

Need For Improvement In The Literature Curriculum Design And Its Implementation – The Case Of Albanian High Schools

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Abstract

The design of the literature curriculum in the Albanian pre-university education level presents complex problems. Such issues are reflected in the results of literature State Matura exams. The purpose of this study is to analyze the design of literature curriculum and its implementation and evaluation. The focus is in identifying these issues and in proposing a suitable solution geared towards eliminating them. This study tries to give an answer to the question: What are some of the design, implementation, and evaluation issues that are present in the Albanian preuniversity literature curriculum? To achieve the purpose of this study, curriculum documents, such as school programs, teaching plans, textbooks, items from the literature State Matura exams, and official students results data in these exams were analysed. The findings of this study clearly show that, despite the efforts of the working groups, there are certain gaps in the design, implementation, and evaluation process of the literature curriculum. Based on these findings, recommendations will be given on improving of the content and the process of literature curriculum development, which takes into consideration the Albanian tradition and history, but is also intuned with the most updated trends in curriculum design and implementation.

Keywords: curriculum, maturity exams, textbooks, learning experience, curriculum development

Literature Curriculum Need for Improvement in Albanian High Schools

Introduction

Literature in the Albanian upper secondary education (tenth to twelfth grade), is offered as a creative, subjective and self-sufficient subject. Its program is based on the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that students have acquired in lower secondary education (9-year cycle), in which literature is taught integrated with the Albanian language. As one of the main subjects of upper secondary education, literature plays a major influential role in aesthetic and literary formation, in the increase of creative skills and in the enrichment of students'

expressive abilities. This course also enables the creation of a positive and stable relationship between students and the art of literature. (Kurrikula Bërthamë, Lënda: Letërsi Shkalla: VI Klasa: X, Tiranë, 2016, IZHA, 2016, p. 2).

Like any other subject, literature enables the mastery of key competencies which are necessary to prepare successful individuals in the personal, social and professional sphere. It carries out this “mission” through the construction and development of its competencies, defined in the curricular framework and materialized in the subject curriculum guidelines drafted by the Agency of Quality Assurance in Pre University Education (ASCAP) and textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS).

Schools as educational institutions organize the learning process based on the principles set out in the Curriculum Framework as the most important key document, which describes the main orientations and guidelines for educational goals, content, ways of learning and student achievement. (Curriculum Framework of Pre-University Education of The Republic of Albania, Ministry of Education And Sports, Tirana, 2014, p.11)

The Curriculum Framework defines knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for each subject competence, as well as their classification according to some topics. (LITERATURE CLASS X, IZHA, Tirana, 2016, p.4).

The teachers ought to be conscious of the differences in their students and in acting accordingly, so that their students are better supported. This means that the teachers should have the right to adapt their teaching plan and teaching activities in order to offer scaffolding which will ensure their students to reach their full potential or in creating differentiated assessment levels and categories. "(Koncepti kryesor për të kuptuar kurrikulumin, Colin J. Marsh, (përkthyer në Shqip), Tiranë: CDE, f. 250). But the curriculum development in Albania remains problematic, especially related to the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process, and in the lack of a competency framework, which needs to be based in the professional standards' platform (Vlerësimi i Strategjisë së Arsimit Parauniversitar 2014-2020, Raporti përfundimtar, Përgatitur nga: Mike Wort & Dukagjin Pupovci & Ermelinda Ikonomi, Lund/Prishtinë/Tiranë 2 korrik 2019, fq 6). Such a framework would offer more decision making opportunities, both in selecting the necessary didactic materials alongside to the textbook and in choosing the most appropriate teaching methods, in order to support their students' learning more efficiently.

The development of the curricular framework and its implementation in the daily practice of teaching literature in Albanian high schools presents some problems, which have become even more complex, after the adoption of the new law on pre-university education, in 2006, which initiated the State Matura process. (*Open Society for Albania* Foundation, STATE MATURA IN ALBANIA, 2012, Tirana, 2013, p. 10)

These problems, which we will try to discuss in this article, testify to a lack of coherence and consistency between the curriculum, the subject programs, the teaching and students' results in the final literature test.

The problems faced today by the curriculum development of the literature in Albanian pre-university education, as one of the most important and specific fields of study, are complex. One of the main issues is the conceptual difference of the curriculum framework in setting goals and in specifying the content, as will be analysed in this article. The other very important issue faced by teachers, parents and especially students of upper high school which are directly affected by the ongoing assessment and the State Matura test in literacy as

threshold setting for accessing higher education, is the difference in testing. And the other issue that will be discussed in this article is the lack of updating the philosophy of developing content of the textbooks, which goes alongside the lack of updating teaching methodologies of literature from teachers. Since 2006, when the State Matura was implemented for the first time until today, the teaching of literature and especially the results of students in its final testing have turned into a serious worrying problem, which has generated endless debates between teachers, academics, students, their parents as well as test designers and specialists of curricula and orientation programs.

Assessment of learning for the subject of literature is performed by teachers based precisely on these guidelines and teaching materials. Meanwhile, the assessment of learning for the subject of literature (state matura exam) is drafted by Center of Educational Services (QSHA), based on the goals of the subject reflected in the Curriculum Guides.

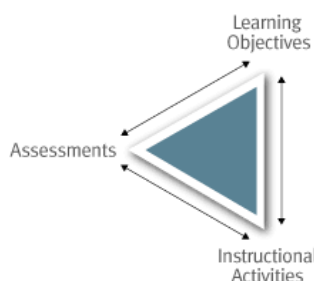
Methodology

Based on these issues, this study aims to answer the question: What are some of the design, implementation, and evaluation issues that are present in the Albanian preuniversity literature curriculum?

For reaching a sound conclusion, The curriculum framework of the Literacy subject in Upper High school, 9 textbooks of Upper higher schools, as well as the state literature matura tests were analyzed, in order to bring to light the possible clash between them.

In order to identify the problems of curriculum implementation with the curriculum framework, observations were conducted in 5 teaching hours of the subject of literature.

This article will focus on analysing possible conceptual gaps in the comparison of the results of students' achievements during the three years of schooling and the results of the state matura exam, which indicates a lack of harmonization of the three elements: learning objectives, instructional activities and assessment. Data were analysed in order to compare the Matura exam results with the results of students' achievement during the three years of high school was performed, aiming a thorough research of the issues under consideration and finding appropriate solutions. For these comparisons, data were obtained from a high school in the city of Elbasan.



Then we will go on to give recommendations aiming to shrink the gap between students' assessments in the subject of literature during the school years and their assessment in the state matura exam.

Results

1. School programs. Curriculum framework

While the literature curriculum (2016-2017) aims to increase the creative skills and enrich the expressive skills of students, according to the Subject Curriculum Guide for Albanian Language and Literature, drafted and published by ASCAP. This course also aims to enable the creation of a positive and lasting relationship between students and the art of literature. Conceived through this new framework, literature is seen as related to historical and social development and to the philosophy of the time but not as a simple tool that illustrates history.

The two main competencies of the literature, defined on the basis of the aims and specifics of this subject, are:

- a. Analysis and interpretation of texts of different genres and literary types.
- b. Evaluation of Albanian and world literature in different literary and historical periods.

(Kurrikula Bërthamë Lënda: Letërsi Klasa: X, IZHA, Tiranë, 2016, fq 18)

While the literature curriculum (2016-2017) aims to increase the creative skills and enrich the expressive skills of students, according to the Subject Curriculum Guide for Albanian Language and Literature (...IZHA), the analytical program in its conception shows is a lack of coherence or uniformity between the goals of the course, with competencies broken down by thematic units, in which teachers rely on the design of synthetic subject plan.

Below is just an example from the ASCAP subject program, which clearly shows the lack of coherence between the goals set in the orientation program and the competencies developed by the subject teachers in their curricula.

Table 1: Goals in the analytical orientation plan

Goals in the analytical orientation plan
Students:
• read and interpret works and fragments from different literary genres, from the creativity of the authors
• read poetry, prose, drama and distinguish their main features;
• discover the pleasure of reading literature and become aware of the multitude of ways of perceiving the world around them; etc ..
• relate the text they read to their lives and experiences, as well as to the world around them;
• analyze different literary texts and develop their creative oral and written skills;
• interpret the holistic values of works that take on a timeless character and that convey messages beyond their time;
• are trained to be worthy citizens of society and the labor market

Table 2: Themed competencies

Competencies disaggregated by thematic unit Migjeni: Analysis "Free verses"
The student
• Analyzes the ideological, social and biographical factors that influenced Migjeni's literary creativity;
• Analyzes and evaluates the innovations that Migjeni brought to literature, as well as the influences that his creativity had on the literature of the twentieth century;
• Defines the main works of Migjeni;
• Gains the ability to understand the given verses and to deconstruct the internal mechanism of operation of the work;
• Uses linguistic knowledge to assess the language of the literary text;
• Expands knowledge on text construction (use of language tools and stylistic);
• Interprets the main figures: epithet, comparison, metaphor, symbol;
• Demonstrates the skills acquired during the commentary of the volume Free Verses(Literature Curriculum 12, 2021)

From this example it is clear a conceptual gap between the curriculum goals, which aims for students to read, to connect their readings to their lives, to develop creativity and to be prepared as active citizens, members of the society, in the detailed plans prepared by publishing houses and used verbatim by teachers, the learning outcomes focus on theoretical conceptualization, commenting of the reading and basic text analysis

Textbooks

If we analyse the textbooks and the concrete practice of teaching literature in school, we notice that the literary knowledge stretched along a vertical axis from antiquity to modernity during the three years of high school, does not create the possibility of a synchronous observation of the whole literary developments.

The textbooks' authors should be guided, by the curriculum framework, according to which the main aimed competence is: students analyze and interpret works of literary genres and types, as critical and independent readers, learning the concepts and features concretized in literary fragments or works (i.e. not theoretically). Such guidance were not followed by the authors of nine textbooks that we took into scrutiny.

Let's take an illustration. Among the skills targeted by the program for the teaching unit "Literature and literary genres" addressed only in 5 lessons, only one of them aims to analyze the functions and values of literature as an art form (Letërsia X IZHA, 2016, p. 21 -22).

Consequences of this non-uniformity are also the lack of genuine literary competencies in teachers' curricula and the shortcomings observed in covering this topic in literary textbooks, which are mostly in the form of a synthetic summary of notions, lists of works and great authors, whom students know mainly through the names of text study and not through reading their works.

Since 2005, the pre-university education in Albania has implemented alternative textbooks' concept, a reform undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in 2005, aimed at liberalizing the textbook publishing process, with the belief that the free market economy will ensure the selection of the best textbook in the market. Thus, teachers can choose out of several different texts of the same subject, based on what they think that suits them best. RAPORT MONITORIMI ALTERTEKST 2012, Fondacioni Shoqëria e hapur për Shqipërinë, Tiranë, 2012, fq 9. The textbooks, aimed at supporting Literary education of students which starts from the concept they create for literature through the definition of the literary text. However, based on an analysis of nine textbooks of literature, such a competence is incomplete and often unclear. Let's focus on some examples:

Literary texts are texts filled with sophisticated literary details and tools, with figurative meanings and with deep and philosophical thematic themes and colors. (Literature 10, Mediaprint, Tirana, 2016, p.30)

Literary works contain human experience of life and the world, expressed in a way that is unique to them. The writer illustrates and embodies the truth of life in his work, influencing the reader so that he can imagine it. on an artistic level. (Literature 10, Filara School Publications, Tirana 2016, pp. 8-9)

Characteristic of the literary work from the non-literary one, is the fiction. Literary texts, unlike other texts with a practical function, have an aesthetic function, which includes in itself

the style, language, meter, rhythm, general structure of the literary work. (Literature 10, Albas School Publications, Tirana 2016, p. 13)

Duke qenw se letërsia është e gjerë dhe ka shumë forma, ekziston vwshtirwsia e gjetjes sw njw pwrkufizimi tw vetwm funksional pwr tekstin letrar. Por mund tw konsiderohet si përkufizim mw i plotë ai që do të përfshijw të gjitha zhanret, (Hanconck P (2006) What is Literature. Sydney: Australia)

Textbooks of literature are mostly in the form of synthetic summaries of notions, lists of works and great authors, which students know mainly through the names of the study of the text. and not through reading their works.

One of the problems faced by teaching literature in the Albanian high school today is also the lack of an anthology or other supplementary textbooks, which would meet to some extent the need of students to read authors, analyzed texts or critiques, who are not necessarily part of the curriculum. Anthologies of this nature are quite important to orient students' interpretation towards true aesthetic values (Hermann Grosser, "Il Canone letterario, la letteratura italiana nella tradizione europea", Principato, Milano, 2014, pg 7).

In all textbooks observed, the pedagogical apparatus of the text during an hour of literary commentary is filled with questions that aim to explain to the student about historical, social, psychological situations, etc. When it is necessary to dwell specifically on the literary elements which make that work be called exactly such, that is, literary fiction, we find a lack of in-depth development of these learning outcomes. Teachers still follow rigorously the textbook, not focusing on elements of the literary work being studied and not offering opportunities to students to think creatively. This is also a result of their lack of continuity from the lower secondary school program, but especially due to the inefficient (inappropriate) analysis of new concepts in texts.

Example- Expressionism

The prevailing themes of expressionism are: alienation caused by chaotic, violent and sad civilization; anxiety that expresses expressionist "screaming"; etc. Their anarchist slogan is the war against this society, against any society. "The cry of expressionism rises against the horrors of the world, where people are exploited or exploited, excluded, marginalized and destroyed by the capitalist system and war."

Students, who are new to the concept of expressionism, certainly find it difficult to understand such academic language, and often even the teachers themselves, who try to explain it as simply as possible to the students.

The construction of the pedagogical apparatus in the text aims more at memorizing important facts or works of the authors, reproducing the material covered in the text or recognizing the difference between literary currents, thus creating the mistaken belief in students that literature can be memorized, as a recipe or technical manual.

Example

- What are the literary genres that were delivered in the twentieth century? List the names of the main representatives of prose and poetry of early twentieth century literature and their well-known works. In what aspects did these authors bring innovation?

- What are the directions of the twentieth century novel? Representatives.

- What are the directions of twentieth century poetry? Representatives.

- What do you mean by "avant-garde"? When was it first used? Who used it? For what purpose? What are its directions and philosophy where they were based? (Pegi, 2018).

Even during class observations, it was noticed that teachers did not use teaching methods to promote high-level thinking skills, but rather in teaching and repeating facts and concepts given in textbooks.

Matura state literature exam

The State Matura is a standard procedure that exists in almost all European countries. Despite the different names, it has in common the realization of goals, such as:

- Mobilizing young people to face the challenges of the future;
 - Systematization of knowledge learned, built and created in the high school years;
 - Measuring the quality of educational services by state bodies;
 - Serve as a mechanism for admitting students to Universities.
- (https://web.archive.org/web/20070927133203/http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/downloads/Albfinalexamssecedu.pdf)

But it seems that even after 15 years since the first implementation of the model of the State Matura, the testing of students in the subject of Albanian Language and Literature, presents problems that have been deepening. (Bardhyl Musai, Education in Fragile Democracy, Botime E dualba, Tirana, 2020. Pp 201)

The reality of the compulsory exam for the subjects of Albanian Language and Literature, of 2020, seems to have marked the highest curve of the occurrence of these problems, thus stimulating the reaction of graduates and not only, for facts such as:

The test is not intended to assess the knowledge of the curriculum, implemented in the classroom. Alternative questions aim to test the student's memory of the fragment and not the true degree of their literary formation.

Formulation of questions with alternatives, in the test of the language part does not avoid ambiguity and does not assess the thinking habits of high level students.

Questions with literary text alternatives often present a high degree of difficulty, not respecting the levels of achievement and competencies of students.

Example: Article 31 of matura state literature exam 2020.

The main motive of this poem is related to:

- A) love for nature, as a feeling that nourishes the poetic soul.
- B) the close relationship of man with his birthplace.
- C) the reflections of the creative man in the process of recognizing the essence of life.
- D) philosophical deviations regarding the way the universe was created (http://qsha.gov.al/infos/matura_2020/testi_gjuhe_shqipe.pdf, fq 8)

While in accordance with the competence of the 12th grade literature instruction program (according to which the student should analyze the main motives of L. Poradec's poetry) in the textbooks the students have learned that, according to a classification, Poradec's lyrics can be divided, according to motives in:

-love lyrics

-scape lyrics

- philosophical lyrics

(Letërsia 12, Botime shkollore, Filara, Tiranë, 2018, fq 93)

Ideological reflections in the protracted formulation of questions that require simply determining the motive create ambiguity and confusion in students, all the more so in the moments of a state exam, heightening their uncertainty about their level of achievement.

In the format of the national exam test, 11.06.2020, the model of the orientation test of the State Matura 2020, published by QSHA ON 25.05.2020, was not respected, which is completely different in terms of the nature of the questions. (Qendra e Shërbimeve Arsimore, Matura Shtetërore 2020 MODEL TESTI, Lënda Gjuhë Shqipe dhe Letërsi, Tiranë, 2020, https://maturashteterore2016.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/model_testi_gjuhe_shqipe_watermark.pdf) While the model test focused on the practical application of students' knowledge, as well as respecting the balance between literary texts in prose and poetry, the national exam test included two poetic literary texts, which consequently increases the difficulty of the test above average.

The following graphs show the differences between the results of students in the subject of literature during the three years of schooling and their results in the state matura test, for a public high school in the city of Elbasan.

Figure 1: Comparative data for students with grades from 5-6

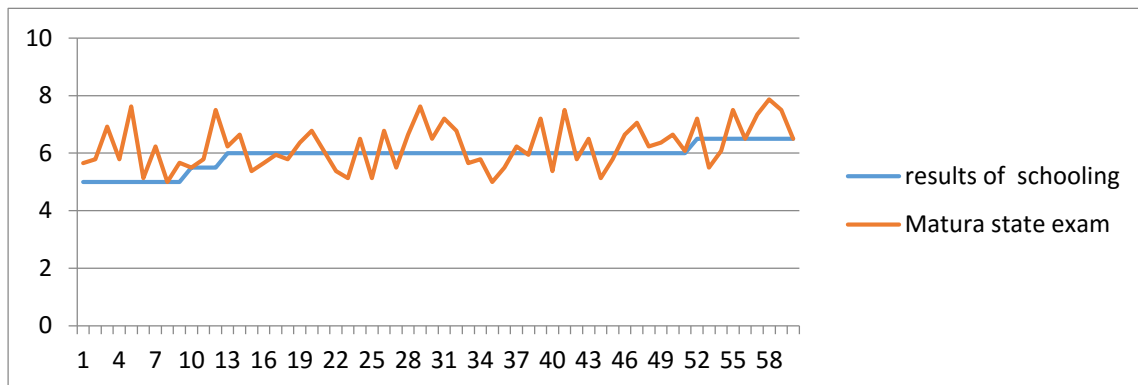


Figure 2: Comparative data for students with grades from 7-8

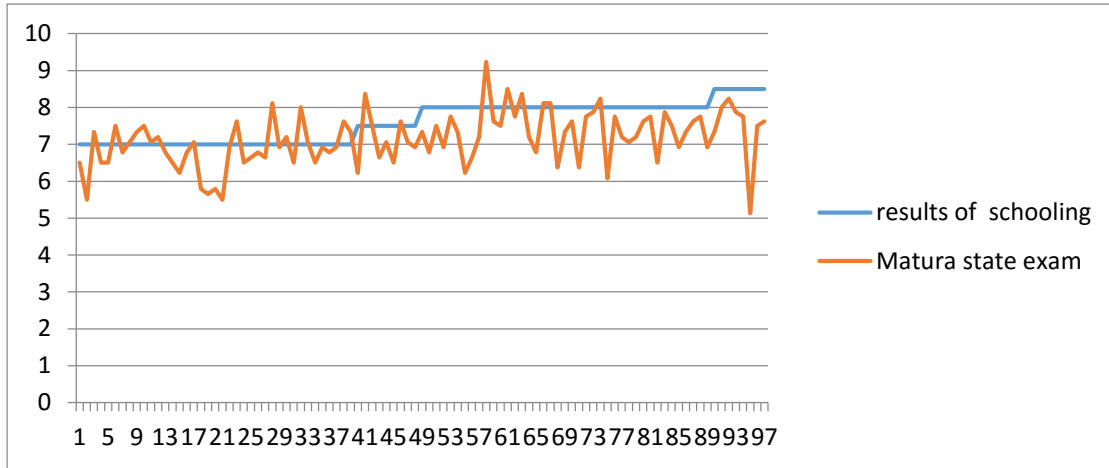
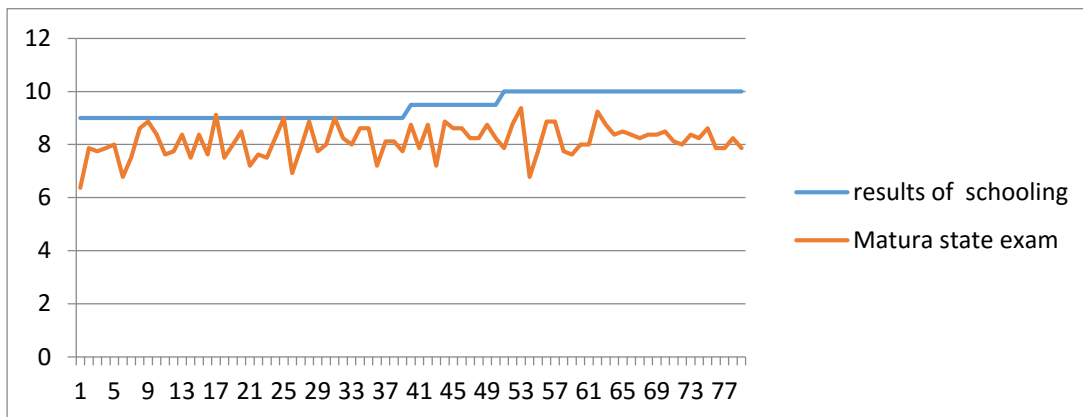


Figure 3: Comparative data for students with grades from 9-10



The differences in results are clearly seen in the table below, where the value 8,589 t-score indicates that the groups are very different.

		Paired Samples Test								
		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
					Lower	Upper				
P	Nota Vjetore	,53	,95148	,0619	,4099	,6539	8,5	23	,000	
air 1	D1 (mesatare e 3 viteve) - Nota e Provimit te Maturës D1	195		4	3	7	89	5		

Discussions

The analysis of the documents and observations show:

1. Lack the competencies of the historical approach, which aim to connect the author's work, read by students, with their life and experiences, as well as with the world around them.
2. The literary formation of students in its diachronic and synchronic continuity and depth shows shortcomings and is not fully realized as the literature program lacks authors, literary schools and new concepts with which the literary system is enriched today, such as migratory literature or diaspora, drawer or prison literature, self-referential literature.
3. Literature curricula stimulate and develop in students historical, ideological, sociological, psychological interests, and in some rare cases critical and rhetorical interests, but no specific literary ones

From the review of textbooks and observations in the lessons results:

1. Lack of didactic organization in texts and teaching, accompanied by absences such as that of an accompanying anthology of literature, in all study cycles
2. Incomplete and continuous presentation of literary concepts that leads to ambiguity in students' understanding or the acquisition of literary knowledge mechanically.

Examination of the results of students' achievements in the subject of literature with those of the Matura exam and those of the content of the Matura literature test show that:

1. The standardized state matura tests are not designed on the basis of the competencies of the curriculum and the aims of the course, in order to measure the true degree of literary formation of students.

From the analysis made in all elements of the curriculum development of the literature in high schools, it is clear that the problems start in the process of curriculum design and planning, problems that follow with the way the literature curriculum is implemented in schools and the way of evaluation literature. The lack of coherence and harmonization of the elements of curriculum development brings as a consequence the shortcomings in the literary education of students but also their coping with difficulties, which start from teaching literature in the classroom and end up facing a test that does not provide effective measurement. of the degree of their knowledge in this field.

Conclusions

The main question of this study was: What are some of the design, implementation, and evaluation issues that are present in the Albanian preuniversity literature curriculum?

1. The lack of harmonization and coherence between the competencies, goals and skills targeted in the Literature Curriculum, the curriculum of the literature subject implemented by the teacher, has led to a deficient literary education of students, which is evident in the Matura results. state.

2. The presentation of the teaching material in the textbooks, as the basic material of the teacher's work, are not based on a more complete concept of the literary text, and the pedagogical apparatus fails to go beyond the traditional historical approach by not promoting literary interests and thinking. of high levels of student life.

3. Lack of anthologies or other complementary materials of the literary text, leads to misunderstanding of theoretical concepts and recognition and reading of the works of the authors.

4. The design of Matura test articles should be based on the observance of the important principle "testing is done for what students know and not for what they do not know".

5. The methodology of drafting textbooks and drafting the state matura test should be in line with the requirements and goals of the curricular framework.

These conclusions should be taken into account by curriculum developers, planners, implementers and implementers of the curriculum in adapting it to the time, requirements, needs of students, professional skills of teachers accompanied by continuous training and mutual

adaptation during curriculum development. of literature, in order to achieve the goals of the course.

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