in which the agency <sup>1</sup> addresses the growing concerns of the presence of plagiarism in UK's universities. The good practices that were highlighted in the report are in regards to plagiarism malpractices. The agency strongly recommends the integration of plagiarism detector software, enabling student access to the software, and ensuring that all courses across all universities actively apply it. (Quality Assurance Agency, 2016) The report also mentions the key actions which will be taken against such malpractices. "We will work with universities and colleges to identify and share existing good practice in the detection of custom essay cheating and in promoting more explicit and consistent approaches to punishing its use." (Ibid.) If we are about to compare the role of the quality assurance agencies and offices in North Macedonia, it can be said beyond doubt that such provision hardly exists. There are universities in North Macedonia who do not implement quality assurance, let alone drafting a code or recommendation on how to further advance the level of quality on institutional level. In cases where there are offices of quality assurance, the offices do not address the issues of plagiarism and cheating but are rather focused only on the quality of teaching rather than the quality of students' work. That is why it is recommended that the quality assurance offices become a major force in promoting and implementing policies for academic integrity in a way that the quality assurance office facilitates drafting of policies, communication, implementation and advancement of integrity on campuses. Following the UK model of QA standards, QA offices are also obliged to implement the Quality Code of the QAA



especially the ones related to assessment it plays an important role in “developing in students the understanding of, and skills for, ‘good academic practice’ and the need to tackle ‘unacceptable academic practice’ (embracing all forms of academic cheating, misconduct and plagiarism).” (Quality Assurance Agency, 2016)

## 11.2 AUDITING

Auditing plays an integral part in the sustainability of higher education in one country. Sustainability here refers to a set of policies, practices, values which enable effective institutional organization through effective implementation of laws and regulations of institutions on a national level. But sustainability of institutions is inherently connected to demonstrating ethical behavior in a way that in order to demonstrate sustainability an education system allows students to “acquire knowledge and insight about sustainable development, in general and in their own field of profession; are trained in skills, methods and techniques supporting their work as a (future) professional; develop an attitude in which sustainable development is seen as important” (Rooda, 2001). Internal audit brings other institutional benefits because it obtains important insight to the governance, management and institutional risk of the institutional management, both financial and conceptual. (Demeke, Tadesse. Kaur, Jasmindeep, Kansal, 2020). Since the internal auditing plays such an important role to university management can the audit have an influence towards solving issues which are related to corruption? If so, how? The answer lies in the fact that regardless of all types of methodologies applied by countries to address risk-management such as through internal or external auditing, “all approaches have the same goal: to reach, promote and to maintain integrity within institution(s) through eliminating risks and vulnerabilities.” (Jure, 2016). While doing research on corruption, especially at the institutional level, internal and external auditing reports are crucial to accessing information about the possible breach of ethical conduct and in which way has that code been broken. However, the underlying assumption is that due to its “sensitive” content of the reports, the same are less likely to be found in any higher education institution in North Macedonia. External auditing likewise, do not publish information regarding the findings of the inspections to national higher education institutions. However, the Law on Access to Public Information <sup>3</sup> guarantees “equal access to all legal entities and individuals”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Law on Access to Public Information. Official Gazette No. 101 p.2. The Assambley of Republic of North Macedonia. <http://www.mod.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Zakon-za-sloboden-pristap-do-informacij-od-javen-karakter.pdf>



Having a law does not necessarily mean enforcing it. To begin with, the *State inspectorate for education* as a separate body with a very important role in detecting and penalizing inconsistencies does not have a web site, so an access to any electronic information, let alone an inspection report is impossible to realize under current circumstances. But can internal auditing provide information about practices that were found by the university which do not adhere to the institutional code of ethics and responsibilities that come out of it and are they available as the law implies? According to Transparency International, the number one tool in the fight against corruption is practicing transparency and that the information should not be only available, but citizens should be also free to use it (Transparency International, 2021). If higher education institutions in North Macedonia do not embrace transparency as a method of institutional operation, and the audit is not publicly available for citizens to be able to use, then corruption will less likely decline among these institutions. Most importantly, the role of the auditing is not only making the information public, but to gather key information about potential breach of ethical codes, categorize, investigate and initiate legal procedures against individuals who engage in such misconduct. The auditing office should draft reports and make that report available, because on a national level, hardly anything is more important than the interest of the public, and the public has the right to know.

### 11.3 Student Involvement in protecting and promoting academic integrity values

Additional quality which should not be ignored while tackling issues related to corruption and academic integrity are students. There are many reasons why students can play an important role. The literature or practice has proven that students' involvement on all levels of implementing and monitoring policies and recommendation at institutional level reduces corruption and academic dishonesty. (Boehm et al., 2009), (Morris, 2018).

Students in no way should be perceived by teachers or the management of universities as the source of all evil. Instead of being perceived as enemies of integrity, students too, can contribute a lot to raising awareness about academic integrity. The question is how?

Prior to the actual start of drafting the policies, universities need to make sure that students are aware of such activities on the campus. University management is expected to contact student representative bodies in order to ensure their inclusion. This can be done by

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<sup>4</sup> Article 4, (1). Law on Access to Public Information. Official Gazette No. 101 p.2. The Assambley of Republic of North Macedonia. <http://www.mod.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Zakon-za-sloboden-pristap-do-informacii-od-javen-karakter.pdf>

inviting the one member of the student parliament/student union, a person who is selected by the student body to represent the body and all students.

Moreover, these students need to be consulted about their proposals on how to better address this issue to students and find out possible ways that they can be involved in defending academic integrity values. University management should ask students to open a debate among students and student bodies to come up with written proposals on addressing the issue of academic integrity, proposals which will be delivered in the form of a request by the student to be taken into account while drafting institutional policies.

Students also need to be involved in the process of drafting the policies. Once they have submitted their proposals to the university authorities, a member of the student body has to be involved in the commission for drafting academic integrity policies in order to ensure successful interpretation and implementation of their proposals. Once their proposals are integrated within the institutional codes and policies for academic integrity, a formal approval by the student bodies is requested on the final draft of the policy.

Implementation and enforcement of policies on academic integrity can be another aspect of how student bodies can contribute to the overall infrastructure. The implementation and enforcement should come from the institutional student ombudsperson, where he/she will demand the implementation of these policies by students and by the academic and administrative staff.

The student parliament and student ombudsperson should be involved in measuring the quality of educational outcomes students receive especially related to academic integrity. The way the student parliament or ombudsperson can measure implementation of policies or practices of academic misconduct is through polls, interviews and reports in the form of a complaint which are delivered by students in their offices.

Students have the right to demand actions by the institutional authority to address issues which have been found to be problematic on institutional level. The authorities are responsible for responding to such requests by justifying what specific actions are undertaken and delivered regarding specific issues addressed by the students.

Students should not be perceived as passive receivers of academic integrity insight. Since it is about them, the institutions should consider that involving them in the promotion of academic integrity values maximizes the chances to have an impact on the way that maintaining values, learning about them and improving their skills can benefit them rather than harm them but also the institution where they study. For this reason, student bodies have an enormous

potential to disseminate these academic values through workshops and other awareness raising events in the institutions such as: establishing clubs to attract English students on academic integrity, hosting a helpdesk center for prevention of academic misconduct, hosting social events on celebrating international anti-corruption day.

### **Academic Integrity Pragmatism**

#### **11.4 Pragmatic Approach**

If one is to embark on a national desk research analysis on the current state of academic integrity in North Macedonia, the emerging question is academic/research integrity implemented and how much is taught on faculty level at universities that are included in this analysis.

Based on the reviewed national documentation i.e. various laws, regulations and manuals, issues of integrity were identified which were addressed within code of ethics, ethics committee and as part of standard for accreditation<sup>5</sup>. More specifically, fulfilling the task to find and detect whether academic integrity is incorporated within the national and institutional level in North Macedonia in the process of determining the degree of the overall culture of integrity and ethics infrastructure the following laws, regulations, rulebooks were considered:

*1. Law on higher education.*<sup>6</sup>

*2. Statute of the South East European University. Tetovo.*<sup>7</sup>

*3. Statute of University of St. Cyril and Methodius- Skopje.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>This is in line with the findings of the ETINED Council of Europe Platform of Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education in Southeast Europe countries.

<sup>6</sup> ЗАКОН ЗА ВИСОКОТО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ. Retrieved from:

<https://www.sonk.org.mk/documents/Zakon%20za%20visoko%20obrazovanie.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> STATUTE OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY. South East European University. Tetovo. 2021.

Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/1/Approved%20Statute%202019.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Статут на Универзитетот „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ во Скопје, Универзитетот „Св. Кирил и Методиј“. 2021.

Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=139&glavno=32](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=139&glavno=32)

4. *Labour Relations Law*<sup>9</sup>

5. *Strategic Plan 5.0. South East European University*.<sup>10</sup>

6. *Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023. University of St. Cyril and Methodius-Skopje*.<sup>11</sup>

7. *Action Plan 2019 – 2023. University of St. Cyril and Methodius-Skopje*.<sup>12</sup>

8. *Action Plan and Strategy for Development of Education 2018-2025. Republic of Macedonia*.<sup>13</sup>

9. *Law on Scientific Research Activities*.<sup>14</sup>

10. *Law on Prevention of Conflict of interest*<sup>15</sup>

2 Based on the evidence found from the analysis of the above-mentioned documents, there is a lack of common framework to the ways that academic integrity is defined in the country. On the national level, academic integrity as a phrase is not featured in any of the above-mentioned documents. Besides that, there is also a lack of legal definition of academic integrity, the methods in the breach of academic integrity as well as reflection of academic related issues in the legal system of the R. of North Macedonia. Having said this, the author does not refer to the lack of legal and institutional mechanisms to address the issue of integrity in the workplace, such as the academia, but the statement above refers more to the lack of inclusion of the term as it is, in any important document on a national level. The situation is similar with the national legislature where the definition of academic integrity is *de facto* absent.

<sup>9</sup> LABOR RELATIONS LAW. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia. 2021. Retrieved from: <http://agrosindikat.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Labor-Relations-Law.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Strategic Plan 5.0. 2021-2025. South East European University, Tetovo. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/about/important-documents>

<sup>11</sup> СТРАТЕГИЈА НА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТОТ „СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЈ“ ВО СКОПЈЕ (2019 – 2023). УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЈ“ ВО СКОПЈЕ. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/Strategija\\_i\\_AP/Strategija\\_na\\_UKIM\\_2019-2023\\_MK.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/Strategija_i_AP/Strategija_na_UKIM_2019-2023_MK.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> АКЦИОНЕН ПЛАН НА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТОТ „СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЈ“ ВО СКОПЈЕ. УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „СВ. КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЈ“ ВО СКОПЈЕ. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/Akcionen\\_plan\\_na\\_UKIM\\_2019-2023\\_MK.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/Akcionen_plan_na_UKIM_2019-2023_MK.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Action Plan and Strategy for Development of Education 2018-2025. Republic of Macedonia. Republic of North Macedonia. 2021. Retrieved from: <http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-MAK-WEB.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> ЗАКОН ЗА НАУЧНО-ИСТРАЖУВАЧКАТА ДЕЈНОСТ. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/zakon-za-naucno-istrayuvacka-dejnost.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest. Retrieved from: [http://www.gazibaba.gov.mk/business/media/pdf/zakonska\\_regulativa/pravni\\_raboti/sudir\\_na\\_interesi/3-zakon-za-sprecuvanje-na-sudir-na-interesi--precisten-tekst--128-22102009.pdf](http://www.gazibaba.gov.mk/business/media/pdf/zakonska_regulativa/pravni_raboti/sudir_na_interesi/3-zakon-za-sprecuvanje-na-sudir-na-interesi--precisten-tekst--128-22102009.pdf)

Contrary to the examples of inclusion of academic integrity on national level where there is an obvious need for the definition and inclusion of academic integrity and similar related issues in the national documentation and legal system, on institutional level, there is a slight change in that respect. Judging by the examples that the author was able to access, there are examples where academic integrity is defined within institutional level. Higher education institutions are such an example. An assumption exists that the few of the universities which included these examples had the need to define academic integrity due to:

1. Legal obligations, which arise from the law on higher education where universities are obliged to publish information regarding institutional Code of Ethics
2. Because of pragmatic reasons and examples where institutions face the need to define academic integrity in order to process specific examples.

Generally, it is challenging to find an exact definition of what constitutes academic integrity within institutions due to lack of accessibility of documents online. However, few institutions demonstrate the availability of definitions of academic integrity. This definition is based on the already established theoretical definition provided by ICAI (International Center for Academic Integrity) which is based on 6 principles. South East European University defines academic integrity as “Members of academic staff appointed according to the provisions of the Law on Higher Education are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the following principles derived from international sources: Integrity; Honesty; Truth; Transparency; Respect for Others; Trust; Accountability; Fairness; Equity, Justice and Social Justice; Selflessness; Objectivity; Openness; Leadership; Academic Freedom.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition, University of St. Cyril and Methodius defines academic integrity as:

“Basic goals and characteristics of the universal academic ethics, as well as the ethics of the University "St. Cyril and Methodius are: dignified performance of the functions of academic institutions, promotion of scientific and teaching activities at the University and in society, dissemination of academic culture, respect for academic traditions, preservation of the dignity and self-respect of academic actors, good relations between institutions and actors of the

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<sup>16</sup> Rule for Ethical Conduct of Academic Staff, South East European University, Tetovo. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/18/Code%20of%20conduct%20for%20academic%20staff%20MM.pdf>

University, care for young people, students and trainees, maintaining and developing the ethics of noble behavior, not harming anyone, providing assistance and developing general humanistic ideas.”<sup>17</sup>

It is worth to point out that the above-mentioned definitions are associated only to 2 higher education institutions, whereas other definitions, in the official documentation of the institutions published on the website of the institution were not found.

Beside definition and inclusion of the term academic integrity in the national documentation of the state other aspects of the academic integrity were the subject of the analysis. The further analysis of higher education policies regarding the academic integrity in North Macedonia involves the positive dimension of academic integrity and the other aspects that are used for the prevention, detection and reaction to situations where there is a breach of these values.

As far as concerned the positive dimensions of academic integrity in higher education institutions demonstrate some kind of preparedness to be able to address these issues in their institutions. Many of the procedures and regulations included in these policies encompass provisions which are applicable for the academic staff.

Administrative staff also presents a significant number of employees in the higher education sector across the country. Omitting regulations that are equally applicable to this group of higher education institution employees would be limiting the access to precise measures for detection, prevention and reaction mechanisms of institutions and thus give a false picture about the state of the institutional framework to addressing academic integrity. Institutions include procedures designed to address the administrative staff by incorporating the code of conduct for the administrative staff, the content of which address the issue of integrity for this particular group of employees specifically.

On the pragmatic level of applicability of academic integrity values, institutions provide content to a limited degree in regards to the set of skills which are necessary to implement the appropriate skills for academic writing which incorporate academic integrity values. In cases where courses implement some kind of aspect of academic integrity, the course itself is labelled as a course on academic skills. These educational outputs are related to set academic skills such as academic writing and are offered as part of the English language course.

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<sup>17</sup> Етички кодекс. University of St. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32)



Moreover, whistleblowing plays an important role in reporting issues related to integrity whether by staff or students. However, a proper legal and practical protection of whistleblowers has to be in place in order for reporting to happen. Universities need to provide space for such reporting if a staff member or student decides to report a breach in values. That is why proper mechanisms to channel such reporting needs to be implemented in order to protect the whistleblower but to also address the issue which is raised upon. Very few universities provide access to the legal obligations of the university for the law on protection of whistleblowers in higher education <sup>18</sup>

Awareness raising events, which have a significant importance <sup>2</sup> on the topic of successful implementation of academic integrity values on campuses are also being analyzed. According to the information available through the web pages of the universities analyzed, few universities organize events such as conferences, debates, roundtables, and polls for students and staff to raise awareness on issues related to academic integrity, corruption in education and the importance of whistleblowers in higher education. <sup>1</sup> <sup>19</sup>

Positive examples in this respect are demonstrated at the South East European University which has made available the *Disciplinary Rule* upon which the university operates in cases where issues related to corruption and integrity are reported in whatever way. The content of this *Disciplinary Rule* focuses on three phases, identification of corrupt practices, and definition of the same and disciplinary measures. The rulebook proposes 3 degrees of disciplinary measures upon each case being subjected. The reported cases, dependent from the action of the subject are then classified into *minor, moderate and major* degrees. Disciplinary measures applied for each of the degrees of the disciplinary measure can be found in the appending of the *Disciplinary Rule*. <sup>20</sup> The example of the South East European University presents the most detailed inclusion in this respect and exemplifies one of the rare cases where disciplinary measures are made available in such detail.

All higher education institutions have included information on the rules on the first, second and third cycle of studies. The rule on first and the second cycle vaguely refers to academic integrity by mentioning that “The students are expected to maintain the integrity of their own work”. It remains to be seen if issues that may arise from breaching the institutional codes for academic integrity can be solved with this sentence. Moreover, this specific sentence

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<sup>18</sup> Law on protection of whistleblowers, University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/653\\_Zakon\\_za\\_zastita\\_na\\_ukazuvaci-precisten\\_tekst.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/653_Zakon_za_zastita_na_ukazuvaci-precisten_tekst.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Универзитет без корупција. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.univerzitetbezkorupcija.mk/>

<sup>20</sup> DISCIPLINARY RULE. South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/31/Disciplinary%20Rule%20MM.pdf>



related to the maintenance of integrity in your academic work is not included as a rule in the rulebook for the third cycle of studies.<sup>212223</sup>

Although the main positive dimensions of academic integrity are summed up above, how about what are the main negative dimensions of academic integrity in North Macedonia and what aspects can it be said that are implemented for the prevention, detection and the reaction to these cases?

Navigating through the SEE-University webpage is easy. The university has made the documents related to reporting academic dishonesty or any other type of breach of academic integrity values available in all three languages, English, Macedonian and Albanian. However, that is not the oldest and largest state university in North Macedonia. The definition of academic integrity on the web page of The University of St. Cyril and Methodius is only available in Macedonian, neglecting the Albanian language (official language in the country) and English, neglecting a significant foreign English speaking student body who are registered as full-time students or as exchange students in bachelor, master and PhD level.

Area that needs improvement regarding academic integrity in a higher education institutional level is that there is a lack of information regarding academic integrity on the web sites of the universities. Out of 5 universities (University st Cyril and Methodius, University of Tetovo, University of Goce Delchev) and 1 public-private university (South East European University) and one private (University American College) three had information regarding academic integrity and 2 had no information at all. The missing information involved lack of general information on academic integrity such as rules, procedures, measures and other relevant information for students, staff and parents. Availability of the documents related to academic integrity plays an important role in the process of informing the public. If these documents are difficult to access then it can be assumed that the institutions do not find it relevant and, in that way, discourage possible reporting by students and staff and in that way make them less applicable. Of all 5 public and public/private universities, only 1 had information on the front page of the university, 1 had less obvious (more than 3 clicks) and the other 3 had no information at all.

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<sup>21</sup> Rule on First Cycle Studies. South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from:

<https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/6/RULE%20ON%20FIRST%20CYCLE%20STUDIES%20Sept%202019%20MM.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Rule on Second Cycle Studies. South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from:

[https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/7/Rule%20on%20Second%20Cycle%20Studies%20-%20consolidated%20text%20\(july%202020\)MM%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/7/Rule%20on%20Second%20Cycle%20Studies%20-%20consolidated%20text%20(july%202020)MM%20(1).pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Rule on Third Cycle Studies. South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from:

<https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/8/RULE%20ON%20THIRD%20CYCLE%20STUDIES%20Sept%202019%20MM.pdf>

Moreover, on an institutional level, other issues related to academic integrity are associated with the word choice of aspects that are related to integrity. Variety of terms and terms are used by higher education institutions differently. An example would include the word choice such as code of ethics whereas other institutions use corruption, bioethics and code of conduct for academic staff and administrative staff. This is particularly important to coin the term academic integrity in higher education institution so the staff and students are aware of what issues are encompassed within this term and what procedures, methods and regulations are applied to ensure more integrity on campuses. Using simplified language, which includes one term and does not involve specifically legal terminology, makes it easier for students to understand especially at bachelor level where they are less aware of academic standards of the institution where they are studying and are more likely to face the term for the first time in the course of their education.

In addition, on an institutional level, very few universities have electronically accessible guidelines on their web pages regarding steps on the procedure on detection, prevention and reaction for specific cases related to academic integrity for the academic and administrative staff. There is a lack of information about the flow on how a specific case is approached, processed and whether such reports or results are made available to the wider public in the form of a report. South East European University and University of Goce Delchev are the only universities which have made available information on the *Rule on receiving corruption allegations Rulebook on protected internal reporting in public sector institutions* from the *Law on Protection of whistleblowers*.<sup>24</sup> Based on Article 2, paragraph 2 it writes “an authorized person for receiving corruption allegations is selected from among the Full Professors, according to the specific procedure.”<sup>25</sup> Even though this rule entered into force on 01.10.2019, this person has not been selected yet by the time this analysis was drafted in 2021, exemplifying a more declarative position to implementing academic integrity values rather than pragmatic one, thus not implementing Article 2, paragraph 1 of the *Rulebook on protected internal reporting in public sector institutions* from the *Law on Protection of whistleblowers*.<sup>26</sup>

In comparison to South East European university, University of Goce Delchev-Shtip has appointed an authorized person for receiving corruption allegations, and his/hers contacts are made publicly available through the university website, as foreseen in Article 5, from the

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<sup>24</sup> Правилник за заштитено внатрешно пријавување во институциите во јавниот сектор. Article 4 paragraph (5). Law on Protection of whistleblowers

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

rulebook. Other higher education institutions do not display any information on this matter on their webpage whatsoever.

Regardless of the fact that academic integrity is partially covered as an academic skill in courses designed to improve students' academic skills in English, it remains to be exclusive for students with higher proficiency of English language and only in one course, specifically Advanced English, leaving out students who undergo language courses in lower proficiency levels. The majority of students do not undergo training in implementing academic integrity principles because the courses' main goal is to teach students the language and that is done by developing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of the students.

Courses teaching academic skills offered in Macedonian or Albanian are a limiting factor due to the nature of the language and the differences in rules and procedures in citing and documenting sources. It remains unclear if and how the content of the teaching of these languages includes citation styles such as APA, MLA or Chicago or they have a separate format of their own in which case would be separate from Western citation style.

## 12: Research Integrity

Research <sup>61</sup>plays an important role in the wider context of academic integrity. Research in itself presents another possibility for breaching the institutional ethical codes <sup>1</sup>within the higher education sector. In order to detect the degree to which research integrity is regulated, the system has to have a clear definition of the phenomenon itself. The emerging question is, how is research defined in North Macedonia and to what degree is it regulated. To specify the latter question, the author here mainly refers to the laws, policies and regulations on national and institutional level.

The research integrity in North Macedonia is regulated through the *Law on Scientific Research*. The definition derives from the *Law on Scientific Research*. Article <sup>30</sup>2 of this law specifies what constitutes the key principles of scientific research activity which is based on the following principles:

freedom and autonomy of research and creativity, connection with the education system, ethics, transparency in the work and dissemination of the results, application of international quality standards in science, inviolability and protection of the person and human dignity, diversity of opinions, methods, theories and doctrines, application of European standards for recruitment of researchers and their behavior, competitiveness and equality of opportunity, protection of intellectual property and applicability of the results.<sup>27</sup>

Article 3 of this law names *ethics* as one of the main principles of scientific research.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the *Law on Scientific Research* private and public universities in North Macedonia have drafted separate regulations. South East European University is an example of this type of internal rule and procedure on scientific research.<sup>29</sup>

South East European University defines research integrity as:

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<sup>27</sup> ЗАКОН <sup>41</sup>А НАУЧНО-ИСТРАЖУВАЧКАТА ДЕЈНОСТ. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/zakon-za-naucno-istrayuvacka-dejnost.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> RULE ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/docs/regullore/Rule%20on%20Scientific%20Research.pdf>

"When participating in research activities, they must not engage in plagiarism, fail to cite or attribute the work of others, falsify results, and abide by ethical principles in relation to protection of personal data, and other specific principles in defined subject areas according to the Rules of the institution (for example in medical and veterinary sciences, and sociological research)" <sup>30</sup>

A legal definition of research integrity is reflected in the legal system in North Macedonia. This is a particularly important aspect because without laws, research integrity as an issue of concern in the society would be doomed to failure because there are no legal provisions to regulate it, leaving the research integrity to be defined based on personal interpretation of what research integrity means and how it can be implemented.

Based on the excerpt above, *The Law on Scientific Research* addresses the issue of research integrity in a clear, precise and concise way, thus providing bases for further regulation for additional inter-institutional policy, rules and guidelines for research to be developed by the institutions based on their needs.

Higher education institutions provide financial support for staff in order to promote research. The way that this is connected to the promotion of research integrity is by regulating the application for these funds through a set of procedures for the approval of these funds where the application for participation at a conference or publishing at a journal with a paper is reviewed and then approved or rejected by three instances, such as dean's office, CRC (Central Research Commission) to be finally approved by the Pro-rector for academic issues. In this way the committee has the responsibility to evaluate the quality of the scientific conference or journal and recommend whether it meets the criteria for publication. The inter-institutional application process for financial support has well-structured and clearly defined criteria for research. In addition to the institutional financial support provided, the academic staff can also consider applying for funding for research provided by the Ministry of Education and Science in R. of North Macedonia. The application process for funding for research in the ministry is not however evaluated qualitatively, the focus of the application is more of a matter of formality rather than providing qualitative input. But it also regulated the research in some way that has clear guidelines which need to be followed by the applicant. The applicant is however limited to apply for only one of the financial supports mentioned.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

As mentioned before, a good practice in research integrity is establishing inter-institutional committees to evaluate the quality of the application and determining whether the applicant for the financial support is approved or rejected based on the report of the committee for research.

As far as the main negative dimensions of research integrity and the ways or mechanisms that are used to detect, prevent and react to research integrity related issues there is an evident loss of application of key principles of the *Law on Scientific Research*. The law itself, as mentioned previously, is well defined, precise and concise, however, the law does not guarantee that it will be enforced by itself. So, the loose application of law enforcement agencies in the field of higher education in North Macedonia needs to make sure that the law is respected and well in function.

Moreover, on a national level, there is a lack of institutional regulation and mechanisms to control quality research. The state inspectorate for education, an organ in the Ministry of Education of science, responsible for “for inspection in higher education and scientific institutes, and dormitories” has not made any information available about the applied mechanisms to control quality research. Quality research is strongly encouraged but the ministry does not have any mechanisms to regulate good research practices at higher education institutions. As of 16.06.2021, the web site of the State inspectorate for education <http://dpi.mon.gov.mk/> is not active and does not contain any information.

In addition to the negative aspects of research integrity within the high education sector in North Macedonia is related to the regulation of research integrity on institutional level. There is an absence of structure, guidelines and bodies to oversee the quality of research in public higher education institutions. With the exception of few public/private higher education institutions which have active, functional bodies to oversee the quality of research, public universities do not have such mechanisms to evaluate the research prior to the research being published. The control that university has over the quality of research is demonstrated during the evaluation of publication for the promotion of an employee for a higher position. Regardless, during that time, the work has already been published and the quality of the journal as well as their role in the research cannot be disputed and the possibility to accept or reject the publication is not possible, only points allocated by the commission for reappointment are expected at that point. The more publications a candidate has, the more points he/she is awarded and if the employee has published a paper in Web of Science or Clarivate Analytics receives higher marks in the evaluation process.



Internal regulation to promote qualitative research is imperative to all <sup>1</sup> higher education institutions. It is not only a moral obligation but the promotion of these values can impact the quality of the educational outputs. On the other hand, lack of internal regulations such as policies and procedure to promote qualitative research reflects not only an academic neglect, but also undermines the commitment to practicing, promoting and disseminating science based on the truth as truth can be certainly affected from handling data, error correction, mentoring as well as falsifying and manipulating data.

A nation-wide, inter-institutional communication among all members of staff on the topic of the ways that universities can promote integrity among researchers is absent. Such communication among staff of all institutions can contribute to the creation of a common framework on promoting research values among universities and increase the capacities to fight these phenomena by learning from each other. That is why having a law, which strictly defines what constitutes qualitative scientific research can be damaging to institutions on different levels. Lack of what constitutes a good scientific research practice stated explicitly in the law leaves a possibility for the institutions themselves to regulate the research integrity. Another possibility is how this regulation or more precisely lack of it is problematic to the institutions because it causes gaps among how they apply it. The institutions might agree what constitutes research integrity, however, not all of them would agree that the legal, pragmatic are equally applied <sup>1</sup> at all instances. Therefore, a law which clearly defines the parameters of qualitative research in higher education is of a vital importance.

In line with the inter-university communication on promotion of integrity in research equally important is outreach of the same agenda. This remains to be another task for higher education which awaits to be fulfilled. The outreach of such promotional activities have been spotted with joint conferences, roundtables and speeches on corruption, usually on the 9<sup>th</sup> December, the International Anti-corruption day, however, these remain to be a more declarative statement which have no follow-up, and universities in the country rarely consider to implement findings of such innovative approached because of various reasons, such as budgetary, logistics and staffing and intellectual differences.

After a careful examination of the main aspects of academic integrity and research integrity and the extent to their inclusion and representation in higher education institutions in North Macedonia, the emerging question is to how are academic integrity and research integrity connected? Are these examples materialized in any way into policies, guidelines of breaches on national or institutional level?



On an international level, there are many examples from around the world where appropriate practices in academic integrity and research are exemplified. Such examples include, <sup>2</sup> *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, *The Irish Council for Bioethics Recommendations for Promoting Research Integrity*, and <sup>39</sup> *The Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics Good Scientific Practice and Procedures for Handling Misconduct and Fraud in Science*. Moreover, practices which involve responsible research have gained momentum in what appears to be the responsible institutional conduct in activities related to education.

In North Macedonia, on national level academic integrity and research integrity are well regulated, integrated and consolidated with the national law. Such is the example with the <sup>1</sup> *Law on higher education*, *Law on Scientific Research* which set the standards for promotion of academic titles in the higher education sector. These laws do not only set the criteria for the academic community, they also define the major requirements for academic promotion. Obligatory research and publication for academic staff being an integral part of every academic promotion allocates points for every publication. Promotion only takes place when the sufficient points for the specific position are provided.

On national level, the Ministry of Education website, as of 16.06.2021 does not provide any space or content on issues related to academic integrity and research integrity, as does not the State inspectorate for education <http://dpi.mon.gov.mk/> the responsible body within the Ministry of education “for inspection in higher education and scientific institutes, dormitories and dormitories”. For comparative reasons, a quite unique example is the web page of the South East European University, where students, staff, stakeholders can access important documents and information on guidelines, rules and procedures to detect, investigate and to report corruption related practices on any institutional level <sup>26</sup> regardless whether it involves academic or administrative staff. The lack of any information on the web page of the Ministry of Education regarding such a relevant issue such as the academic and research integrity is needed as it concerns the quality of the educational outcomes and this is the highest priority of the ministry and a more proactive role on the issue would be beneficial.

On an institutional level, the connection between academic integrity and research integrity is well regulated due to legal obligations of higher education institutions. These institutions are frequently visited by the educational inspectorate who inspects data on the regularity of the academic promotions.

On an institutional level academic integrity and research integrity need to be implemented and integrated within the educational system. These can come in form of courses with specific learning outcomes to raise awareness among students and staff in the ways they

can avoid breaching the codes, policies, regulations related to academic and research integrity

An important milestone for the South East European University in terms of promoting integrity in research presents the inclusion of research **as a strategic goal in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025**. The research goal focuses on “Monitor publications of all full-time academic staff with PhD, in recognized international journals with impact factor, to a level agreed by the Senate.”<sup>31</sup>

European Network for Academic Integrity in their published *General Guidelines for Academic Integrity* recommends documents related to integrity be *publicly available*. (Tauginienė, L, et al., 2019) It remains not clear however, what *publicly available* refers to in this case, or how *publicly available* is practically executed by institutions. Arising questions can be, whether publicly available is only printed and placed somewhere in the student advisors’ desk and only students and staff who specifically require it can access it or it refers to making the documents available electronically. Regardless of the case, the assumption is that these documents should be somewhere visible and easily accessible.<sup>32</sup> Article 4 paragraph (5) of the **Law on Whistleblower Protection** (“Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia ”no. 196/15) and in paragraph 6 requires that “The data referred to in paragraph (5) of this Article shall be published on the website of the institution in which an authorized person is appointed or otherwise they are made public available.”

Certainly, a combination of both is encouraged to be used in making the documents available. As regards to the electronic accessibility, it is not common that citizens would consult the legal obligation of higher education institutions to investigate as to what are the legal obligation of the universities to publish information, they rather use the web sites or Facebook pages to access the necessary documents. The arising questions how much are institutions on national level and if you will on international are familiarized with such practices and to what extent? Being highly aware **that higher education systems are not being** necessarily unified and that the cultural context of higher education **plays an important role in the** diversification of the **higher education** map, with vast differences on how universities operate on national level implies the linguistic barriers that are imposed. This is particularly important for countries which have a linguistically diverse population and this population regardless of being linguistically different; they enjoy equal right to this access to documentation. Such linguistically diverse countries have more than one official language and are obliged by law to make

<sup>31</sup> Strategic Plan 5.0. 2021-2025. South East European University, Tetovo. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/about/important-documents>

<sup>32</sup> Правилник за заштитено внатрешно пријавување во институциите во јавниот сектор. Article 4 paragraph (5). Law on Whistleblower protection.

documents available in all languages that are recognized by the constitution as a linguistic group. Such is the case of many countries such as Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg and North Macedonia. This is mostly for the European continent, in other parts of the world the linguistic and cultural differences are far more emphasized and far more complex and involve many more linguistic differences, especially in the African continent. That is why the *publicly available* term for code of conduct or code of ethics, as much as it might sound simple, involves multi-faceted levels of its application because of the vast linguistic and cultural difference. The sole success of whether these documents are being available is whether they are made to be available

a) electronic or/and on paper

b) in languages that are officially recognized in the country by law.

The determining factor of the documents related to good integrity guidelines, policies and practices are not only in their definition of what make good practices, but also their availability - if, where and how easily they can be found- and accessibility-if they can be found in languages recognized constitutionally or in the language of the minorities.

The availability and accessibility of these documents is connected with <sup>46</sup>the respect of minority rights. Countries with the constitutional recognition of the language of more than one official language have a legal obligation to respect and protect the rights of the minority groups by respecting it. And there can be no bigger ethical dilemma than that of imposing ethical norms and values, all while being unethical by disregarding the constitutional rights of the certain linguistic group of citizens. This behavior is particularly problematic when public universities disregard this obligation although funded by the taxpayers.

Regardless whether these institutional or national guidelines and policies are labelled as code of conduct or code of ethics or are given another name for the same documents, they need to be available, preferably at a visible place in their web pages. This is because the primary goal here is to define the institutional standards to which employees in a particular institution where these standards are drafted, are exposed and expected to adhere to, while representing the institution internally and externally. These positive principles of organizational culture and spirit can be promoted only if they are put in visible places, in this way facilitate the trust building process between stakeholders, parents, students and staff.

In the higher education context of North Macedonia, an analysis conducted by the author for the purposes of BRIDGE<sup>33</sup> (Erasmus + Strategic Partnership project, n.d.) during

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<sup>33</sup> THE BRIDGE PROJECT. Bridging Integrity in Higher Education, Business, and Society.  
<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2020-1-SE01-KA203-077973>

which a thorough analysis of accessibility and availability of ethics infrastructure of public and private universities. Universities included in the analysis were as follows. Period of analysis: 2021

**Figure 10**  
*Analyzed universities*

ANALYZED UNIVERSITIES	
1.	University of St. Cyril and Methodius (public university)
2.	University Goce Delchev- Shtip(public)
3.	University of Tetovo (public)
4.	South East European University (public/private)
5.	University American College (private)

**Figure 11**  
*Findings of the analysis:*

FINDING	RESULTS
I.	Two public and one public/private universities have published the code of conduct for academic and administrative staff on their webpages.

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II.	Two public universities have code of conduct only for administrative staff at higher education institutions. <sup>35</sup>
III.	Of all universities, only one state university has published information on the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers on their webpage <sup>36</sup>
IV.	One public and one private university have published information on their webpage on the disciplinary rule. The rule defines corruption, bribery, plagiarism and other integrity related practices as “ <i>inappropriate actions and behavior</i> ”. <sup>37</sup>
V.	One public and one private university have published the Rule on Receiving Corruption Allegations on their webpage. <sup>38</sup>

While discussing accessibility and availability of important documents <sup>41</sup> at higher education institutions, it is inevitable to ask to what extent universities in North Macedonia fulfil their legal obligations to the availability and accessibility of documents in other languages recognized by the constitution? And to what extent can citizens of the minority groups expect to exercise their right to access any documents in their own language at public universities. In the case of North Macedonia, this is regulated through the *Law on the use of languages*. Article 1 of the *Law on use of languages* (Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia no. 108/7. 2019) states “On the whole territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and in its international

<sup>34</sup> Rule for Ethical Conduct of Academic Staff, South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/18/Code%20of%20conduct%20for%20academic%20staff%20MM.pdf>

Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методи- Скопје. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32)

Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Гоце Делчев. Retrieved from: <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/doma/info-javen-karakter/96-za-ugd/241-etichki-kodeks>

<sup>35</sup> КОДЕКС ЗА АДМИНИСТРАТИВНИ СЛУЖБЕНИЦИ, Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методи- Скопје. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/505\\_kodeks\\_za\\_administrativni\\_sluzbenici-1.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/505_kodeks_za_administrativni_sluzbenici-1.pdf)

Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Гоце Делчев. Retrieved from: <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/doma/info-javen-karakter/96-za-ugd/241-etichki-kodeks>

<sup>36</sup> Закон за заштита на укажувачите, Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методи- Скопје. 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/653\\_Zakon\\_za\\_zastita\\_na\\_ukazuvaci-precisten\\_tekst.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/653_Zakon_za_zastita_na_ukazuvaci-precisten_tekst.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> DISCIPLINARY RULE. South East European University. Tetovo. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/31/Disciplinary%20Rule%20MM.pdf>

ПРАВИЛНИК ЗА РАБОТАТА НА ОВЛАСТЕНО ЛИЦЕ ЗА ПРИЕМ НА ПРИЈАВИ НА КОРУПЦИЈА НА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТОТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ ВО ШТИП. Retrieved from: <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/documents/ugd/korupcija/pravilnik-korupcija.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> RULE ON RECEIVING CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS, South East European University. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/19/Rule%20on%20receiving%20corruption%20allegations%20MM.pdf>  
Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Гоце Делчев. Retrieved from: <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/documents/ugd/korupcija/pravilnik-korupcija.pdf>



*relations, the official language is the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet.” In addition, Article 2 of the same law defines the terms of the use of other languages. According to Article 2 “Another language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens (Albanian language) is also an official language and its alphabet, according to this law.” Article 1 also imposes the usage of the languages on all institutions in the territory of R. of North Macedonia.*

“In all state administration bodies in the Republic of Macedonia, central institutions, public enterprises, agencies, directorates, institutions and organizations, commissions, legal entities that perform public authorizations in accordance with law and other institutions, an official language in addition to the Macedonian language and its alphabet is also the language is spoken by 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its letter, in a manner defined by this law”

Article 2 of the *Law on use of languages* allows citizens to be able to use the language of the minority in institutions as defined within the same law.

“Article 2 (1) Citizens have the right to use any of the official languages and their letters referred to in Article 1 paragraph 1 and 2 of this Law, and the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as other institutions, have the obligation to enable them the use and application of those official languages and their alphabets in any proceedings, as well as the implementation of those procedures in that official language and alphabet.”

Article 51, paragraph 2 of the <sup>62</sup>Constitution of Republic of Macedonia obliges everybody *to respect the constitution and the law*, including the higher education institutions in the country.<sup>39</sup>

The legal obligations mentioned clearly imply that documents need to be available not only in Macedonian but also in Albanian. The availability of documents in English is considered

<sup>74</sup>  
<sup>26</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. n.d. Retrieved from: [https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix)

an advantage due to the increasing foreign non-native speaking student body and also due to the participation of students and staff in foreign exchange programs such as Erasmus+, Horizon and Fulbright.

Combining the ENAI recommendations of making the documents related to academic integrity publicly available, as well as fulfilling the legal obligation of the Law on whistleblowing protection the author searched the official university webpages to find out to what extent do public and private higher education institutions are in line with ENAI recommendation in qualitative terms, as well as to what extent they respect the *Law on the use of language*. The following table presents the search results by May, 2021.

**Figure 12**

*Languages of official web pages of public and private universities*<sup>40</sup>

University	Languages			
	Macedonian	Albanian	English	Other languages
St. Cyril and Methodius University (public)	√	×	√	×
Goce Delchev (public)	√	×	√	Turkish
University of Tetovo (public)	√	√	√	×
University American College (private)	√	×	√	×
South East European University (pub-non private)	√	√	√	×

Based on the information provided on table 13 it can be concluded that universities have a selective approach towards the implementation of the *Law on use of languages*. More importantly, such is the case with the oldest university which has the largest student body in the country, the University of St. Cyril and Methodius which does not contain nor publishes any information in any Albanian language. Followed by university of Goce Delchev, which is another public university which does not contain nor publish any information in Albanian too. It is worth noting that the only two universities who publish information in languages of the minorities and in this way fully implement the *Law on use of languages* are The South East

<sup>40</sup> \*Note Information taken from official web pages of the universities



European University and University in Tetovo. Unequal access to information can certainly affect knowledge of the matter of academic and research integrity, especially when information is scarce while trying to build an institutional infrastructure on ethics and raise awareness on issues which require cultural shift. Given the current situation, that is less likely to happen.

If we are to explore the content on what is being published at the university web pages and how that is related to academic integrity is by focusing on how much these universities have made available the ethical codes or institutional codes of conduct in languages other than Albanian or English. The following table presents the search results by May, 2021.

**Figure 13**

*Languages in which institutional code of conduct/ethical code are published on university web pages*

University	Institutional code of conduct/ethical code and languages in which they are published on university web pages <sup>41</sup>			
	Macedonian	Albanian	English	Other languages
St. Cyril and Methodius University (public)	√	x	x	x
Goce Delchev (public)	√	x	x	x
University of Tetovo (public)	x	x	x	x
University American College (private)	x	x	x	x
South East European University (pubic/private)	√	√	√	x

Based on the table above, the majority of universities have made available their institutional codes of conduct only in Macedonian language. Such is the case with University of St. Cyril and Methodius <sup>42</sup> and University of Goce Delchev <sup>43</sup>. The underlying assumption is that this is in partial fulfilment of the legal requirements by higher education institutions. There is

<sup>41</sup> \*Note Information taken from official web pages of the universities

<sup>42</sup> Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методи- Скопје. 2021. Retrieved from:

[http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32)

<sup>43</sup> Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Гоце Делчев. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ugd.edu.mk/documents/ugd/korupcija/pravilnik-korupcija.pdf>

also the case of universities that have not made available any information regarding the institutional codes of conduct on their web pages. Such is the case with one public university which is this case is University of Tetovo and one private university, such is the case with University American College. Only one university stands out in the list of universities who have made available codes of conduct on their web pages. The South East European University<sup>444546</sup>, has its codes of conduct published in all three languages.

It is worth noting also that availability of information is scarce in any other language than Macedonian at university web pages. Although one would assume that clicking the webpage in another language would mean seeing the same content in another language, this is not the case with the universities mentioned above. With the exception of South East European university which publishes content, new information and documentation equally and consistently in all three languages thus fulfilling the ENAI recommendation on making information available publicly.

However, universities are not the only ones to take the blame. Lack of budget reserved for development of education within the higher education sector certainly complicates the adoption of innovative pedagogical solutions to combat academic dishonesty on institutional level. Taking in consideration the extensive effort and incredible amount of invested resources put by higher education institutions to promote academic integrity presents an important step towards the right direction in securing long term responsible academic and research practices. Changing a cultural phenomenon is difficult for any culture, especially when it involves ethical values. However, having all the necessary legal and conceptual pre-conditions on paper is one thing, and putting the same in actions is another. At this point, in practical terms, an emerging question is how much laws, regulation, procedures and rulebooks would be meaningful to a 18-19 years old student who has never undergone any previous training on academic integrity prior to engaging in practices related to academic dishonesty. In the context of North Macedonia, this would be a very realistic context. In public schools, academic integrity values are not taught, students don't know the term because they have never had a subject where they

<sup>44</sup> Кодекс за етичко однесување на академскиот кадар. South East European University: Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/18/00%9A%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%20%D0%B7%D0%82%20%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%BE%20%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B4.%20%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8%202019%20MK.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Kodeksi për sjelljen etike të stafit akademik. South East European University: Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/18/Rregullore%20p%C3%ABr%20Kodin%20etik%20MM.pdf>

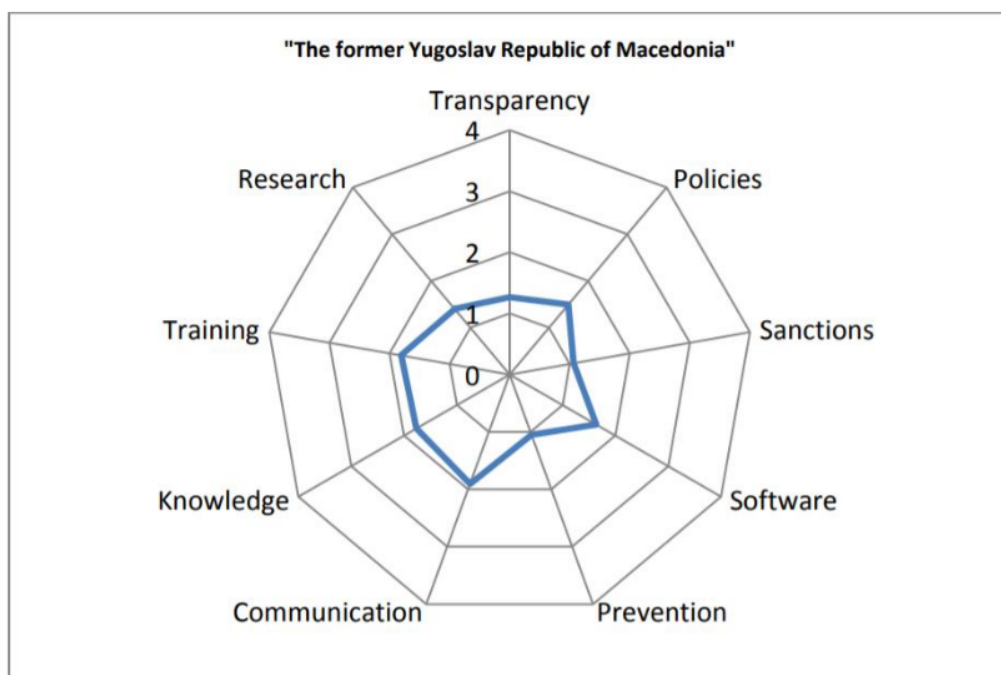
<sup>46</sup> Rule for Ethical Conduct of Academic Staff. South East European University: Retrieved from: <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-2020/18/Code%20of%20conduct%20for%20academic%20staff%20MM.pdf>

practice values of academic integrity and they are not discussed in any way in the course of their education. For comparative purposes, schools in Lithuania, Finland and Canada are among countries which exemplify investment in developing appropriate writing skills in early stages. A study commissioned by The Council of Europe as part of ETINED (Ethics Transparency and Integrity in Education) involving countries from South East Europe found that the academic communities in North Macedonia have an increasing interest to strengthen *the knowledge and the skills* in addressing the issue of academic misconduct in secondary education as well. (Foltýnek, T et al., 2017)

Based on the survey results, the study found that North Macedonia has a low ethics infrastructure/academic integrity culture due to very low level of prevention followed by sanctions, transparency and research. Based on the same report, communication, knowledge and training were evaluated slightly better, but remained whining level 1. As exemplified in Figure 15.

**Figure 15**

*AIMM Radar Chart for "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*



Source: AIMM Radar Chart for "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Foltýnek, T. Dlabolová, D. Linkeschová, D. Calhoun, B. Glendinning, I. Lancaster, T. Kapet, 2017)

As it can be seen on Figure 15, few aspects of academic integrity culture are better than the others. Prevention seems to have reviewed the lowest ratings when it comes to integrity culture. This is very important to highlight because other aspects of academic integrity are interrelated to prevention. There is a partial overlap of these aspects of the points discussed. Software at higher education institutions is used as a method of prevention of academic dishonesty, therefore this could be interpreted in this way too. In North Macedonia, all MA and PhD level students are obliged to undergo a software analysis through <http://plagijati.mon.gov.mk/> and prove that their work has not been plagiarized. However, many professors, students and management have expressed their concerns about the fact that this web site provided by the Ministry of education has a very limited scope to how much it can detect plagiarism. The lack of sophistication of the tool makes it very little possible to detect the ever-evolving plagiarism techniques which students and staff use to conduct academic dishonesty. As it can be seen in Figure 15, sanctions are equally rated on the lowest possible level. This particularly is not surprising at all because there has been virtually very little to no particular sanctions against faculty members or students in regards to penalizing conduct in academic dishonesty even in cases where plagiarism of the highest degrees has been proven to exist among academicians.

**Figure 16**

Definitions of sanctions for breaching code of conduct across universities <sup>47</sup>

University	Specific sanctions published by universities			
	Macedonian	Albanian	English	Other languages
St. Cyril and Methodius University (public)	×/√ <sup>48</sup>	×	×	×
Goce Delchev (public)	×/√ <sup>49</sup>	×	×	×
University of Tetovo (public)	×	×	×	×
University American College (private)	×	×	×	×
South East European University (pubic/private)	√ <sup>50</sup>	√ <sup>51</sup>	√ <sup>52</sup>	×

Based on the data provided in Figure 16, the emerging question is how universities are currently coping with these concerns and how much pedagogical solutions are offered to students to inform them about integrity in general. In the analysis above, it was demonstrated that administratively, universities demonstrate a limited access to information on codes of ethics, policies, penalties and procedures on issues related to academic integrity. But are

<sup>47</sup> \*Note. ×/√ stands for cases where code of conduct/ethical code foresees sanctions for academic dishonesty but they are limited only to private/public warning.

\*Note ×/√ stands for cases where code of conduct/ethical code foresees sanctions for misconduct but the sanctions are not defined.

<sup>48</sup> Етички Кодекс. Универзитет Кирил и Методиј Скопје.

[http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32)

<sup>49</sup> Етички Кодекс. Гоце Делчев Штип.

<https://www.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/doma/info-javen-karakter/96-za-ugd/241-etichki-kodeks>

<sup>50</sup> Правилник за дисциплински мерки. Универзитет на Југоисточна Европа.

<https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-4410/31/%D0%9F%D1%80%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%20%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%20%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B8%20%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8%202019%20%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%20MM.pdf>

<https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-4410/31/%D0%9F%D1%80%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%20%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%20%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B8%20%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8%202019%20%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%20MM.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Rregullore per masa disiplinore. Universiteti i Evropë

Juglindore <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-4410/31/Rregullore%20p%C3%ABr%20masa%20disiplinore%20gusht%202019%20MM.pdf>

<https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-4410/31/Rregullore%20p%C3%ABr%20masa%20disiplinore%20gusht%202019%20MM.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> Disciplinary Rule. South East European University. <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/2019-4410/31/Disciplinary%20Rule%20MM.pdf>

pedagogical solutions in the form of courses being offered to students something which potentially shows more promising results? These could be academic programs carefully tailored to address the levels of academic dishonesty in the field.

### 13: Academic Integrity in Business Schools

Discussing field based academic dishonesty, there is an ever growing concern about the level of it on an international level there. Few fields are more susceptible to academic dishonesty than others. Levy and Rakovski (2006) state that in higher education where cheating is an ever-growing behavior, calls “students of business are the most dishonest”. McCabe et al. (2006) report found that graduate students of business, compared to their peers in other fields



have admitted to have cheated during the course of their studies. More than half of the graduate students, more specifically fifty-six percent engaged in cheating. Likewise, Caldwell expresses his concerns regarding cheating habits in business schools calling “the problem of academic dishonesty in Business Schools has risen to the level of a crisis” (Caldwell, 2010). Since, business schools students are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty, the emerging question is what kind of a culture of academic integrity do business schools in North Macedonia demonstrate? In order to address this question, a more detailed overview at how business integrity is defined in the country and how much business ethics is taught at business schools in public and private higher education institutions in the country.

### 13.1 Background information

Analyzing integrity in one society requires a thorough search of the most important pillars of the society, which includes education, business, state administration, public services, politics, and many more. In terms of linking business to corruption, North Macedonia has consistently received the lowest rates on the regional level on the *Global Foreign Direct Investment Country Attractiveness Index (FDI)*. The top three reasons the foreign investors note about doing business in North Macedonia are related to corruption.<sup>53</sup>

Finding a common definition of integrity in business in North Macedonia presents a difficult task due to the complexity and the flexibility of the term “integrity in business”. Although the literal term might not be applicable in the state- or privately owned- business, it certainly finds an application through the concepts it implies. Terms such as business ethics, managerial ethics, economic ethics are used interchangeably, all referring to business integrity in general. Other additional concepts which are associated with integrity in business include: corporate social responsibility, anti-corruption and conflict of interest, and fair competition.

Academic research in local languages, primarily Macedonian covering ethics include theories of business ethics and define more specifically the importance of the notion of integrity in business where business ethics is perceived as “primary economic ethics”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Competitiveness Strategy and Action Plan of the Republic of Macedonia 2016-2020. Government of R. of North Macedonia. Retrieved from: [https://www.vicpremier-ekonomija.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pdf/07.Competitiveness\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.vicpremier-ekonomija.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pdf/07.Competitiveness_Strategy.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Examples of this research includes: Темков, Кирил. Етика за III година. Скопје: Просветно дело, 2004. Темков, Кирил. Етиката денес. Скопје: Епоха, 1999. Темков, Кирил. Етика. Скопје: Епоха, 1998. Темков, Кирил. Како да се биде добар. Скопје: ОХО, 2007. Retrieved from: [http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FZF/Voved\\_vo\\_etika.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FZF/Voved_vo_etika.pdf)

The integrity in business is defined and regulated around legal obligations which emerge from specific implementation of laws in relation to corruption. *The Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest* defines corruption as “abuse of function, public authority, official duty or position for the benefit or through an intermediary, for oneself or another”.<sup>55</sup> Paragraph 7, Article 8 from *The Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest* defines the meanings of the terms used in this law which refers to “integrity” as “lawful, independent, impartial, ethical, accountable and transparent performance of activities by which the officials preserve their reputation and the reputation of the institution in which they are responsible person, ie the are employed, they eliminate risks and remove doubts in the possibility of the emergence and development of corruption and with it ensures the trust of the citizens in the performance of public functions and in the work of public institutions.”<sup>56</sup>

In terms of defining integrity in business on national level in North Macedonia, this is regulated with yet another law, *Law on lobbying*. Lobbying has a particularly important role in Macedonian society because of the scope and level in which this activity can be performed. Lobbying, as a legitimate profession in all democratic societies, revolves around defending the interest of government on one side, and large corporations, small and medium size business, NGOs on the other side, thus- making it particularly susceptible to corruption. In this respect, the law does not make use of the term *business integrity* but is rather defined through the lens of corruption. Article 20 of the *Law on lobbying* specifies “when lobbying, the lobbyist is obliged to act in accordance with the laws that refer to the prevention of conflict of interest and to the prevention of corruption”<sup>57</sup>. A more direct connection between lobbying and business ethics is highlighted in the course Managerial Lobbying, offered at the Business Academy Smileski. The course points out that through this course, students will understand the procedure, knowledge of international and national norms, transparency, business ethics compliance with the code for managerial lobbying.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> State Commission for Prevention of Corruption. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://dksk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/%D0%97%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%87%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%BF%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B8%D0%24%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B8.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. <https://dksk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/%D0%97%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> <http://bas.edu.mk/dl/SM-PredmetniProgrami.pdf>



integrity in business are engraved in *The Code of Conduct, Business Ethics, Office Rules, Customer Care, and The HR Office* of respected companies.

### 13.2 Business integrity awareness raising events

The President of the Chamber of Commerce MCC, Daniela Arsova, in relation to the need for more integrity highlights the benefits of the same to the businesses and the society in general. She states "cooperation between the private and public sector is necessary to create a business environment that encourages increased integrity and trust in institutions, acting towards achieving economic prosperity."<sup>62</sup>

*The Business Confederation Macedonia* has included 12 different principles for ethical business implementers. These principles include the following characteristics: *honesty, integrity, keeping trust, loyalty, justice, care for others, quality commitment, management, reputation and morality, responsibility, respect for others and respect for laws.*<sup>63</sup>

EU funded projects also contribute to building the capacity of the country to improve transparency, integrity and combating corruption. In terms of improving integrity in the business sector, the EU sponsored a project titled "*Enhance Integrity and Reduce Corruption in State and Private Business Sector*" the project terminated in 2021. The results of which included: *Recommendations for legislative changes and benchmarks on good practices to increase transparency, accountability and integrity of state-owned enterprises;*<sup>64</sup>

#### *Teaching Business Integrity in Higher Educational Institutions*

In order to determine the level to which ethics infrastructure is available in ethics susceptible schools such as the business schools in higher education institutions, the following analysis was conducted based on the following parameters.

#### 1. Faculties of Economics, Business, Management, Finances

<sup>62</sup> Сојузот на стопански комори на Македонија. Arsovska, D. 2020. Retrieved from:

<https://chamber.mk/kreiravme-ekonomski-politiki-za-zemjite-od-g20-koi-se-globalno-primenlivi/>

<sup>63</sup> Business Confederation Macedonia. N.d. Retrieved from:<https://bcm.mk/%D0%91%D0%9A%D0%9C-%D0%97%D0%90-%D0%91%D0%98%D0%97%D0%9D%D0%98%D0%A1-%D0%98-%D0%98%D0%9D%D0%A2%D0%95%D0%93%D0%A0%D0%98%D0%A2%D0%95%D0%A2-%D0%98-%D0%A3%D0%A1%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%9B%D0%90%D0%A1%D0%95%D0%9D/>

<sup>64</sup> Center for Civil Communications. Зајакнување на интегритетот и намалување на корупцијата во јавниот и  
48 ватниот бизнис - сектор (2018-2021). 2018. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.ccc.org.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=342%3A-2018-2021&catid=22%3A2012-03-03-10-36-56&Itemid=97&lang=mk](https://www.ccc.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=342%3A-2018-2021&catid=22%3A2012-03-03-10-36-56&Itemid=97&lang=mk)

2. Only accredited courses are involved in the analysis
3. Business ethics courses in postgraduate studies
4. Search for “ethics” or “business ethics” as a keyword or any other course which has the same content in the course description of all courses within the H.E.I. sector
5. Compulsory or free electives courses
6. Analysis of academic program for MA and PhD
7. Information available online on the official web sites of the universities

Few universities offer courses in Business Ethics in bachelors, masters and PhD level. The University of St. Cyril and Methodius University, the largest state university in North Macedonia, offers courses in Business Ethics or course content related to ethics in business on all academic levels. *Business Ethics* first study cycle, Business Ethics for second study cycle and PhD level.

The overview of the programs was also analyzed including the content of the description of study programs, course descriptions and syllabi to find courses such as *Business Ethics*.

In addition, courses which implicitly or explicitly contain the key concepts of Business Ethics in their content, either in form of a course module, chapter or topic covered during the course of semester were included in the analysis.

- key competences demonstrating ethics and ethical behavior
- lectures and/or practical hours on business ethics
- corporate social responsibility
- ethics, ethical norms, ethical principles, professional ethics, business ethics
- code of conduct, ethical dilemmas in business, ethical problem solving, ethical solutions
- values (e.g. values-based principles; universally recognized values; individual (personal) values; values of organization)
- sustainable development; sustainable businesses



-principles of business ethics; ethical businesses

State and private higher education institutions included in this analysis are the University of St. Cyril and Methodius <http://www.ukim.edu.mk/>, South East European University <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/>, University American College <https://uacs.edu.mk/home/>, University of Goce Delchev-Shtip <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/>.

### 13.3 Faculty of Economy, University of St. Cyril and Methodius

Based on the analysis of the incorporation of Business Ethics courses in the curricula involve the following courses. On MA level, three courses have been detected, and those include Business Ethics in insurance (*Бизнис етика во осигурување*),<sup>65</sup> Business/Professional Ethics (*Деловна етика*)<sup>66</sup> and Business Ethics (*Бизнис етика*)<sup>67</sup>. On Doctoral School level, two courses which include or overlap with Business Ethics have been found. The courses include Scientific-research ethics which application and examples in the field of economics sciences (*Научно-истражувачка етика со примена и примери во подрачјето на економските науки*)<sup>68</sup> and Methodology of scientific research work with application and examples in the field of economic sciences (*Методологија на научно истражувачка работа со примена и примери во подрачјето на економските науки*).<sup>69</sup> The University of St. Cyril and Methodius offering the course *Business Ethics* in the undergraduate program, presents an additional value enabling

<sup>65</sup> Faculty of Economy. Бизнис Етика. N.d. Retrieved from:

<https://cf.ukim.edu.mk/%d1%81%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8-%d0%b2%d1%82%d0%be%d1%80-%d1%86%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%bb%d1%83%d1%81%d0%b1%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%81-%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b0-%d0%b2%d0%be-%d0%be%d1%81%d0%b8%d0%b3%d1%83%d1%80%d1%83%d0%b2%d0%b0%d1%9a%d0%b5/>

<sup>66</sup> Faculty of Economy. Деловна Етика. N.d. Retrieved from:

<https://cf.ukim.edu.mk/%d1%81%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8-%d0%b2%d1%82%d0%be%d1%80-%d1%86%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%bb%d1%83%d1%81%d0%b4%d0%b5%d0%bb%d0%be%d0%b2%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b0/>

<sup>67</sup> Faculty of Economy. Бизнис Етика. N.d. Retrieved from:

<https://cf.ukim.edu.mk/%d1%81%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8-%d0%b2%d1%82%d0%be%d1%80-%d1%86%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%bb%d1%83%d1%81%d0%b1%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%81-%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b0/>

<sup>68</sup> University of St. Cyril and Methodius. Предлог студиска програма за организирање на трет циклус студии по Економски Науки. N.d. Retrieved from: <https://eccf.ukim.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Doktorski-Ekonomski-nauki-PhD-Economic-Sciences.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



consistency in the learning process from lowest to the highest academic levels within the department.

As far as further description of the key competencies acquired by students in the third cycle of studies in Economics the *General descriptors for qualifications for third cycle studies with 180 ECTS in the field of Economics* include *Communication skills* which include the *ability to formulate research results in a concise, clear and convincing manner, respecting the standards of scientific research ethics*.

Of all 4 higher education institutions, University of St. Cyril and Methodius is the only university which offers courses from BSc to MA and PhD level on *Business Ethics*. With one course on BSc level, three courses on MA level and 1 on PhD level, demonstrates that this higher education institution, within the faculty of Economics, takes Business Ethics seriously by offering courses and securing continuity and consistency in the transition from BSc, MA and to PhD level. Thus, the faculty emphasizes the importance that ethics plays in contemporary business environments by reinforcing the same within competencies acquired by students in the third cycle of studies. As part of the general descriptors of the qualification for third cycle studies in the field of economics, the *Communication Skills* section states "*Ability to formulate research results in a concise, clear and convincing manner, respecting the standards of scientific research ethics.*"

As for the key competencies mentioned in the course description for the PhD level course, this course focuses on a theoretical and pragmatic approach to the definition of ethics within economics. The course further focuses on the role, the importance and the use of scientific-research ethics, ethical behavior, methodological approaches and reaction to social responsibility, function of the code of ethics, challenges and innovations, and so on.

#### 13.4 Analysis of the South East European University

This is the only university in North Macedonia which offers study programs in three languages on all academic levels, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral. Additionally it includes two more specialization professional programs, such as: Professional Sales Management and Professional Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

The course specifically titled *Business Ethics* was not found on any of the cycles of the study programs within the faculty of Business and Economics. However, two free elective courses were found within the Business Economics faculty which covers to a certain extent

ethical issues in business. These two courses are: *Ethical and Legal Issues in Information Technology* and *Ethical Issues for IT Professionals*. Although the course title *Ethical and Legal Issues in Information Technology* refers to ethical issues in IT, the course description states “to provide experience in the consideration of ethical matters and the resolution of ethical dilemmas.” and is open to MA students from the Business Economics Faculty.

The course *Ethical Issues for IT Professionals* which is also offered to MA students of Business Economics Faculty. According to the general course description, the course includes wide areas of IT such as: intellectual property, free speech and privacy, it also states ethics in social networking and online communities. However, the course description does not provide any information to what degree it dwells in the theoretical or practical approaches to analysis of ethics, ethical values, code of conduct, public social responsibility or any other issues relevant to better understanding of business ethics.

An important distinction that ought to be highlighted here is the difference between mandatory and free elective courses. Although faculties offer these accredited courses, that does not necessarily mean they are activated because faculties still need to put these courses into function by prioritizing and expressing interest as well as requesting the course conveyor to teach the course. If otherwise, it is only accredited but not taught. Another important factor determining the fate of these courses and the success of the same is the number of students being assigned or registered in the course. In mandatory courses, all students are obliged to take the course; in free electives, a course is not activated if it lacks students.

The case of both of the free electives mentioned above, one has never been activated and the other has been activated only once and never again.

### 13.5 Analysis of University American College

This private higher education institution in North Macedonia offers two separate courses on issues related to *Business Ethics* titled *Business Ethics and Corporate Governance and Business Ethics*. These courses are limited only to MA level, whereas PhD level courses on *Business Ethics* are not offered at all. The presumption is that If business ethics is covered during the MA degree, there is no need to be covered in PhD.

Variations on course requirement dependent on the direction of the studies, ex. MA in Marketing, MA in Management, MSc in Corporate Finance and Banking. For some directions within the MA programs *Business Ethics* is a mandatory course, in other directions is offered as a free elective.

11 The course description covers issues related to but not limited to the following:  
11 Understand the techniques of moral reasoning and argumentation that are needed to analyze moral issues in business; Evaluate the individual actions in economic and business transactions within a variety of moral frameworks; Apply general ethical principles to particular cases or practices in business; Critically evaluate the morality of different economic systems;<sup>70</sup>

#### 13.6 Analysis of Faculty of Economy, University of Goce Delchev-Shtip

This state university within the first cycle of studies does not include any courses with the title *Business Ethics*. However, ethics as one of the key concepts of business ethics is included as a chapter in several courses in the undergraduate program. These courses include;

-*Management*, which according to the course content covers a chapter on *Ethics and Social Responsibility*.

-*Corporate Finances* includes a chapter *Management and Ethics*.

-*Marketing* covers *Marketing Ethics and Social Responsibility*.

-*Management of Small Business* includes Social Responsibility and Ethics and small business.

-*Professional Communication* course covers lectures on *Business Ethics, Business and legal behavior in an ethical environment* and practical hours on *Cultural Differences in Professional Ethics*

-*Auditing* according to the course content includes *Professional ethics in the auditing profession*, followed by a chapter on *Legal Issues in Business Law* covering a topic on *Business Ethics*.<sup>71</sup>

The first cycle of studies includes *Ethics* as an elective course from the university's list of free elective courses.

Neither mandatory nor free elective courses are offered on Business Ethics on MA or PhD level.

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<sup>70</sup> University American College. Business Ethics course. N.d. Retrieved from:  
<https://uacs.edu.mk/home/course/business-ethics/>

<sup>71</sup> Goce Delchev University in Shtip. Предметни Програми. N.d. Retrieved from:  
<https://ef.ugd.edu.mk/documents/studiski/prv-ciklus/2017-2018/biznis-ekonomija-predmetna.pdf>

The emerging question is what are the positive dimensions for Business Ethics in the country? Business Ethics courses are offered at higher education institutions in R. of North Macedonia. Courses on Business Ethics are being offered at all study cycles, including BSc, MA and PhD level. Courses which include chapters in Business Ethics as learning outcome or key competency their course content can be found across the universities. Courses taught at universities focus on *theoretical and pragmatic approaches to the definition of ethics within economics*. The course further focuses on *the role, the importance and the use of scientific-research ethics, ethical behavior, methodological approaches and reaction to social responsibility, function of the code of ethics, challenges and innovations*, and so on.

In building an institutional and educational ethics infrastructure, faculties need to play a more proactive role towards introducing and implementing business ethics within their department. Faculties need to offer courses on business ethics as mandatory courses in order to ensure sustainability of the model where ethics is included on all level of the postgraduate studies.

## 14: Data collection And Methodology

For the purpose of this dissertation, data were collected with the intention to collect data which provide more insight to the quest to answer the research question which were presented at the beginning of this dissertation.

The research questions are:

1. What is the role of academic dishonesty and corruption in education?
2. Which are the characteristics of academic dishonesty and in which form does it appear in higher education institutions in North Macedonia?
3. Which factors contribute to the development of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education institutions across the state?
4. Which are the main educational implications of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia?
5. Which are the main practical implications of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia?

Staff and students of the following three universities included in this research:

1. University of St. Cyril and Methodius (public university)
2. University of Tetovo (public university)
3. South East European University (public/private university)

For the purpose of this research, a specific population was included. Since the research requires investigating phenomena which are related to higher education it implies that a population which is engaged or associated with higher education in institutions can take the questionnaire.

A qualitative and quantitative method of verification of hypothesis is applied in order to determine the level of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education institution in North Macedonia. Individuals who were eligible to take the questionnaire were only students who have legal status of a student and who were registered as active students in one of the three universities that are analyzed. No other selection process was applied.

For the qualitative method, a request was sent to universities to access the content of the auditing reports and inspect the abuse of positions or other corruption related records of the auditing office. Three questions were also included in the request.

Another qualitative method that was utilized for the purpose of this research is by sending specific questions related to academic integrity to the management at 2 different institutions.

The same pattern was followed for the questionnaire for the staff. Individuals who are employed as either employed as part-time or full-time staff at one of the universities were eligible to take the questionnaire. An equal and representative number of participants from all universities were targeted. Individuals participating were asked to consent to volunteer to take the questionnaire. Dissemination of the questionnaires was done electronically using google forms.

For each target group, a separate questionnaire was developed. Each questionnaire included a short description of the purpose of the questionnaire and a short description of the research purpose for participating in this research. The questionnaire also included information about guaranteed anonymity of the participants due to the sensitive issues that the questionnaire contains. The letter Q, followed by a number in table 2 and 3, or text while reporting the numbers and percentages from the respondents, the letter refers to the question.

The student questionnaire included 25 questions including information on age, gender, year of study, degree level, field of study, employment status. The topics included in the questions vary based on experiential encounters in the institution where they study and included ethical questions such as information on unethical situations that they have encountered, information on whether they were victims of an unethical behavior and information whether they have witnessed an unethical behavior. The questions were also

related to their experience with cheating and plagiarism as well as intensity of these practices in the duration of their studies. An additional comments box was left at the end of the questionnaire for students to add insight regarding any aspect of the topic.

The staff questionnaire included 25 questions including questions on their experiential encounters in the course of their career as employees of the higher education institution they represent. The questionnaire included ethical questions such as witnessing and participating in unethical behavior. The questionnaire did not include information on the employer in this case the university of the participants because this research implements a holistic approach and that excluded comparing data between institutions.

The quantitative data were collected over the course of one year. The type of questions included in the questionnaires for the staff and students were:

**I. Likert scale:** a point scale value from 1 to 5 was given for each question.

1 for strongly agree (expressing strong agreement)

5 for strongly disagree (expressing strong disagreement)

**II. Dichotomous questions:** Yes/No answers.

**III. Multiple choice questions.** Choose more than one answer.

For the qualitative section of this research, a semi-structured interview including 5 questions were distributed among stakeholders in institutions. The questions were sent via email to all respondents.

A variation of the questions based on “interconnected protocols for assessing the integrity of national education systems (further INTES protocols or methodology)” (OECD, 2018b) were adopted. The primary goal is to “identify practices in education which qualify as corrupt and to explore education systems from the point of view of their vulnerability to such practices.” (Ibid.) The initiation of INTES started as a political agenda which came out from the <sup>6</sup>Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (OECD, n.d.) While designing the questions three research questions from the INTES protocol were taken into consideration. The questions are related to the type of violations that take place, what enables them and the motivations that are behind them. (OECD, 2018b).

In addition, in order to detect any corruption patterns in higher education and to the extent of the same are revealed by the institutional authorities an email was sent to the official contact person/email of the university requesting access to information of the auditing and if



the auditing has The letter see (Figure 27 in Appendix). The request by email included a short description of the PhD, information on the purpose of the study as well as the specific information requested by the auditors to provide. The email also included a justification that the access to the documents was based on the Law on Free Access to Public Information <sup>72</sup> and the request included access to the following information:

1. provide the exact number of cases where abuse of office and corrupt behavior have been detected in the last 10 years. Such cases include cases where misuse and corrupt behavior has been proven by the audit office who have had:
2. strong evidence based on facts from the audit office, whether they are without legal initiation or cases in process
3. cases with legal initiation
4. cases with criminal chargers.

The questionnaire for the semi-structured interview with the management was sent through email and responses were received through email. The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. Do faculties have an active disciplinary commission for students and staff related to cheating and plagiarism?
2. Does the commission hold a written record of reports annually, monthly or any reports with figures on the number of cases reported by mentors, professors regarding cheating and plagiarism yearly, monthly or quarterly?
3. Do you think the current anti-plagiarism software <http://plagijati.mon.gov.mk/> implemented by ministry of education is enough to prevent plagiarism? Do you think it detects plagiarized work translated from English to Macedonian and Albanian?
4. Do you think universities should implement additional anti-plagiarism tools(software) to prevent plagiarism?
5. Do you think universities should teach students by offering pedagogical solutions(more courses, writing skills on following citation guidelines) on how not to engage in academic dishonesty?

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<sup>72</sup> Law on Free Access to Public Information. Government of Republic of Macedonia. 2021 Retrieved from: <https://www.dbki.gov.mk/?q=node/134>

#### 14.1 Limitations

Corruption is a complex issue which incorporates multi-faceted forms of operation. This already complex matter expands in size and width when put in the vast cultural context of nations across the world. That is why no corruption pattern is unique and no one-solution to solve it can be applicable and that is why it is important to highlight that this research will not offer solutions to all existing problems related to all corruption phenomena present in the higher education systems in North Macedonia and across the world.

The research should not be considered as a potential problem-solving guide for all national higher education institutions across the country. This research does not reflect and does not represent all the issues related to corruption and academic integrity of all universities in North Macedonia. Due to the large amount of student body as well as academic and administrative staff variations in responses may be present in future research, however, the current ones represented in the data of this research are limited only to 3 public and private universities.

What instead this research does is to attempt to answer the questions on why these events are ever more present in academic circles, in what form they appear and what possible solutions can be withdrawn based on the evidence provided. In addition, this research attempts to present the ways that educational values and educational quality can be compromised by the way students and staff operate on daily bases inside and outside the educational institutions.

## 15: Results

### 15.1 Student questionnaire results

42

The purpose of this study is to identify the ways that conflict of interests and breach of ethical codes of institutions by staff and students can be present in the educational system. What this study does specifically is that it translates practices by the frequency of its appearance, the way that they appear and draw conclusions based on the evidence provided by date of the qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The questionnaire included 126 responses from three different institutions. According to the results received from students' responses, the table proves the hypothesis that academic dishonesty is very present among students. Also, academic dishonesty affects the education and educational attainment, meaning that educational goals that are set by the institutions are not met because of the degree to which its students engage in the behavior which breaches the instructional code of ethics.

The tables and figures included demonstrate another degree to which academic dishonesty is normalized within the institutions of higher education in North Macedonia. In Table 1. on the question on if students have taken an exam the questions of which they knew before they actually entered the exam, 47% of the students responded positively and 53% responded negatively. When students asked how many times they have taken (more specifically copied) the exam questions the students responded that 42% have done this 1-2 times and 18% have done this 3-5 times. (See Figure 19) Almost half of the students who take the exams

already know the questions that their teacher has prepared to test them and almost half of them have done this 1-2 times.

In addition, the number of students who share the questions of the test with other students who have not taken the test yet is even higher than with the one who declared that they knew the questions. The number of students who have decided to share their question with others are 65%, as opposed to 35% who do not share the questions of the test and this has happened 1-2 for 48% of the students and 3-5 times for 20% of the students. (See Figure 20 in the Appendix).

Sharing of exam questions by students is not the only phenomenon that takes place before and after the test as described in Q1 and Q2 in Table 1. Students also responded positively to the questions if they told the correct answer during the exam where 72% of the students responded positively proving that they have told the correct answer to their peers and 28% responded that they have not engaged in such activity. As far as the frequency of this activity, 35% of the students have said that they have done this 1-2 times and 26% have said that they told the correct answer during an exam 3-5 times, (See Figure 20).

Equally interesting are the results on Q4 on if students were ever caught even though they cheated during an exam. On this question, 53% of the students found this question not applicable because presumably these students have never engaged in such activity, whereas 22% have responded that they cheated during an exam and they have not been caught. On the question on how many times they were caught cheating during an exam, 20% of the students who declared that they cheated, they got caught. (See Figure 22 in the Appendix).

The next question, Q5 follows up on Q4 regarding the students experience with being caught while cheating and students have responded that 99% of the students have never been reported at the Dean's office for cheating even though as they state in Q6, 86% of the students were very aware of the consequences of cheating during an exam.

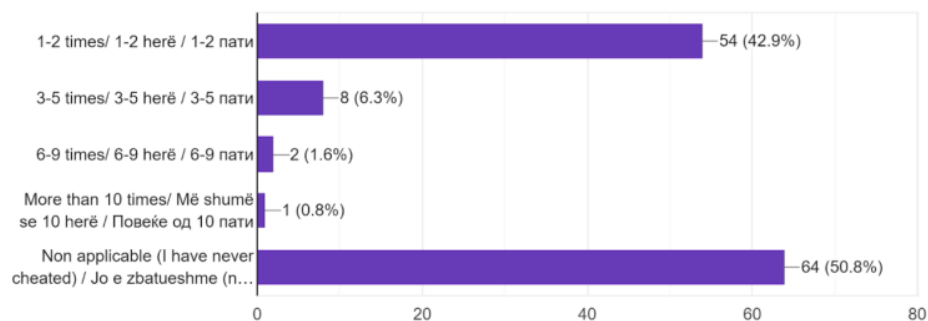
Another interesting trend arises from Q8 on students using devices as a method of cheating during an exam. One third of the students responded positively, whereas 70% have not used devices. An emerging similarity between Q8 and Q9 where again, almost one-third, more specifically, 27% of students have used written notes to pass an exam as opposed to 73% who have responded negatively.

In Q10, 67% of students have witnessed other people showing the correct answer to somebody else. In Q12, 27% of the students have positively responded that they have submitted an assignment which has been completed by someone else. When asked about how many times they have submitted an assignment which was not theirs, 42% that they have submitted 1-2 times and 6% have submitted 3-5 times. (See Figure 17.) In terms of plagiarizing, the most frequent activity where there is plagiarism involved are essays with 31%, presentations and

group presentations with 24%, seminar works 14% and projects 11%. (See Figure 23 in the Appendix) and when students are asked how many times they were discovered that they submitted someone else's assignment, only 11% were discovered. (See Figure 24 in the Appendix) From those students who were discovered plagiarizing, only 6% reported that they were penalized for it, whereas 10 % reported not to be penalized for their actions.( See Figure 25 in Appendix). The severity of penalty for students who plagiarized are 7.9% received verbal warning and 7.9% received reduced mark for the assignment. (See Figure 26 in Appendix)

**Figure 17**

**Frequency of submitting assignment which is not students'**



Q14 in Table 1 shows that 69% of the students believed that plagiarism in local languages is more frequent among students because it is more difficult to verify the source of the work which is copied. 41% of the students have reported that they were asked to buy a book the author of which is the professor because otherwise they would not be allowed to take the final exam. 26% of the students in Q17 have responded positively that they know exams which can be bought. Moreover, 17% of the students have used family or friend as a connection to influence a final grade.

On the issue of students' involvement in reporting professors of their wrongdoings, 12% of students have reported lecturers of their wrongdoings on encounters such as discrimination, corruption, embezzlement, helping students pass the course. A significant number of 65% of students for Q22 think that their professors do not consistently monitor and penalize academic integrity breaches in line with institution's policy.

For Q23 from Table 1, 38% of students report that their professors and tutors have not spent class time teaching them how to correctly use references including how to quote, paraphrase and summarize with acknowledgement.

The last dichotomous question is concerning the educational implications of applying pedagogical solutions to reduce academic dishonesty. 78% of students believe that educating them about issues related to academic integrity can make them become less involved in breaching the ethical codes, see Figure 18.

**Table 2: Academic integrity in higher education institutions in North Macedonia**

Questions	Answers			
		Yes	No	Non Appl icabl e
Q1: I have taken a test that I knew the questions of prior to entering the exam.(ex. from previous exams)		47%	53%	
Q2: I have shared questions of a test I have taken with other students		65%	45%	
Q3: I have sometimes told others the correct answer during an exam		72%	28%	
Q4: I have NEVER been caught cheating even though I cheated.		22%	23%	55%
Q5: Have you ever been reported for cheating at a test at Dean's office or Cheating and Plagiarism Commission?		1%	99%	
Q6: Are you aware of the repercussions(consequences) of cheating during an exam?		86%	14%	
Q7: Have you ever taken an exam for someone else?		5%	95%	
Q8: Have you ever used any devices such as mobile phones, smart watches, ear pieces, etc to take an exam?		30%	70%	
Q9: Have you ever cheated from written notes while taking the exam?		27%	73%	
Q10: Have you seen anybody being assisted(told the correct answers) by somebody (friend or another student) for a question during an exam?		67%	33%	
Q11: Have you ever hired a company, a friend or a colleague for an academic service, such as: assignment, project, seminars, thesis and others?		7%	93%	
Q12: Have you ever submitted an assignment completed by someone else?		27%	73%	
Q13: Did you ever pay a colleague or a friend to prepare an assignment		1%	99%	



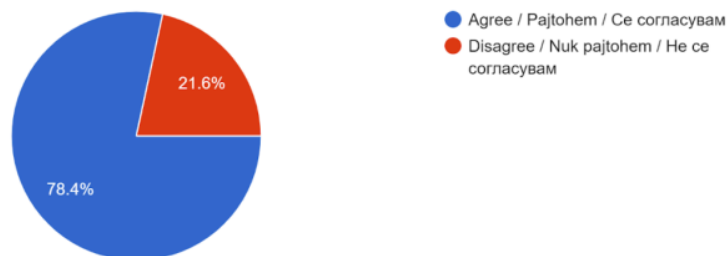
for you?			
Q14: Do you think plagiarism in local languages is more frequent among students because it is more difficult to verify the source?	69%	31%	
Q15: If your actions were discovered, were you penalized for it?	7%	10%	83%
Q16: Have you been asked to buy a book the author of which is your lecturer because you would not be allowed to enter the exam?	41%	74%	
Q17: Do you know of any exams within your faculty that can be bought?	26%	74%	
Q18: Have you ever contacted with a mediator in order to buy an exam?	6%	94%	
Q19: Have you ever used connections (family/friends) to influence a grade?	17%	83%	
Q20: Have you ever used political connections to influence a grade?	6%	74%	
Q21: Have you ever reported any lecturers of their wrongdoings (discrimination, corruption, embezzlement, helping students pass)?	12%	66%	22%
Q22: Do you think your professors consistently monitored and penalized academic integrity breaches in line with institution's policy?	35%	65%	
Q23: Have your professors and tutors spend class time teaching you how to correctly use reference (including how to quote, paraphrase and summarize with acknowledgement)?	62%	38%	

**Figure 18.**

Students opinion if educating them on issues related to academic integrity can make them become less involved in breaching the ethical codes.

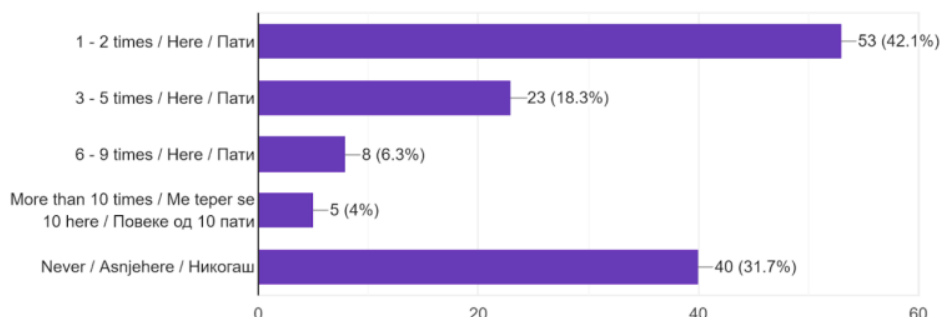
34. Educating students about issues related to academic integrity can make them become less involved in breaching the ethical codes? / Eduk...алку вклучени во кршењето на етичките кодекси?

125 responses



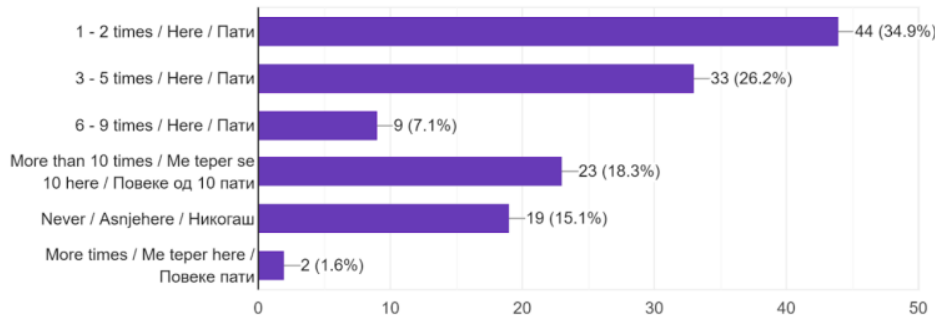
**Figure 19**

How many times students took the exam questions from others



**Figure 20**

The frequency of the sharing an answer during an exam.



## 15.2 Additional results from reports

Other sources of information which clearly demonstrate patterns of abuse of position by the academics include official reports from the State Commission for Preventing Corruption

In absence of responses by the universities related to how many cases of breach of code of conduct have been verified by the auditors' office at university St. Cyril and Methodius,

University of Tetovo and South East European University, additional sources were analyzed in the hopes to find other cases where a violation was verified.

Based on the findings of the State Commission for Preventing Corruption in their yearly report for 2019 have raised an initiative for initiating criminal prosecution cases in the field of corruption in higher education. Out of 9 such initiatives, 3 cases were regarding direct or indirect involvement of higher education professionals, including the rector of the largest and oldest public university in North Macedonia which according to the commission knowingly abused his position and refused to put one of his positions on hold. With this, the Rector of the university of St. Cyril and Methodius has abused his position of authority and demonstrated negligence.<sup>73</sup>

In addition, in 2020, according to the Public Prosecution Office, three retired professors from the Faculty of Economics at University of St. Cyril and Methodius were sentenced from two to two and a half years in prison after the court found them guilty for accepting bribes and requesting sexual services from female students for passing grades. During the course of the action against the professors, one of them was caught committing a crime and receiving 1000 euros from a student. (Basic Prosecution Office of Republic of North Macedonia, 2016).

Moreover, the more recent scandal involving the university Tetovo, staff and students who took part in the questionnaire for this study, has also been an example of extensive use of plagiarism in their published papers. An organization called Intellectual Initiative to Increase Quality in Education University in their magazine "Veritas" using text-detection software published the names of professors who have plagiarized their papers. 10 professors in total were identified to have plagiarized their papers including the former dean of the faculty of Medicine, his wife and his daughter (Intellectual Initiative to Increase Quality in Education University, 2021) while the current Dean of the faculty of Medicine, confirmed this information (In7, 2021) The deputy minister for education Mr. Shabani, in an interview informed the public that the drafting of the full inspection report for the University of Tetova takes longer than expected because besides plagiarism many more irregularities are found in the work of this institution. (TV21, 2021). As the magazine reports, 10 of the academic staff who were reported to have plagiarized, 5 of them are members of a family, such as the former dean, his wife and his daughter and a professor and his son accusing them for nepotism in this particular institution.

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<sup>73</sup>Годишен извештај за работата на државната комисија за спречување на корупцијата. 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.dksk.mk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/2020/Godishen\\_izveshta\\_za\\_rabotata\\_na\\_DKSK\\_-\\_2019.pdf](https://www.dksk.mk/fileadmin/user_upload/2020/Godishen_izveshta_za_rabotata_na_DKSK_-_2019.pdf)

## 16: Analysis of Results

### 16.1 For students questionnaire results

Based on Table 2, results, there are several emerging trends in relation to academic dishonesty. Their responses show that students in the analyzed 3 universities express a keen interest in test questions inherently. The results show that students feel very comfortable in receiving and sharing final exam questions in their courses. This “sharing” aspect of final exam questions appear to be not only prior or after the exam but also during the exam. 72% of the students have confirmed that they have sometimes shared a correct answer with someone else during the exam. Another emerging trend in relation to exams and cheating at exams is that students even though they cheat during an exam, they are never caught. It is particularly interesting that the majority of students have confirmed that they know the repercussions of cheating during an exam and some still continue to practice it. In Q14, regarding whether they have witnessed anybody being assisted by someone during a test, 67% confirmed such occurrences during exams. The attempts to try to increase the chances of passing an exam are also demonstrated outside of exams, where 17% have used connections to influence a grade.

Moreover, almost a quarter of students have confirmed that they have used tools which have helped them take the final exam. By tools here it is implied devices such as phones, smart

watches, ear pieces. In addition, students have declared that they have used written notes to cheat on an exam and it is safe to say that for the cheating students, they would use any way which will help them pass the test.

Similarly, to cheating, plagiarism is an occurrence which students appear to be familiar with just as much as with cheating during an exam. Almost a quarter of students have declared that they have submitted an assignment which was not completed by them. An overwhelming majority, 69% of students have agreed that plagiarism in local languages is more frequent due to the difficulty with identifying the source. This is happening despite the fact that according to students' responses (69%) teachers spend a considerable time with them teaching them how to correctly use references, quotes, paraphrase and summarize with acknowledgment.

Another corruption pattern which appears to be consistent in institutions struggling with corruption is the seeing the book as a way to bribe the student by conditioning their presence in the final exam if they refuse to buy the book. This particular act is also mentioned in the elements of professional misconduct in education (Braxton, John M.; Bayer, 1999). 41% of students have responded positively to course conveyors selling their own books to students justifying and covering it as a course requirement to take the final exam. Moreover, bribery is a common phenomenon which is manifested through adding a price tag to an exam. Almost a quarter of students have confirmed that they have knowledge of exams within their faculty that can be bought. However, very few of them have reported any wrongdoings demonstrated by their lecturers in relation to corruption, discrimination, embezzlement or helping students pass by their lecturers.

As far as students' perception whether academic staff demonstrate a proactive role to act in line with the institutional code and penalize students who obviously breached the codes of conduct, 65% of the students responded negatively. This shows that students are not particularly convinced that their lecturers implement academic integrity policies

## 16.2 Academic staff's questionnaire results

The academic staff questionnaire includes 25 individuals who are active staff of higher education institutions in North Macedonia.

One question whether staff thinks that sometimes students cheat to pass an exam in Q1, 20% of the staff strongly agrees and 40% agrees with this statement. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of the academic staff think that students sometimes plagiarize their homework or assignment. In fact, in Q2, 20% of the respondents strongly agree and 56% agree with this question.

There is an overwhelming consensus among the academic staff that the recent cheating and plagiarizing practices require universities to deal with this use more seriously. More precisely, in Q3, 84% strongly agree and 8% agree. In this respect, the increasing concerns regarding the seriousness that universities need to approach cheating and plagiarizing practices in Q4 72% of the respondents strongly agree and 24% agree that stricter implementation of regulations, more control and tougher punitive actions are needed in higher education in order to prevent cheating and plagiarizing practices.

<sup>1</sup> Besides cheating and plagiarism, as internal factors, other forms of external factors of corruption in higher education are also detected in the responses of academic staff. In this respect, in Q6 32% strongly agree and 36% agree that external pressure can force the educator to change the grade of a student. Other external pressures such as nepotism and political ties are also reported by respondents in Q5, 60% strongly agree and 28% agree that nepotism and political ties can improve the professional prospects of academic staff in private and public institutions in higher education. The teaching staff also faces external pressure from students with the justification that they might lose their scholarship, in Q7, 56% of the staff strongly agree and 36% agree that they have been asked for a grade increase by a student and in Q14 the staff have agreed to change the student grade with the justification that they might lose their scholarship, 12% strongly agree and 44% agree. Colleagues are also included in the external pressure in increasing a grade. In Q8, 40% of the staff strongly agree and 32% agree that they have been asked by a colleague to increase a student's grade and in Q15, 52% agree that they have increased a student's grade because their colleague asked them to. In addition, in Q9 32% strongly agree and 24% agree, that they have been asked to increase a student grade by the management of the institution where they work and only to admit in Q13 that 8% strongly agree and 32% agreed to have increased the grade because of the external pressure.

**Table 3**

Questions	Answers in %				
	SA	A	N	A	DA
Q1: Do you think students sometimes cheat to pass an exam?	20	40	28	12	0
Q2: Do you think students sometimes plagiarize their homework or assignments?	20	56	16	0	8
Q3: Do you think recent cheating and plagiarizing practices requires universities to deal with this issue more seriously?	84	8	4	0	4
Q4: Stricter implementation of regulations, more control and tougher punitive actions(punishment) in higher education institutions are needed in order to prevent cheating and plagiarizing practices.	72	24	4	0	0



Q5: Nepotism and political ties can improve the professional prospects of academic staff (including management positions at state and private universities)	60	2 8	4	8	0
Q6: Do you think excessive external pressure can force an educator to change the grade of a student.	32	3 6	2 4	8	0
Q7: I have been asked by a student to increase their grade with the justification that they might lose their scholarship or any other reason.	56	3 6	0	4	4
Q8: I have been asked to increase a student's grade by a colleague.	40	3 2	4	8	16
Q9:I have been asked to increase student's grade by the management(Rector, Pro-rector, Deans, Pro-Deans, Directors)	32	2 4	8	12	24
Q10: I have been physically threatened by a student(or someone close to him such as mediator, friend or family member) for a higher grade.?	16	8	0	12	64
Q11: I have been threatened by a student(or someone close to him such as a mediator, friend or family member) from processing a case where a student obviously breached code of ethics.	12	0	8	20	60
Q12: I have withdrawn from processing a case where a student obviously cheated/plagiarized mainly because of minimal or non-existing penalty.	24	1 6	2 0	12	28
Q13: I have agreed to increase student's grade because of external pressure by the management(Rector, Pro-rector, Deans, Pro-Deans Directors.)	8	3 2	1 6	8	36
Q14: I have agreed to increase the student's grade because he/she was in risk of losing his/her scholarship.	12	4 4	2 4	8	12
Q15: I have agreed to increase student's grade because my colleague asked me to.	0	5 2	1 2	8	28
Q16: Academic staff is discouraged to report cheating/plagiarizing students due to lack of institutional good will to deal with such cases.	20	4 8	2 0	12	0
Q17: Academic staff is discouraged from reporting cheating/plagiarizing students due to complicated administrative procedures.	24	4 0	2 0	16	0
Q18: Academic staff are discouraged to report cheating/plagiarizing students due lack of administrative procedure.	24	3 2	2 0	16	8
Q19: Academic staff are discouraged to report corruption due lack of anonymity and confidentiality.	36	3 6	8	12	8
Q20: Academic staff are discouraged from reporting corruption due to fear or lack of whistleblower protection mechanisms.	36	3 6	1 2	12	4

As regards the administrative aspect of issues related to academic integrity, responses received in Q16 report that the staff is discouraged to report students who cheat and plagiarize due to lack of institutional good will, 20% strongly agree and 48% agree. In Q17, academic staff is also discouraged from reporting cheating and plagiarizing students because of complicated administrative procedures 24% strongly agree and 40% agree. Academic staff is also discouraged from reporting corruption due to lack of anonymity and confidentiality, 36% strongly agree and 36% agree. Likewise, they are discouraged to report corruption due to fear of lack of whistleblower protection mechanisms. 36% strongly agree and 36% agree.

## Interpretation

### 16.3 For academic staff's questionnaire results

Based on the hypothesis, academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism affect higher education in North Macedonia. Based on the survey results for questions Q1 and Q2, there is an overwhelming consensus among the academic staff that they are highly aware of the cheating and plagiarizing practices of their students. These results show that university staff appears to be slightly more aware about plagiarizing practices than the cheating practices of their students. To exemplify, in Q1 40% of the staff agree that students sometimes cheat to pass the exam whereas 56% of the academic agrees that students sometimes submit plagiarized work to the teacher.

The concern regarding the increasing numbers related to corruption and academic dishonesty in higher education institutions in North Macedonia is also reflected in academic staffs' responses regarding whether they consider that the recent cheating and plagiarizing practices require universities to deal with this issues more seriously, and 84% strongly agree and 8% agree showing a clear indicator that such actions, measures and steps need to be taken by university authorities to address this issue. The call for necessary steps that need to be taken immediately by the authorities is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive answer by the academic staff that stricter implementation of rules and regulations, tougher punitive actions are necessary in order to prevent cheating and plagiarizing practices.

Another emerging concern regarding the reporting of academic integrity related issues institutionally is the amount of pressure that the teaching staff undergoes in performing their day-to-day duties. Questions related to external pressure show that more than half of the staff strongly agree or agree that this can be the reason for them to increase the grade. In terms of the research question about the types of academic dishonesty that appears in educational institutions, external pressure can be named as a significant factor to further exacerbating the already fragile system of values. Based on the results, more than half of the staff strongly agree/agree that they have been asked by a student to increase the grade because of fear of losing their scholarship. More so, more than half strongly agree/agree that they have agreed to change student's grades for fear of losing the grade. A growing concern is the external pressure applied to teachers by the colleagues or the management of the university in which case in both cases, that of an external pressure by a colleague and a member of the management have responded that more than half of the staff have agreed to change students grade when asked by a colleague and 40% strongly agree/agree to have changed the grade due to the pressure from the management.

Based on survey results, respondents are significantly discouraged to report corruption and academic dishonesty cases due to the administration. There are few aspects that are pointed in the survey results. One significant aspect of reporting corruption and academic dishonesty is institutional good will. The majority of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they are discouraged to report cheating and plagiarism because of the institutional good will to process such cases. The majority of the academic staff sees the process of reporting cheating and plagiarism as a complicated administrative procedure. In Q18 the majority of academic staff does not report students' cheating and plagiarism due to lack of administrative procedures, presumably, because the <sup>2</sup> staff are not aware of the existence of such procedures.

<sup>7</sup> Another emerging phenomenon regarding reporting cheating, plagiarism and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia is the methods that the reporting is done. Based on the survey results in Table 3, in Q19 and Q20, the majority of academic staff agrees that they do not report cases related to academic dishonesty due to either lack of whistleblower mechanisms or because of lack of anonymity.

#### 16.4. Qualitative data results

Of all three universities, St. Cyril and Methodius, University of Tetovo and South East European University to whom letters of request to access information based on the finding of the internal audit, none of the universities replied back to this request.

As far as the semi-structured interview, the preliminary results show that the commissions are formed based on the need of the faculty and minutes are taken and sent to the Dean's office.

The respondents also report drawbacks from the web site used for detection of plagiarism on national level <http://plagijati.mon.gov.mk/>. Namely, the software has limited access to checks that this software can perform. The only check that is done with this software is only against its own database, rather than comparing it to all databases on national and international level.

The software can detect translations from local languages such as Macedonian and Albanian, but again, those are limited only to its own database which is very limited. The software does not detect translated texts from other languages on an international level. Respondents have also recommended that new additional tools to detect student plagiarism and student productivity be implemented on institutional level. In fact, the South East European University has enforced a regulation very recently that requires staff to apply Google's software, Originality Report for undergraduate students and Turnit in for PhD students.

Another recommendation by the interviewed members of the management of the private and public universities is that the courses and training targeting MA and PhD students is

necessary and should be mandatory. They recommend appointing an officer to in order to facilitate the writing skills training and technical assistance for writing a thesis for MA and PhD students

## 17: Conclusions

One of the biggest threats to the current system of values of educational institutions is corruption and the absence of academic integrity. <sup>1</sup> There are many factors which play a specific role in the encouraging or discouraging staff and students to act dishonestly. One of these factors is the level of corruption in the society. It is a challenge to detect all existing patterns related to corruption and academic dishonesty. However, understanding the factors which contribute to the increase or decrease of the phenomenon within an institution is key in determining the methods which will be chosen to draft the future policies and practices to prevent it. In this respect “to assess integrity in education means to assess this environment: the sector-specific circumstances in which education participants are expected to stay true to the goals, values and principles of their national education, while steering clear of malpractice” (OECD, 2018b). Improving academic integrity means “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values; honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility” because “from these values <sup>2</sup> flow principles of behaviors that enable academic communities to translate ideas into action” (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, this is why this particular research is relevant because it tries to find the ways in which higher education stays committed to fundamental values and poses the questions if they are fulfilled and to what extent they are fulfilled. For that reason, this research aimed to identify the breaches of academic integrity by staff and students. This research is quite unique

in the sense that for the first time it applies OECD's INTES protocol to assess integrity in education in North Macedonia and it includes questionnaires, interviews, reports and responses by students, staff and stakeholders. Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of corruption and academic dishonesty patterns in higher education institutions in North Macedonia, it can be concluded that the reaction to curb corruption is simply not sufficient. Tackling academic dishonesty in higher education on a national level requires consistent, serious and well-planned pan-university network and agreement on the methods which will be applied to curb corruption at universities. The government, more specifically the Ministry of Education ought to play a more proactive role in promoting, encouraging universities and students to address the issue of academic dishonesty and corruption in higher education. Universities too, have the reasonability to encourage students, citizens and staff to do research in this field in a way that the same will be used to draft, revise old approaches, draft new strategies, and offer new solutions.

Otherwise, external and internal factors will continue to affect the quality of educational outcomes to the point when they become unsustainable. The proven multiplication formula is simple, more corruption leads to even more corruption. (Osipian, 2007) And a contributing factor to the degree to which teachers or students will decide to adhere to the academic integrity principles in the future depends on what actions are taken today.

Institutional inability to act against academic dishonesty leaves a space for various interpretations on what acting with integrity means and why it matters. It matters because inaction exacerbates the quality of educational services, it matters because it makes the educational process less qualitative, it matters because it makes it selective by limiting equal access to educational services and compromises citizens' trust to believe the education system to apply and deliver services which are based on fair and free competition of knowledge and ideas. The positive outcome of this research is that universities are aware of the existence of corruption and academic dishonesty Universities since they have guidelines and policies which regulate the terms of the appropriate conduct in academic institutions. However, it is naïve to expect that well written and polished policies which call upon laws and internal regulations of institutions will be implemented by themselves and they are not a guarantee that they show results. Putting policies in practice requires free flow of information which can be done by publishing results of enforced laws and regulation and making them visible, by having completely transparent institutions, where no information will remain undisclosed.

The results also indicate that students and staff actively engage in breaching academic codes of ethics entrusted by their institutions in their own way and for their own reasons. This is clearly illustrated in the research results, but the question remains why aren't the policies



working, why are the results missing and how can this gap between the policy and implementation be addressed for more effective implementation of guidelines to curb corruption. These questions must not be left unanswered because that will lead to a normalization of cheating and plagiarizing practices on institutional level as it was demonstrated in findings. Universities need to demonstrate vigilance in tackling issues which arise from the normalized academic dishonesty behavior and universities need to play a more proactive role in enforcing policies, implementing practices, penalizing students who cheat and plagiarize and propose pedagogical solutions to fight corruption and academic dishonesty on national, institutional and personal level.

## 18: Recommendations and Implications

The previous research mentioned in the literature review is in line with the corruption patterns demonstrated in the findings in the following aspects.

Corruption patterns which appear to be consistently present in institutions struggling with corruption is the act of perceiving the book as a method to bribe students by condition their presence at the exam (Braxton, Bayer, 1999). In addition, (O'Malley, 2018) characterizes cheating and plagiarism as practices which appear across corrupt education systems and (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018) who defines conflict of interest as a decision to follow personal interest rather than following the institutional codes of ethics. The results of both surveys are based on the evidence of the practices which are described in the literature. The way that his particular research adds <sup>27</sup>to the existing literature is by providing the Macedonian context and the way that academic dishonesty is defined and practiced in higher education institutions in the country. The data contributes to the growing attempts to define what specifically constitutes academic dishonesty and corruption in North Macedonia. Not only that, but also, what are internal and external motivations of students and staff to engage in such behavior even though they are highly aware of the repercussions, as discussed in the survey results.



Theoretical implications of this study consist of the underlying possibility for this material to be used for educational purposes for academic and administrative staff. The material can help professors to put this global issue in local context and provide insight to students on the ways staff and students can demonstrate breach of ethical codes in institutional context. Educators and teacher training programs can include this material as a mandatory reading to raise awareness of future teachers who could possibly discover other innovative methods such as learning about integrity through games and situated learning cases to address this issue in primary and secondary level.

Theoretically, this material could also be used as a catalyst to stimulate further theoretical and pragmatic inquiry in implementation of educational solutions when tackling corruption in higher education in one country.

Other theoretical implications of this study lie in the potential for some institutions in higher education to consider drafting additional provisions for staff and students to address academic dishonesty. These provisions would be in forms of internal regulations which will be additional to the existing legal obligations to professionals in higher education institutions.

For the purpose of clarity and consistency, the implications and recommendations are divided into national and institutional implications.

#### 18.1 National level

On a national level, based on the evidence provided, the Ministry of Education should define academic integrity and corruption in education as a national priority. With the announcement of the national priority, the ministry of education should initiative a task force of experts in the field of education, as well as others such as legal practitioners, and economists to draft a national program or action plan. The action plan will serve as a guideline for the task force to implement the action plan. The action plan then can be divided into proposed policies, steps to implementation and communication which essentially is feedback of the effects, challenges in implementation of the action plan.

In the context of national priority, the ministry of education should also add participation in ETINED (Council of Europe Platform on Ethics Transparency and Integrity in Education). Through the membership in this body, the ministry is obliged to implement the recommendation which foster culture of Ethics in the teaching profession which “foster ethics, transparency and integrity in education through the drafting, implementation and review of codes of ethics for the teaching profession.”(Council of Europe, 2021)

Survey results demonstrate a clear need for universities to develop, enforce and strengthen preventive institutional administrative measures to plagiarism. This can be

implemented in higher education institutions by making a legal requirement to process BA, MA and PhD dissertations through the plagiarism detection tools especially since the current anti-plagiarism detection software <http://plagijati.mon.gov.mk/> based on the data provided, has shown not sufficiently effective. The additional software detection tools that can be introduced include Turnitin, Ouriginal, Antiplagiat.ru, Studiosity, Compilatio, StrikePlagiarism.com but also other writing apps which help students write more correctly and professionally such as Grammarly and citation manager apps such as Zotero, Mendeley and Easybib.

On national level, The Ministry of education, through the inspectorate for education need to demand a firm, immediate and equal implementation of the Rulebook on Protected Internal Reporting in Public Sector institutions <sup>74</sup> at all universities. Article 2, P1 obliges all universities to designate an authorized person to receive applications related to corruption. <sup>75</sup>(Ibid).

Another way that higher education institutions can be encouraged to implement academic integrity courses and content is by incorporating it in the accreditation process of higher education institutions. In this way the agencies responsible for reviews of higher education institutions can ensure inclusion and implementation of academic integrity in the education process.

## 18.2 Institutional level

In addition, improving academic resources are crucial in the attempt to educate students to be competent users of academic articles, books and websites. That is why requirements such as the set of skills and knowledge that students need to demonstrate across disciplines positively correlate with lower engagement in academic dishonesty. The underlying assumption of this educational implication is that through guidance, teaching, supervising and communication students will learn how to demonstrate working with integrity. All students, regardless of their field of study or study cycles should be obliged to undertake mandatory courses on academic integrity, such is the case with Swedish higher education system. The content of academic integrity is versatile and can be practically incorporated easily across all faculties without exceptions. That is why universities need to encourage such a multidisciplinary approach to academic integrity and tailor it based on the specific needs of the

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<sup>74</sup> ПРАВИЛНИК ЗА ЗАШТИТЕНО ВНАТРЕШНО ПРИЈАВУВАЊЕ ВО ИНСТИТУЦИИТЕ ВО ЈАВНИОТ СЕКТОР. МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЗА ПРАВДА. Retrieved from: <https://www.sobranie.mk/content/akti%20generalen/pravilnik%20za%20zastiteno%20vnatresno%20prijavuvanje.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> (Ibid.)

students of that particular faculty at the same time ensuring to avoid repetition through case studies, games and other field related educational material.

2 The essence of building a culture of academic integrity lies in the spirit of the organization. Such spirit includes open and constructive communication between staff members, student, management and parents. In a well-informed environment, where students and professors initiate discussion about the things that matter in the academia and propose solutions together about how to address and overcome differences, how to understand, engage and demonstrate academic integrity ought to be encouraged on all institutional levels. Only in this way fighting against corruption is sustainable. The conditions of such spirit lie in the total integrity management approach where higher education institutions will practice institutional openness to any emerging trends related to integrity.

Transparency is the biggest enemy to corruption. Universities need to ensure implementation of policies which allow full transparency in line with the Law on Free Access to Public information. For educational institutions, it is more harmful to keep information disclosed for scrutiny even for the “sensitive cases” because it increases the suspicions that flaws of the system are trying to be covered and this only increases the distrust in institutions. No sensitive information can be more important than the interest of the citizens. That is why universities as public institutions have the obligation to incorporate full transparency policies. Institutional openness and transparency matter because they are featured as principle number 4 out of 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance published by the Council of Europe.

1 It is recommended that the existing quality assurance agencies in higher education across the country follow the (Quality Assurance Agency, 2016). This recommendation addresses the increasing concerns about plagiarism and other malpractices and recommends that the quality offices work on promotion of academic integrity across campus and work on punishing the perpetrators. This is how implementing an integrity component in addition to other quality assurance standards contributes in building the institutional academic integrity infrastructure.

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## 20: APPENDIX

Figure 21

How many times students shared questions of the exam.

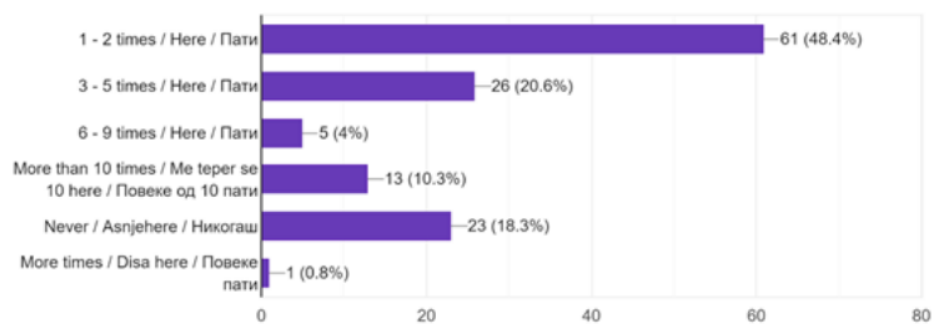


Figure 22

How many times students were caught cheating during exam.

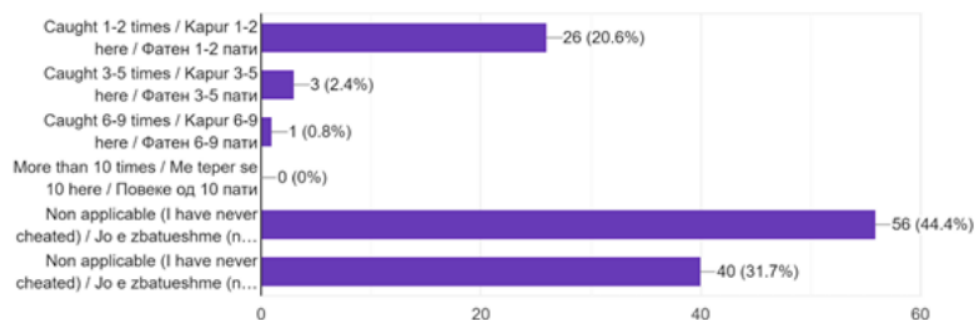


Figure 23

Types of assignments submitted by students other than theirs

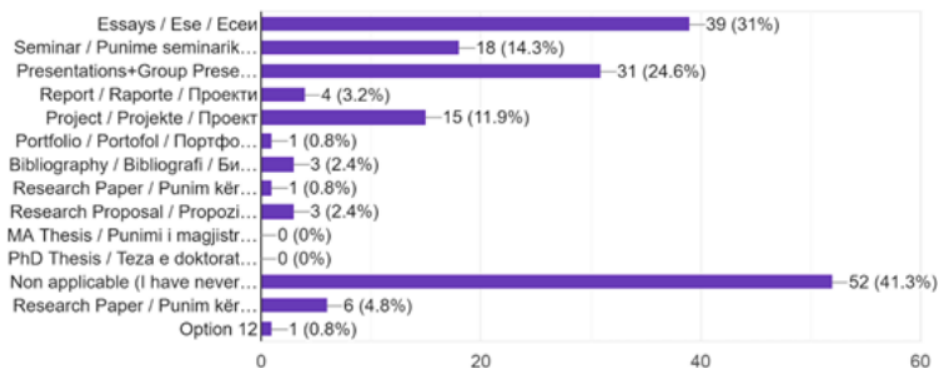


Figure 24

How many times staff discovered students submitting someone else's assignments.

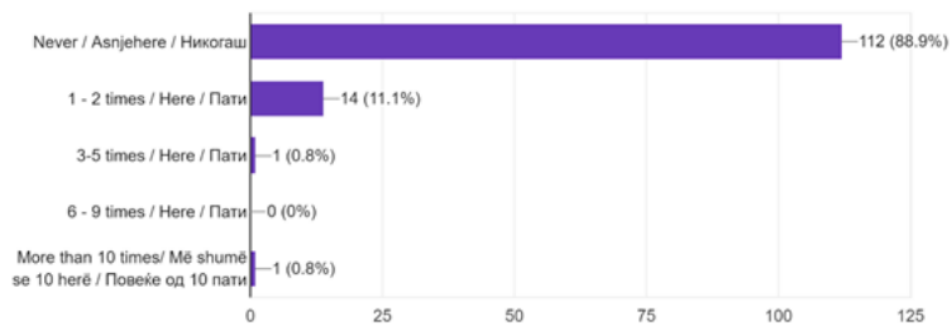


Figure 25

How many times students were penalized for their plagiarism

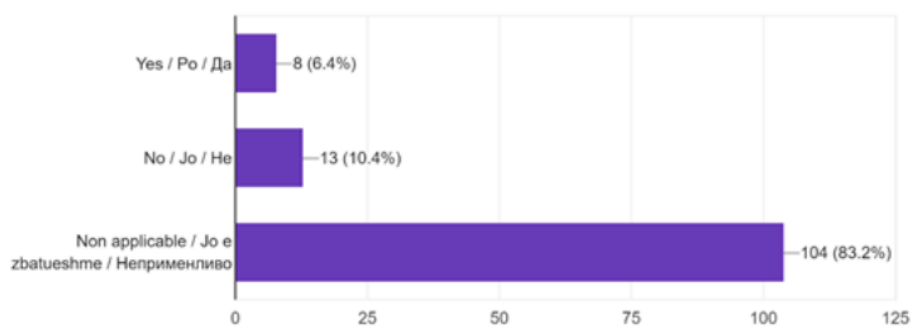


Figure 26

Penalties for plagiarizing students

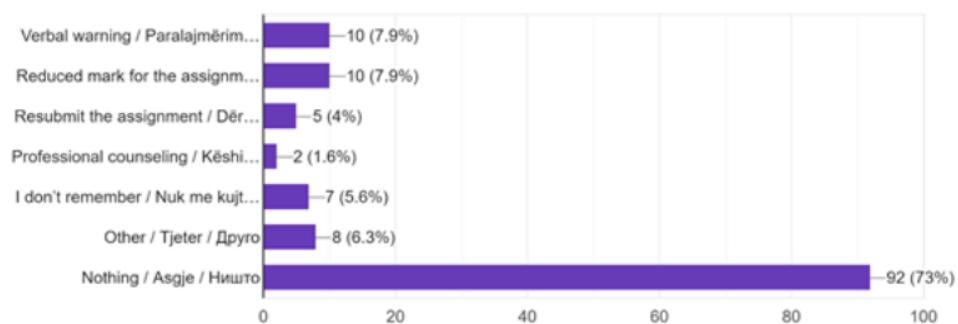


Figure 27

Email correspondence with University of St. Cyril and Methodius, University of Tetovo and South East European university requesting access to the internal auditing reports.

## баранье



Hajrula Hajrullaj  
hajrulla@qau.edu.mk

Mon, 25, 2020, 9:30 AM

Во почитено како докторант на Универзитетот на Јужноисточна Европа во Тетово во врска со потребата од информациони за докторската теза за корупција во високото образование во РСМ.

Моите истражувања се фокусираат на вклученост брзи служби на корупција (црпи и потенцијални) во високообразовните институции во РСМ. Во овој случај, „потенцијални служби“ се однесуваат на служби кои имаат информации од соопственици институција за злоупотреба на службената положба и корупција и истиот случај се уште нема правно поставување или кривична пријава.

Имајќи го предвид, Њашите се спободен пристап до информациони од јавно карактер на РМВ, донесен на 6 мај 2019 година, на сепак јавно или правно лице му се намениле да спободен пристап до информациони од јавно карактер. Членот 3 од овој закон како „јавно карактер“ дефинира отвореност на информациони „или отвореност злоупотреба на службената положба и коруптивно однесување“.

За таа цел, ја замислувам кандидатската на ревизија при УОМ да ми се обезбеди точност брзи на служби каде се отворено злоупотреба на службената положба и коруптивно однесување во последните 3 години (2018 и 2020). Ткавоста служби искористуваат служби која злоупотреба и коруптивно однесување и доколку од страна на кандидатката се ревизија или имаат:

1. сепак доколку запознавање на факти од кандидатката се ревизија, без разлика дали се без законски поставување или служби во поставени.
2. служби со законски поставување (без законски ревизија)
3. служби со кривична пријава (законски служби)

За да бидат многу благодарен доколку кандидатката се ревизија при УОМ однесуваат позитивно на моето барање, што ќе се доколку успеат да обезбедат институција со висока институционална транспарентност.

## Kerkese



Hajrula Hajrullaj  
hajrulla@qau.edu.mk

Mon, Nov 2, 2020, 1:38 PM

Ta ndonuar,

Ju shkruaj si student i doktoratës prane UEJA, si ne lidhje me nevojën për informate për tizen e doktoratës mbi korupsionin në arsimin e lartë në RMV. Më duket se fokusimi në numrin e pengfishem të rastëve koruptivë/qortshëm ato edhe potenciale) në institucionet e arsimit të lartë në RMV. Në këtë rast, "rastë potenciale" u referohet rastëve që kanë indigje nga institucione përkatës për kështjorin të detyrës dhe korupsion dhe i njëjt rast nuk ka mision ligor apo kullzim jonal.

Duke patur parasysh Ligjin për qasje të lirt në informacione me karakter publik të RMV / i qptur në 6 Maj, të 2019, cdo person forë apo juridik i mundeshet qasje e lirt në informata me karakter publik. Tërsi, 3 kakt ligji në "karakter publik" peshifion shprehjen e informatave "për shubin kështjorin të detyrës dhe rastë koruptive".

Për këtë qëllim, nga zjra e Auditimit të UEJA, se kerkim që të më jepi numrin e saktë të rastëve ku janë zbuluar kështjorime të detyrës dhe rastë koruptive gale 10 vitëve të fundit. Në rastë të kështjorin edhe rastë ku është verifikuar kështjorin dhe rastë koruptive nga ana e zjres të auditimit, qoftin ato edhe pa mision ligor ose rastë në proces.

1. indigje të forë duke u bazuar në faktë nga ana e zjres të auditimit, qoftin ato edhe pa mision ligor ose rastë në proces,
2. rastë me mision ligor (që zgjidhet pefundamentet)
3. rastë me kullzim penal (rastë të mbyllur)

Do të jem shumë mirënjohës po që se zjra e auditimit prane UEJA, se pengigjet pozitivisht në kerkesen time me qrad do të deshem reputacionin e një institucioni arsimor me transparence të saktë institucionale.

Ju falënderim për kohën.

Me respekt,

Hajrula Hajrullaj  
High Lectur  
The Language Center  
South East European University  
Tetovo, Macedonia

# Integrity and corruption in higher education in North Macedonia

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