

Higher Education Reform Outcomes

(Descriptive report in accordance to Bologna process indicators)



International Institute for Education Policy, Planning and Management

November 2008

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The Goal and the Scale of the Research, Structure of the Report

This research project was implemented in October–November of 2008 by the International Institute for Education Policy, Planning and Management based on the request from the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The goal of the research was to assess the progress of the Bologna process implementation according to the indicators presented in national report (Bologna Process Template for National Reports, 2008: Stocktaking Report), to describe the higher education reform at institutional level and to identify current challenges in higher education system in Georgia. Accordingly, information presented in the first chapter of the research report is structurally based on the survey template of the national report. The second chapter of the report explores widely the challenges and prospects of the Bologna process implementation in the higher education system of Georgia. The main findings of the research are presented in the third chapter of the report.

This report bases itself on the information provided by quality assurance departments of all accredited higher educational institutions – national report template required (certain indicators required calculation of aggregated ratio for all higher educational institutions) to involve all higher educational institutions in the research. The research also presents viewpoints of experts in the field, rectors of the higher educational institutions, academic personnel and students.

Research Strategy and Methodology

Before deciding on the research strategy and the format of the final report, the following items had been taken into consideration: a) nature of the research goal presented in the terms of reference (it was prioritized to provide a descriptive account of the situation in the higher education system of Georgia in accordance to national report indicators) and b) limitations on the timeframe of the research. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The main objective was to collect information from all higher educational institutions for the Stocktaking Report (by the research items under Stocktaking Report) using an adapted survey form, which was distributed to quality assurance departments of the universities. A number of questions in the survey form necessitated retrieval of information from university internal database systems – responding to one question on average needed minimum a week. For this reason the Institute had contact persons (respondents) from each higher educational institutions, who had been officially employed and contracted.

The project also envisioned a desk study (analysis of other research reports and/or reports produced by National Examination and Assessment Center and National Education Accreditation Center) of the databases of National Education Accreditation Center, National Scientific Foundation and other institutes, also web sites of the higher educational institutions.

Qualitative methods of research had been used to acquire additional information for the report: interviews with the experts and focus groups with the academic personnel and students of the universities.

1. Survey of the University Quality Assurance Departments – Collecting data in accordance to main indicators of the national report.

Information was collected using a special, adapted questionnaire, which was based on the national report template. The questionnaire was comprised of 52 open and closed questions.

After the analysis of the questionnaires profiles of the target universities had been prepared in accordance to the national report indicators. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, some data had been aggregated, certain ratios had been calculated based on a number of indicators for the comparison of the universities. In certain cases, data was presented by location and type (private/state institution).

In order to obtain additional information about the university profiles or to re-examine the information provided by the higher educational institutions, university web-sites had been reviewed.

52 Heads of the university quality assurance departments participated in the survey. (Currently there are 54 accredited higher educational institutions in Georgia, out of which two had not yet had any admission of students).

2. Interviews with the Experts

11 interviews had been conducted with the experts within the research. Interview guide had been developed according to the national report template. Agency heads involved in the reforms, donor organizations and representatives of university administration participated in the selection of experts.

See appendix #1 for the list of the in-depth interview respondents.

3. Focus Groups with academic personnel and students.

Two focus groups had been conducted within the research with academic personnel and students of the higher educational institutions.

12 Professors/teachers and 10 students participated in the focus groups. Selected participants represented the higher educational institutions from the city and/or regions, new and old, big and small, private and state universities. Academic personnel and students from the higher educational institutions of specific profile (medicine, health) participated in the focus groups. See appendix #2 for the list of focus group participants.

Research topics and commentaries on research data

The main topics for the research were the following: higher education levels and access to higher education, connection between higher education and research, employment opportunities for university graduates and relationships with the employers, internal and external quality assurance systems, student participation in university management, launching European system of transferring and accumulating credits, flexible learning opportunities, mobility of students, attracting and partnering with European educational fields, reviewing Bologna process, its social dimension, challenges and opportunities.

These aspects (from 108 questions of the national report) was incorporated in specific ways into research instruments (questionnaires for higher educational institutions, focus group and in-depth interview guidelines).

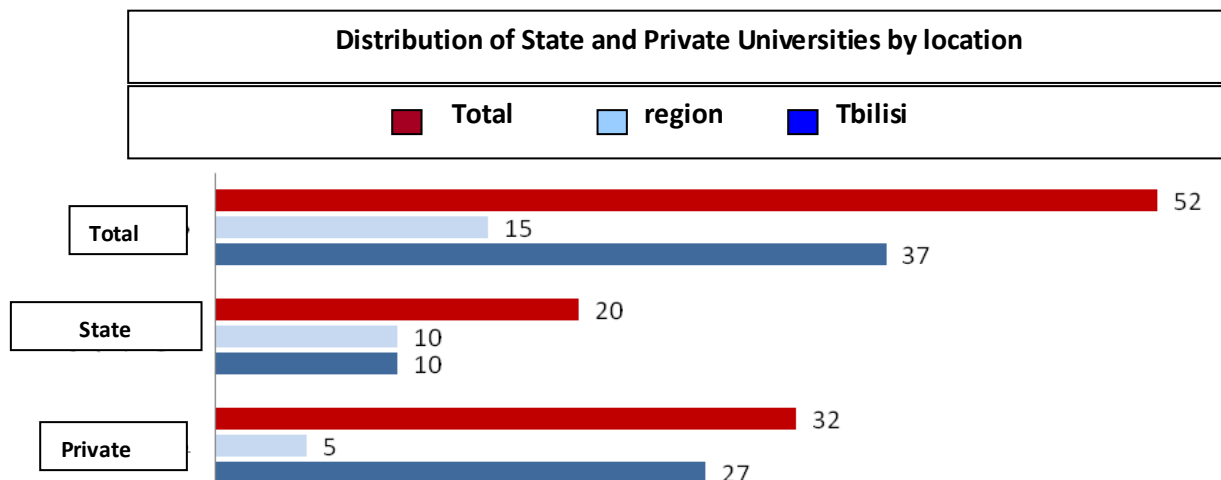
Unfortunately, due to limited timeframe, it was impossible to pilot the instrument, which is why it became necessary in certain cases to explain meaning of certain questions. Research group was available to the respondents at all times via telephone and was providing consultations on filling out the questionnaire. In a number of cases, research group initiated to reconfirm data through phone calls.

1. Data for National Report:

General Information on the Higher Education institutions accredited in Georgia

There are 52 accredited higher education institutions in Georgia, out of which 20 are the legal entities of the public law and 32 are the legal entities of private law.¹ 70% of the accredited higher educational institutions are located in capital Tbilisi. Figure #1 shows distribution of private and state universities by location. State universities are equally represented in the capital and the regions, while the number of private universities is higher in the capital.

Figure #1



Academic Personnel and Researchers

Up to 6500 professors and researchers are employed at accredited higher educational institutions in Georgia with the ratio of the researchers equaling to 12%. Only 24 out of 52 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) indicated having a researcher.

¹ According to the Department of Statistics of Georgia (www.statistics.ge), there are 137 licensed higher educational institutions operating in country. Our research involved only institutionally accredited higher educational institutions.

Table #1 Academic Personnel and Researchers

Status	Number Of “yes” in (HEI)	Number Of “no” in (HEI)	average	median	Standard deviation	min	max	total	% total number
Full	52	0	30.1	18	44.9	2	297	1566	25
Associated	52	0	50.3	23	83.6	1	468	2618	41
Assistant Professor	46	6	27.7	10.5	46.2	0	224	1442	23
Researcher	24	28	14.7	0	56	0	399	765	12
Total			123	55.5	196.3	8	1099	6391	

Number of Students at BA, MA and PHD levels

At all three levels, BA, MA and PhD, and at single-level higher education medical program a total of 83 757 students are enrolled,² out of which 73% study at an undergraduate level. 50% of the total number of students are enrolled in 4 higher education institutions (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (20%), Technical University of Georgia (13%), Ilia Chavchavadze State University (10%), Akaki Tsereteli State University (7%)).

Among private universities, Grigol Robakidze University hosts the biggest number of students (1.8% of total student pool), as well as Tbilisi Institute of Asia and Africa (1.3% of total student pool). The ratio of student to academic personnel is 12 to one on average and minimum at 2 to one, while in one HEI (Georgian-American University) the ratio is 68 to one.

Table #2 Number of students by Levels of Higher Education

	average	median	Standard deviation	max	total	% total number
BA	1177.3	350	2391.5	14090	61222	73
Higher professional	86.3	0	265.8	1802	4403	5
Medical – single-level	162.3	0	536.5	3743	8275	10
MA	161.8	61.5	311.9	1525	8413	10
PhD	28.3	0	82.5	496	1444	2
Total	1610.7	486.5	3010.1	16882	83757	

² It should be mentioned here that according to the data provided by the Department of Statistics, total number of students in country for the current year was 112,1 thousand, out of which 81 thousand are enrolled at state and 30 thousand are enrolled at private HEIs: Information from the Department of Statistics includes students enrolled at non-accredited HEIs.

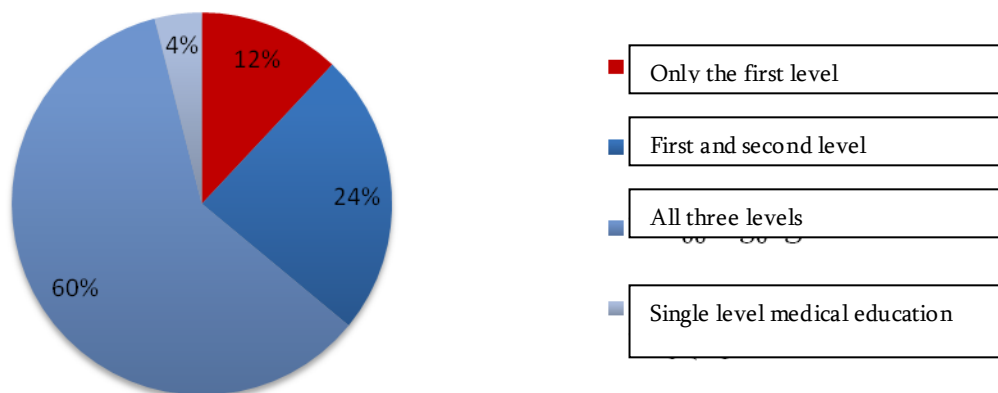
First and Second levels of Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions by Levels of study programs

According to the law “on Higher Education” (article 87/7), “Higher education institutions shall fully engage in offering educational programs envisaged by this law (Baccalaureate, Master’s, Certified Specialist’s program, Doctoral program) and provide the relevant academic degrees no later than the beginning of the academic year 2007-2008.” Consequently, all institutionally accredited higher education institutions operating in Georgia had been fully engaged in three-level higher education system. Medical education is the only exception, which is represented by a single-level program.

In most of the accredited higher education institutions (60%) all three levels of education are present (Baccalaureate, Master’s and Doctoral) – see Figure #2. In 12% of the higher education institutions only the first level of study is represented; Master’s level is offered in 84% of the HEIs, while the Doctoral programs are offered in only 60% of the HEIs.

Figure #2 Higher Education Institutions by levels of study



“Old” type of single-level higher education programs are still running in 14 HEIs (27%), however they are in the fading mode and their full departure is estimated by 2010.

Transferring to a two-level system (4+2 format) had started in Georgian Universities as early as 1994. Currently the law “on Higher Education” regulates the dimensions of each higher education level – 240 credits (ECTS) for BA level, 120 credits for MA level.

Doctoral Program

Doctoral program replaced a Post-graduate study program – a preparation course to PhD – after the adoption of the law “on Higher Education”. In 2005, students enrolled in post-graduate study programs were automatically transferred to doctoral programs.

According to law “On Higher Education” (article 49/1), a person holding a Master’s degree or an equal academic degree may take a doctoral program. Additional terms for admission may be set independently by the universities.

Several seminars with the participation of international experts had been conducted in Georgia (2005 and 2007) dedicated to the organization of the doctoral programs. The purpose of the seminars was to facilitate the introduction of doctoral programs. Launching doctoral study level is still coming along with many challenges. Even though formally many efforts had been made, such as diversification of doctoral program components, establishing structured doctoral, running doctoral programs based on credit (ECTS) system in most HEIs, still the process of development is at its premature stage.

Doctoral programs are offered in 31 HEIs, however 7 of them have not yet enrolled any applicants. Data (percentages) presented in this chapter are based on those higher education institutions that offer the third level of study.

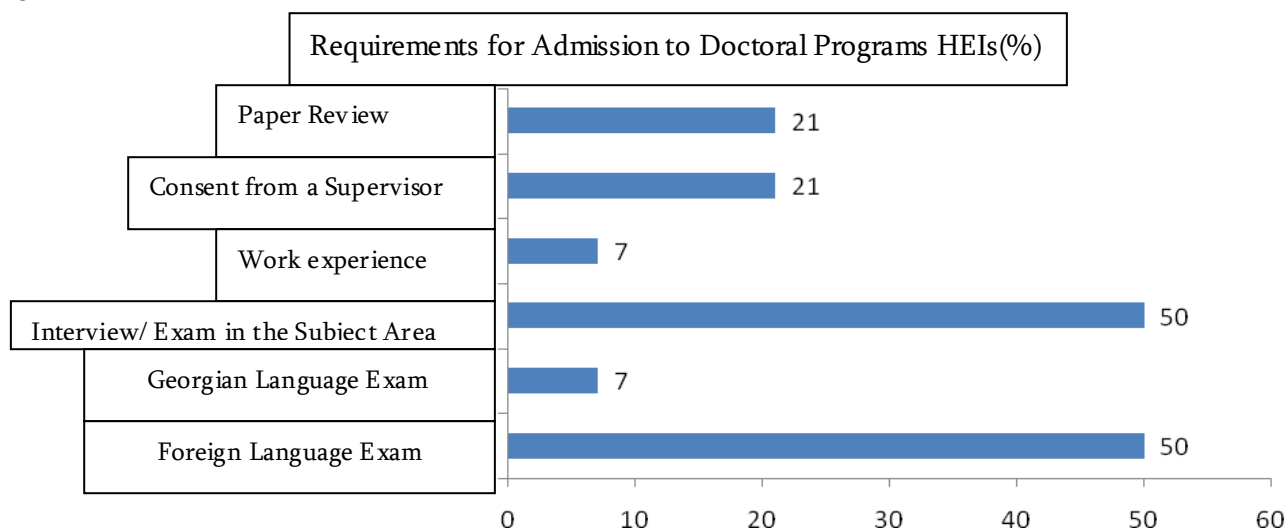
Admission to Doctoral Programs

In half of the HEIs, admission to doctoral programs is open once a year, in a quarter of universities – twice a year, while in the last quarter of HEIs admission timeframe is not strictly defined.

The most common requirements for the admission to the doctoral program is the knowledge of subject competencies and of the foreign language (figure #1). Admission examinations are oftentimes formal and the analysis of the competition show that in most of the program areas competition is low (table #3).

Most popular areas in doctoral programs are the same as at Master’s level – with the highest competition in Business and Law programs.

Figure #1



Students of Doctoral Programs

Doctoral Program students compose 2% of the total number of students. All of them take a doctoral program and are enrolled in a HEI. This means that there is not “independent researcher” practice in Georgia.

In 2007-2008, 940 students were enrolled in doctoral programs.³ This composes 65% of the total number of students enrolled at doctoral level. Approximately 26% out of 940 students are enrolled in humanitarian programs. Average ratio of competition is 1.1., while the same ratio in the fields of business, law and agriculture is about one to 2 (see table #3). However, it should be noted there is a variation in ratios within different higher education institutions.

Table #3 Distribution of Doctoral students within the fields, admission competition and cost of doctoral programs by field

Field of Study	Students			Competition			Fees		
	HEI	Total	%	min	max	median	min	max	median
Humanitarian sciences	7	241	26	1	1.7	1.0	1500	3300	2000
Social sciences	4	143	15	1	1.4	1.3	1500	2800	2000
Business	12	141	15	1	5	1.7	1500	5000	2800
Engineering, construction and industry	3	130	14	1	1.1	1.0	1250	2000	1625
Law	6	82	9	1	3	1.7	1500	5000	3000
Natural sciences	6	73	8	1	1.3	1.1	1000	2000	2000
Mathematics, Computer sciences	6	54	6	1	1.7	1.2	1500	2800	2000
Education	2	31	3	1	1.4	1.2	2000	2000	2000
Agriculture and Veterinary Studies	3	23	2	1	2	1.6	2000	2000	2000
Health Care and Social Security	3	14	1	1	1	1.0	1335	3500	2000
Art	1	8	1	1	1	1.0	960	960	960
		940		1	5	1.1	960	5000	2000

Duration of Doctoral Programs

According to the law “on Higher Education” (article 46/1), Doctoral Program shall constitute minimum 180 credits. Since on average, a student accumulates 60 credits during an academic year, doctoral program may not be shorter than three years. However, it should be noted that the legislation of Georgia in fact emphasizes the program dimensions rather than the actual duration of the course.

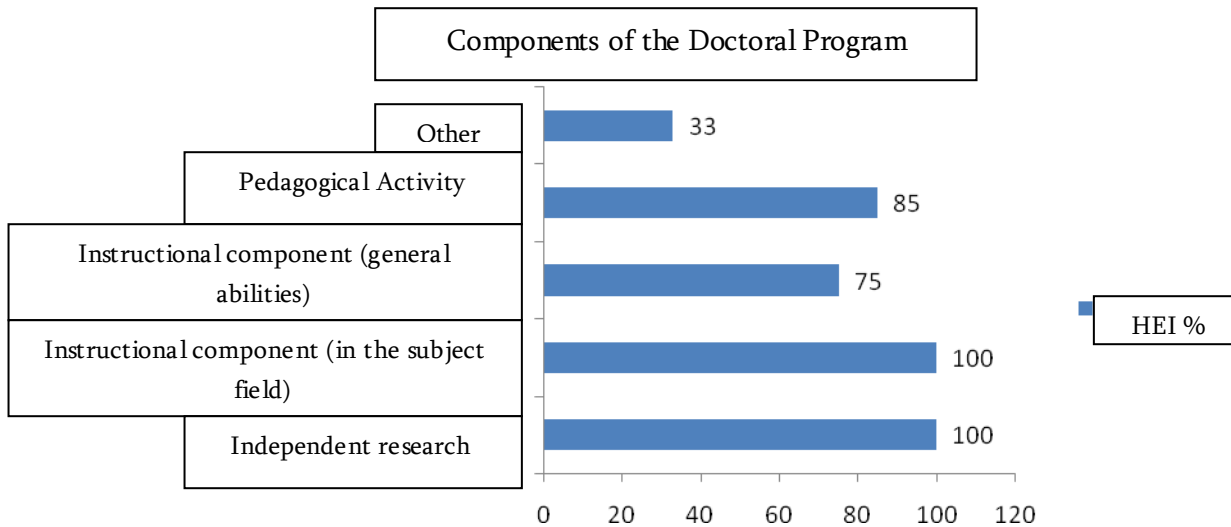
³ According to the data provided by the Department of Statistics of Georgia, number of doctoral students in 2007 was 786, while new 289 were enrolled in doctoral programs the same year. According to the same source, in 2007, 101 students completed doctoral programs, out of which only 11 received a doctoral degree (total of 44 students received some degree).

Duration of the doctoral program may range from 3 to 10 years (maximum duration is not determined only in two HEIs). In most HEIs duration of doctoral program is three years (in 18 HEIs – 60% of all HEIs) and five years (in 6 HEIs – 20%).

Doctoral Program Components

Universally, in all higher education institutions the main component of the doctoral program is independent research. In all HEIs, the doctoral programs also involve attending instructional courses in the subject field. However, this component is not compulsory in 10% of the HEIs. In addition, in most HEIs, doctoral programs require the students to engage in various types of pedagogical activity (85%) and in general ability enhancement courses (75%). These two components are also compulsory in most HEIs (in 8-9 HEIs out of ten).

Figure #3 This figure shows that 100% of doctoral programs involve independent research, while 85% of programs involve some kind of pedagogical activity



Quality Control and Evaluation Procedures of the Doctoral Programs

According to the information provided by the HEIs, quality control and evaluation systems of the doctoral programs are functional in most of the higher education institutions (approximately in 90%). The respondents were given a choice to list down evaluation methods used in their institution. After the analysis of the responses to this open questions the following three aspects, definitive of program quality in respondent’s opinion, had been identified:

- 1) Background of the doctoral students controlled by the HEI through selection mechanisms at admission stage (testing and interviews, examinations in languages etc); every fifth HEI emphasized this aspect.

- 2) Quality of instruction and research component, assessed through middle and final exam results. evaluation of seminar participants etc. 60% of the HEIs identified this aspect; 30% of the HEIs thought that quality control of doctoral program (documents) and syllabuses is important.
- 3) Approximately one fifth of the higher education institutions noted that the quality of doctoral program is reflected in the relevancy and quality of doctoral papers. 20% of the HEIs noted that publishing articles in international reference magazines is an indicator of doctoral program quality.

Competencies and Credit System

The draft version of higher education qualification framework includes the doctoral level, while the description of its competencies is tied to learning outcomes in the same way as at Bachelor's and Master's levels.

As it had been already noted, according to the law “on Higher Education” (article 46/1), Doctoral Program shall constitute minimum 180 credits. However, credit system is still not being used to calculate doctoral student workload in two out of 31 cases.

Status of Doctoral Students

Law on Higher education of Georgia grants the status of a student to doctoral program participants. However, according to the same law, a doctoral student may be elected to serve as an Assistant-Professor.

”Doctoral program participant has a status of a student and if simultaneously s/he holds a position of the Assistant-Professor, s/he acquires a status of academic personnel. In my opinion, doctoral program participants shall only have a status of a student and be given an opportunity to complete their research. However, at the same time, in a number of new fields we have a shortage of academic personnel, where specialists having a Master's degree can fill in the gaps.”

Expert

Higher education institutions responded to the question about the status of doctoral program participants in the following three forms – student (71% of HEIs), researcher (17% of HEIs), assistant-professor (17% of HEIs). About 40% of higher education institutions indicated more than one status simultaneously.

According to field experts, availability of assistant-Professor status for doctoral program participants, provides opportunities for higher education institutions to use doctoral level resources for refreshing academic personnel.

Funded Research, a prerequisite for admission to doctoral programs

Obtaining a university funded research is a prerequisite for the admission to doctoral program in three universities (approximately 10%) – Tbilisi Asia and Africa Institute, Tbilisi University after St. Grigol Peradze and Institute of Healthcare Management and Stomatology. All three of them are private higher education institutions. This is an interesting aspect in our data as it reflects on the research politics at universities, as well as on mechanisms of funding doctoral studies (see more below). It should also be noted, that recommendations of the international conference regarding the doctoral study programs suggested that a funded research be a mandatory admission requirement to doctoral programs.

Doctoral Program fees and funding mechanisms

Average annual fee for doctoral programs amounts to 2000 GEL. Fees vary by university and within business, humanitarian and law fields. Maximum annual fee is 5000 GEL, while the minimum is 1250 GEL (see table #3).

Based on the law “on Higher Education” of Georgia (article 88/10), Ministry of Education and Science should have developed new rules and conditions for financing Master’s and doctor’s level programs before January 1, 2007. This stipulation, unfortunately, had not been implemented. The same law stipulates (article 88/11) that the new system of funding master’s and doctor’s programs, as defined by this law, shall become effective upon starting the study courses for students enrolled in these programs pursuant to this law. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, still no work is being done in this direction. At the same time, 2007 budget allocated significant funds for Doctoral student stipends/scholarships. 720 000 GEL was allocated for doctoral students with excellent academic achievements. Each student would be eligible to a monthly stipend of 500 GEL, which would give them an opportunity to partially fund their tuition fees. Doctoral students shall receive a stipend based on nominations by respective universities. Due to the recent political events in country, this project budget in the end was not approved.

Currently, the main source of funding for doctoral students is self-financing (90%). Free doctoral programs are offered by 30% of HEIs. However, free tuition is offered in combination with other forms of funding. Free doctoral program, without co-funding sources, is offered only in one university (Ilia Chavchavadze State University). Other sources of funding (research grants, sponsorship) is specified by 15% of HEIs. About one third of the HEIs use more than one source of financing doctoral programs.

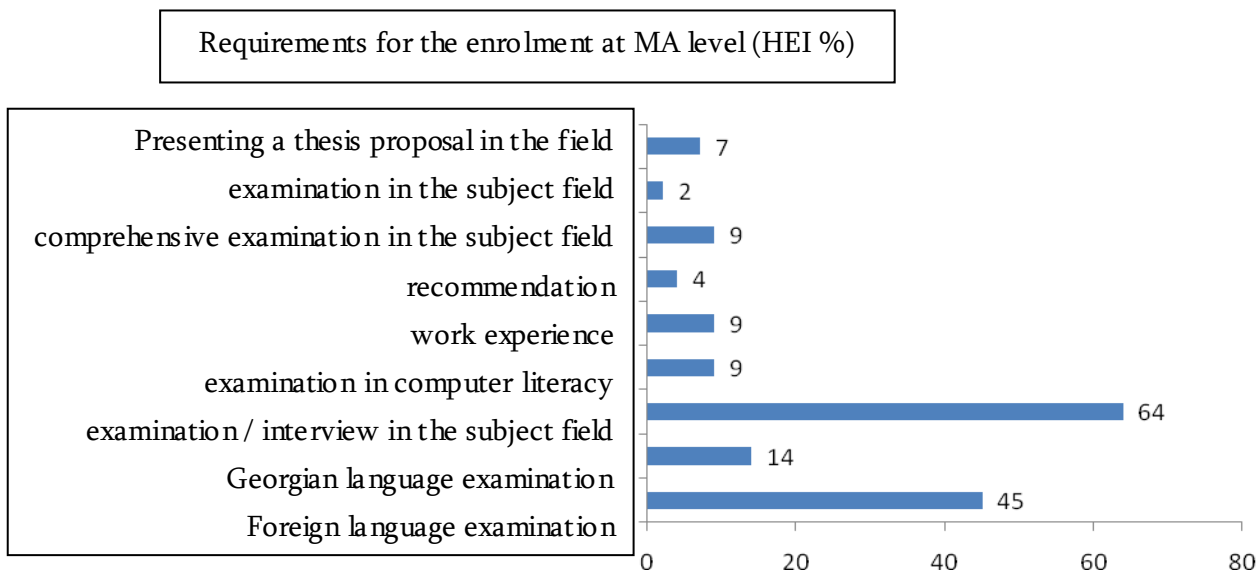
Master’s Program

Master’s programs are offered in 84% of the HEIs accredited in Georgia. According to the law “On Higher Education” of Georgia (article 48/3), a person holding a bachelor’s degree and/or a diploma of a certified specialist in medicine (veterinary studies) is eligible to apply for a Master’s program.

Additional requirements are determined by universities independently. At the same time, under the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, to be enrolled at Master’s level, candidates shall successfully pass Unified Master’s Examination (USE). Unified Master’s examination is a requirement for enrollment at a Master’s level, though this exam is not the only decisive component. The first Unified Master’s Examination is estimated to take place in 2009. The examination will be mandatory for all applicants to higher education institutions accredited in Georgia by Ministry of Education and Science, in case the issue of financing the Master’s programs will be resolved. If the funding issue is not resolved, then universities will have freedom to reject Master’s examination. The format and design of the Master’s exam is developed by the National Assessment and Examination Center within the framework of the respective project.

Figure #10 demonstrates requirements of higher education institutions accredited in Georgia for the enrollment at Master’s level.

Figure #10



According to the data from HEIs, among MA applicants (for the last year enrolment), the number of candidates who graduated from the BA the same year, constitutes about half of the total number. However, in some of the higher education institutions this ratio equals to 100%. In private HEIs the ration is lower than in state HEIs and the difference is statistically significant. Such difference may be derived from the fact, that some of the private higher education institutions set a work experience as a mandatory requirement for enrolment in MA program. Student focus groups, as well as some interviews with the experts in the field revealed that oftentimes applying to MA program is driven from an “inertia”, as “BA level is considered to be incomplete higher education and not as a self-sustainable one”. High ratio of BA graduates immediately applying to MA program may also be an indicator of shortage in employment opportunities.

When applying to MA program, one should not think to just complete it and then find a prospective job; one should have a goal for MA studies – a student

According to 2007-2008 data from the HEIs, 4000 new students were enrolled in MA programs in 2007. Around one fifth of these students, study business programs at MA level. Around half of the students are equally distributed among humanitarian, social and law departments. Experts think, that concentration of larges number of students in business administration MA programs indicates that there is no “career guidance” system available in Georgia. Potential students have a limited understanding of various MA programs and they decide to enroll in business program.

Table #6 contains data about student distribution at MA level by subject fields, competition for enrolment and MA program fees. Average ratio of competition across all fields is one to 1.25, for business, law and healthcare fields competitions coefficients are scattered and depend on the rating of the HEI. Average annual fee of the MA program is 2000 GEL. Annual tuition fees range from 1000 GEL to 6600 GEL. Tuition fees are higher on business, social sciences and law department.

Table #6 Distribution of MA students across fields, competition and annual fee for MA program by fields (2007-2008)

Field of Study	Students		Competition			Fee		
	total	%	min	max	median	min	max	median
Business	734	19	1	8.83	1.28	1250	4500	2000
humanitarian sciences	641	16	1	2.29	1.39	1250	3000	1900
Social sciences	623	16	1	2.27	1.17	1000	4000	2000
Law	615	16	1	4.78	1.26	1500	6600	2000
Engineering, construction and industry	459	12	1	1.46	1.13	1000	2250	1500
Education	227	6	1	1.87	1.13	1250	3500	1550
Natural sciences	173	4	1	3.19	1.39	1000	2250	1600
Agricultural and veterinary studies	166	4	1	1.25	1.13	1000	1500	1250
Mathematics, computer sciences	145	4	1	2.69	1.11	1250	3800	1650
Art	73	2	1	1.50	1.30	1250	3000	1500
Healthcare and Social security	49	1	1	5.19	1.50	2000	2500	2350
Total	3905				1.25	1000	6600	2000

Relationship between higher education and research

Research activities of higher education institutions

Research activity of higher education institutions derives from their mission – it is impossible to run MA and doctoral programs without significant research component and since 84% of the operating higher education institutions offer MA and doctoral programs, or MA programs only, scientific potential should be consequently high.

Experts and academic personnel think that there are serious challenges in the higher education institutions as it relates to research potential.

“Research activity maintains very low profile in higher education institutions in Georgia, at least on the institutional level. This is related to many factors: lack of priorities at state and institutional level, lack of research funds within the universities. The system is not transparent. The structure is unclear and there is neither a customer and nor a product”, expert.

Rate of participation of higher education institutions in the grant competitions announced by local scientific funds, as well as level of achievements verify the viewpoint on the lack of research opportunities. In 2007, Georgian National Scientific Fund (www.gnsf.ge) announced a call for research proposals. The ratio of higher education institutions among the contestants was 8.84%, while the ratio of institutions affiliated with the Academy of Sciences (there are 66 such institutes in Georgia) was 52.39%. The ratio of funded proposals was consequently much lower of those from the higher education institutions

Expenditures on Research, as a share of GDP

Direct state funding for research activities in Georgia amounts to 0.18% of GDP. This includes funding of scientific and research institutes as well as state grant programs. This coefficient does not include though the ratio of state funding for research taking place within university programs.

Private scientific foundations practically do not exist in Georgia. There are charity funds, that invest money for instance in building renovations – e.g. Ivanishvili foundation allocated 25 million GEL on renovating Tbilisi State University. When we speak about private funding of scientific research, we mean business sector being a customer for research.

Total national annual expenditure on research (in national currency)

From state funding: -

- a) 66 scientific and research institutes of Academy of Sciences obtained 14 million GEL in 2008
- b) grant allocation from state scientific foundations – Georgian National Scientific Foundation – 10.5 million, Rustaveli Foundation – 2.9 million GEL.

From private funding: -

There are no private scientific foundations in Georgia. From international donor organizations 14-16 million GEL had been obtained by institutes of Academy of Sciences, HEIs and other organizations (including non-governmental) for scientific research.

In 2008 higher education/research program was financed by 15.562 million GEL; however it is not known how much of state funding is spent on research by universities.

Source of Information: Ministry of Education and Science.

compared to institutes affiliated with the Academy of Sciences.

Detailed information of the research proposals funded by Georgian National Scientific Fund is presented in **table #4** (the table does not show indicators for such participants as non-governmental organizations or other organizations):

Year	Ratio of Research		Ratio of Funded	
	Proposals Submitted		Research Proposals	
	Academy	HEI	Academy	HEI
2006	52,8%	9,9%	72,1%	20,9%
2007	52,39%	8,84%	63,89%	19,44%

If we review the list of grantees from Georgian National Scientific Foundation, we will see that only 9 state universities were able to secure a scientific grant from the foundation:

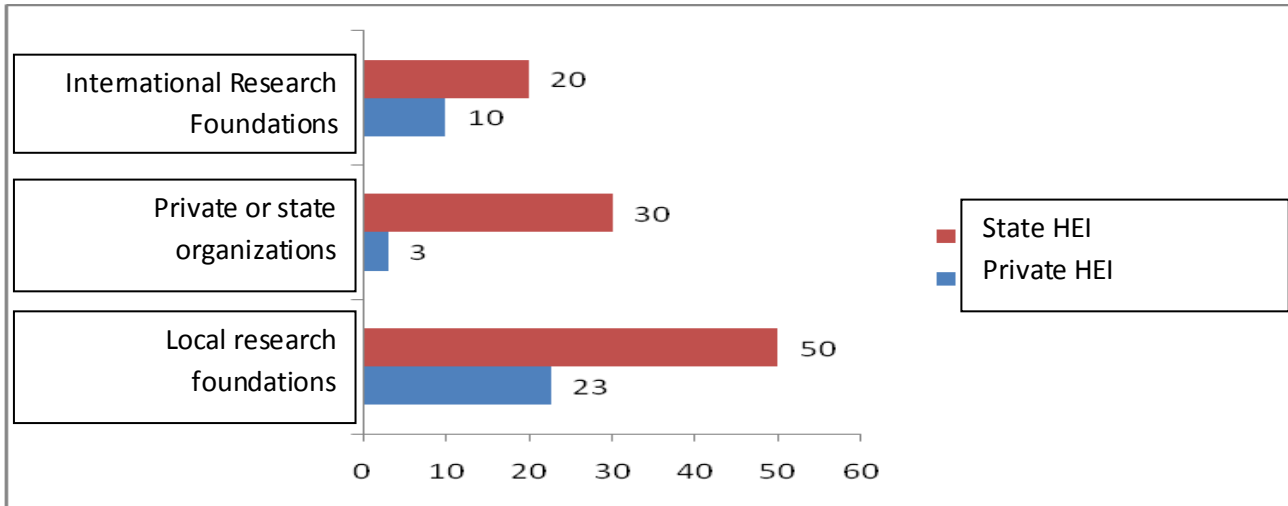
1. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
2. Ilia Chavchavadze State University,
3. Technical University of Georgia.
4. Tbilisi State Medical University,
5. State Agricultural University of Georgia,
6. Tbilisi State University for Economic Relations,
7. Shota Rustaveli University of Theatre and Film,
8. Shota Rustaveli State University (Batumi),
9. Akaki Tsereteli State University (Kutaisi).

It should be noted here as well that according to the bylaws of the Georgian National Scientific Foundation (article 4/4) (www.government.gov.ge/aqtebi_full.php?nid=715) a grant recipient organization may be non-profit legal entity of public or private law. This means some private higher education institutions are not eligible to participate in such competitions.

This legal restriction is one of the reasons, why state universities are grant recipients more often than private ones. Another reason may be the fact that private higher education institutions focus mostly on subject areas of business administration and law, which are highly demanded on the market, while the fundamental sciences are practically overlooked. Such difference is particularly obvious in case of private and state organization funding. Only 3% of private higher education institutions received a grant from this latter source compared to 30% of state HEIs. In addition to

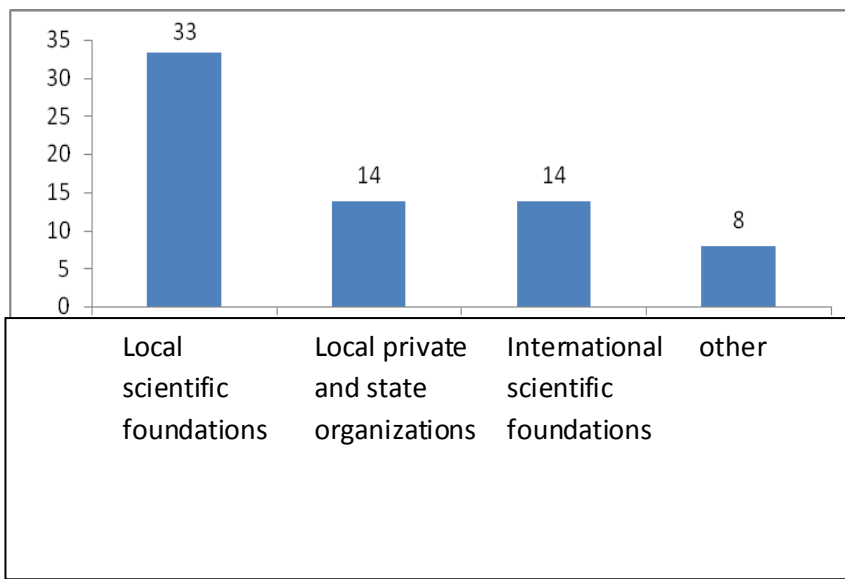
that, state HEIs are twice more often the beneficiaries of local and international research foundations than private HEIs.

Table #4 Beneficiaries of Research Grants by Private and State HEIs (percentage is calculated from the total number of private or state HEIs).



Apart from state scientific foundations, major sources of research funding (particularly in the field of natural sciences) are international donor organizations. Information on research funding sources is presented in figure #6. Table #5 presents information on research funds obtained by state and private higher education institutions.

Figure #6 Sources of funding for research proposal funding by application (all HEIs %)



Tables #5 Funds obtained by HEIs for research projects (2006-2008) by funding sources and the status of HEI.

		local scientific	local state/private	international scientific	other
private	average	32489	2000	41175.6667	13271
	N	7	1	3	2
	maximum	150000	2000	109735	18100
	median	6629	2000	7000	13271
	Σ	227423	2000	123527	26542
state	average	884475.6	110497.5	3610266.5	47895
	N	10	6	4	2
	maximum	4628996	258787	9507956	64000
	median	404903.5	72600	2366555	47895
	Σ	8844756	662985	14441066	95790
total	average	533657.5882	94997.8571	2080656.14	30583
	N	17	7	7	4
	maximum	4628996	258787	9507956	64000
	median	105000	53200	200000	24945
	total	9072179	664985	14564593	122332

Collaboration in the Research Field – Future Prospects

Development of collaboration in the research field is closely linked to the identification of the research priorities in the HEIs and to the accessibility of information. Experts and academic personnel think that oftentimes the higher education institutions do not have a clearly defined mission and a clear view of the research priorities. Therefore, structural changes towards the amplification of research activities do not result into real outcomes.

“Reforms in this field shall be initiated from the bottom. Starting point shall be individuals, around whom the schools will be formed; significant efforts shall be made to identify such people, shape their motivation and create conducive work environment for them.

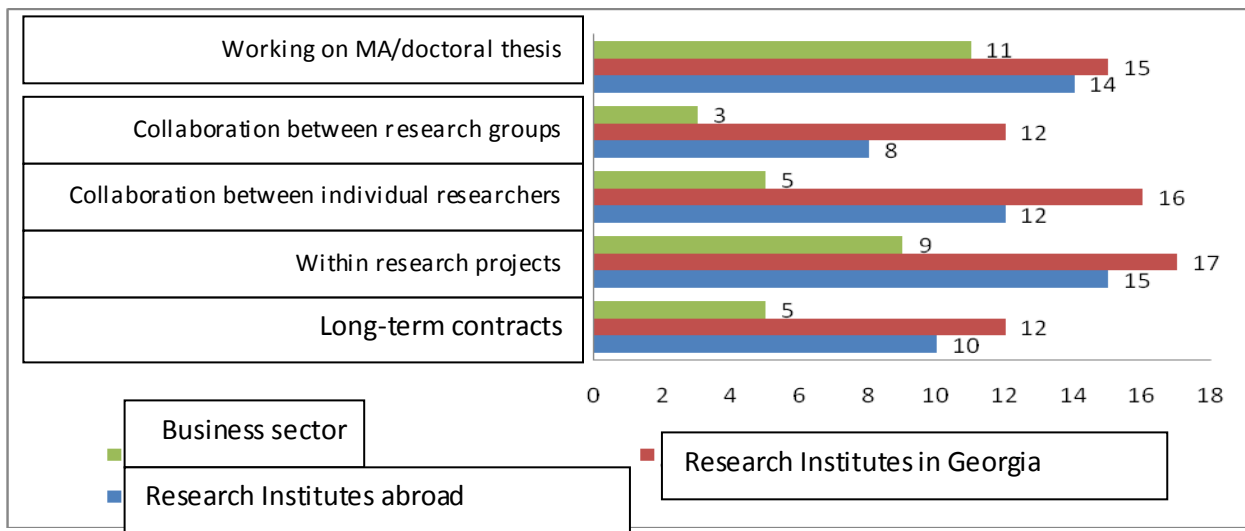
The role of outside forces as well as of international partners is very important in this regard. Current approach, which focuses on structural reform is false as it relies on an artificially formed structure to gather the right people.” expert.

Some universities have demonstrated attempts to internationalize the research activities. As it has been mentioned above, some HEIs stated that publication of articles in international reference magazines was the formal indicator of the quality of research component. However, one of the serious challenges to the process of research internationalization, as well as to the mobility of

academic personnel, is the language barrier. Popularization of research potential on the local market is even at a more challenging condition, as no work is being done in this direction.

Even though, there is a lot to do to diversify collaboration forms in regards to research projects, HEIs reports that they productively collaborate with local and international research institutes and business sector. 33 HEIs (out of 52) indicated at least one form of collaboration. Collaboration with the business sector, though, is at a bare minimum level.

Table #5 Forms of Collaboration in Research Projects (number of HEIs)



In 2007 (we have no data for 2006) 13.9% of research projects funded by Georgian National Scientific Foundation were implemented through the partnership between universities and scientific-research institutes.

Experts envision three potential ways of collaboration in research projects:

- a) Merging - when the research institute becomes a structural unit of the university. There are already some instances of such mergers. For example, Department of Seismic Monitoring was merged with Ilia Chavchavadze State University.
- b) Commercialization – completing research requests from businesses; But, as figure #5 shows, business sector rarely acts in partnership with HEIs.
- c) Establishing large research centers/conglomerates – experts think that due to limited resources in Georgia, maximum 5 such centers may be established.

Higher education institutions consider that in order to enhance collaboration, HEIs shall identify research priorities, define major directions and ensure availability of such information to the interested parties; In addition to that, it is necessary to define a state strategy in regards to research development, in which research priorities, as well as ways of support will be described. Following

that, research shall be coordinated according to priority areas, while for research financing business sector shall be offered some tax exemptions and/or other mechanisms to stimulate collaboration among different sectors. Exchange of information among different sectors shall be carried out through joint conferences, meetings, seminar etc. Private and state universities shall be eligible to the same funding opportunities from state programs. Other areas to promote are research internalization, publication of articles in international reference magazines, improvement of research quality, fostering state financial assistance, supporting the mobility of students and academic personnel.

Access to Different Levels of Education

According to the law “On Higher Education” of Georgia, education at MA level is accessible to a person holding a BA or an equal certified specialist’s degree and it may be used as an opportunity to change profession. Therefore, there are no limitations in terms of subject fields when applying to the second level of higher education. 50% of MA students this year had graduated from the BA level the same year.

According to the focus group discussions, part of the students at MA level is willing to change their specialization, and mainly to conduct scientific research. None of the students have identified increased chances of employment as a primary motivation for applying to MA program.

In Georgia, there are no limitations currently if an applicant wants to change a specialization when moving from one level to the other. However, the universities may require such applicant to undertake additional courses. But, there have not yet been any instances of activating such requirement. Majority of MA students have continued MA studies in the same subject area. Most of the students who have changed their specialization apply to MA programs in business administration. None of the universities offering MA program in business administration have the requirement of undertaking additional courses for the applicants who have a BA degree in a different subject field. However, most of them require applicants to pass admission exams in mathematics and foreign languages.

According to the law “on Higher Education” (article 49/1), a person holding a Master’s degree or an equal academic degree may take a doctoral program. Additional terms for admission may be set independently by the universities. According to the law “on Higher Education”, the third level of higher education is accessible to anyone holding the required qualifications.

Additional qualifications, that make further level of education inaccessible, do not exist in Georgian educational system. The only barrier to moving to further levels is lack of financial resources, since at almost all universities doctoral programs are self-financed. As it was already noted, mechanisms of financing the doctoral programs have not been yet developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. 2009 budget includes stipend/scholarship funds for successful doctoral students.

Employment of University Graduates and Relationships with the employers

Registering the number of employed graduates

No comprehensive research had been carried out in this direction so far. According to the data provided by the higher education institutions, most of the HEIs (approximately 60%) register the number of employed students and graduates (figure #7). Private HEIs are more likely to have such registration system, than state HEIs. Difference between the private and state universities in this regard is significant (figure #10). Chi-Square 13.661, Sig. 0.001

Figure #7 Responses to the question: “Do you register the number of employed graduates from your university” (percentage of HEIs).

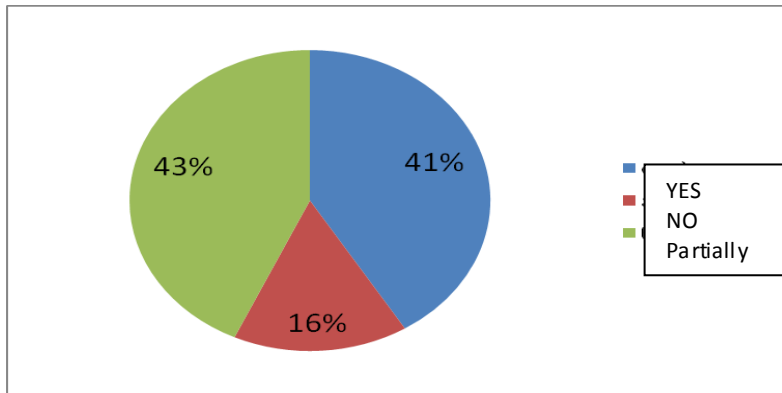
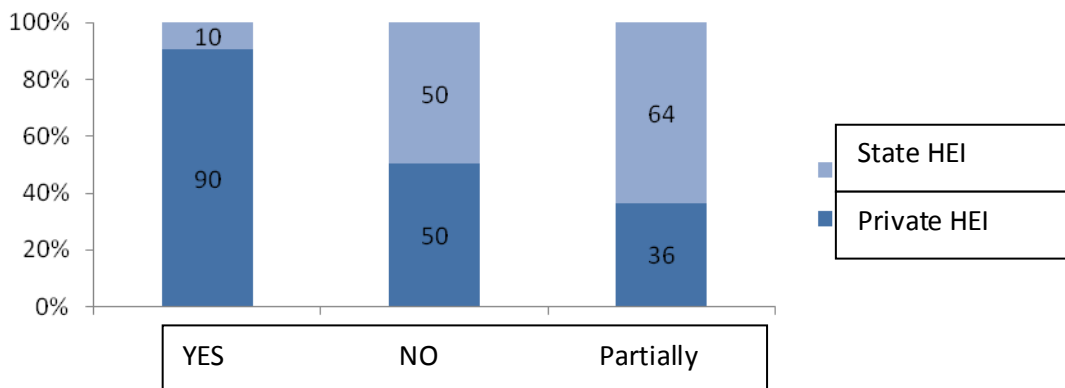


Figure #8 Registration of employed graduates in Private and State HEIs (% of HEIs)



Indicators of employment of graduates and career support activities

Ratio of employment is higher for MA level graduates compared to BA level; at the same time, the difference between these two ratios is statistically significant $t = -3.030$, sig 0.014. Despite this fact, there are no career support activities carried out in the universities for BA level students.

According to the legislation, graduates from BA or MA programs shall be equally treated by the employers. Experts think that the main problem lies in the lack of employer awareness regarding the BA qualifications. Supposedly, introduction of national framework for qualifications will eliminate this problem.

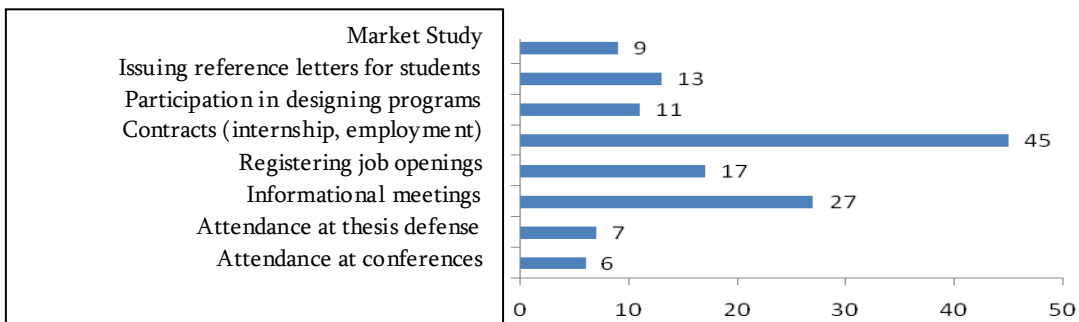
85% of the higher education institutions state that they carry out certain activities to promote student employment. 45% of the HEIs have official contracts for business employment and internships. 27% of the HEIs organize career fairs with potential employers for its students. 10% of the higher education institutions have an ongoing dialogue with the potential employers over the development of educational programs; 9% to 11% of the HEIs conduct market research and register ongoing job openings (figure #8).

Employment in public sector is governed by labor law regulations. State institutions recognize the degrees issued only by institutionally accredited HEIs. This means that employment in public sector is only accessible to graduates from institutionally accredited HEIs.

Currently employment procedures and career development structure in public sector is not organized according to Bologna regulations. First of all, in many cases employers do not clearly articulate those expectations that they have towards the potential employees. Detailed scopes of work/TORs are not available in many cases. Thus, there is a need for dialogue between the representative of education system and labor market in this direction.

Starting from 2007, Higher Professional Education programs are being offered in Georgia. These programs represent a shorter cycle within the BA programs and they are comprised of 120-180 credits. Since the first student enrollment took place in 2007, currently there is no data about the graduates from these programs.

Figure #8 Ways of Promoting Student Employment (% of HEIs)

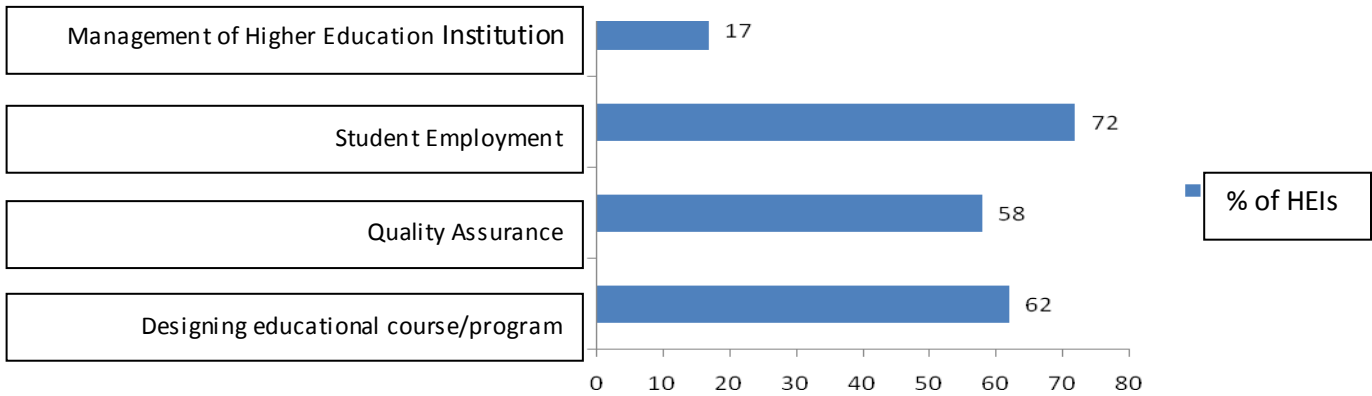


Relationships with the Employers

According to the information provided by HEIs, 80% of higher education institutions have some type of relationships with potential employers. Figure #9 demonstrates different forms of

relationships between the HEI and potential employers. Higher education institutions, primarily, collaborate with the business sector on employment opportunities (80%). Half of the HEIs involve business sector in developing the educational programs. Six higher education institutions (17%) collaborated with business regarding management issues. All of these six HEIs are private universities.

Figure #9 Forms of Collaboration with Employers by extent –(% of HEIs)



Participation of Employers in the process of accreditation/quality assurance/university management

National Education Accreditation Center works with the employers in this direction. Starting from 2009, National Education Accreditation Center plans to establish Committees by different subject fields, in which representation of employers will be mandatory.

Formation of Professional Higher Education Accreditation Committee is planned for 2009 and representatives of potential employers shall be represented in this committee.

Collaboration between employers and universities in the field of quality assurance is yet limited in scale. This is partly due to a limited past experience in such practice and partly because the criteria for institutional accreditation at this stage was mostly quantitative and less of a qualitative nature. Introduction of new criteria for institutional accreditation, as well as the process of programmatic accreditation will significantly increase the role of the employers in this process, as the quantitative indicators will not be augmented by qualitative criteria focusing on the content.

Currently, employers are only involved in developing the instructional programs (see above), providing internship opportunities (45% of HEIs), as well as attending thesis defenses and conferences (7% and 6% respectively). As it was noted above, six higher education institutions only (17%) collaborate with business sector on university management issues and all of these six HEIs are private universities.

Internal Quality Provision System in Higher Education Institutions

Law “On Higher Education” of Georgia determines the structure of the legal entity of public law, i.e. of higher education institutions and requires the existence of Quality Provision Service within such institution (article 25). Accordingly, formation of Quality Provision Service in state universities is required by law. Even though, such requirement is no binding over legal entities of private law, past experience has shown that all private HEIs have Quality Provision Service or some type of unit that performs quality assurance functions. Need for the Quality Provision Service was partly driven from the process of institutional accreditation. For the accreditation process self-assessment reports were to be completed by Quality Provision Services.

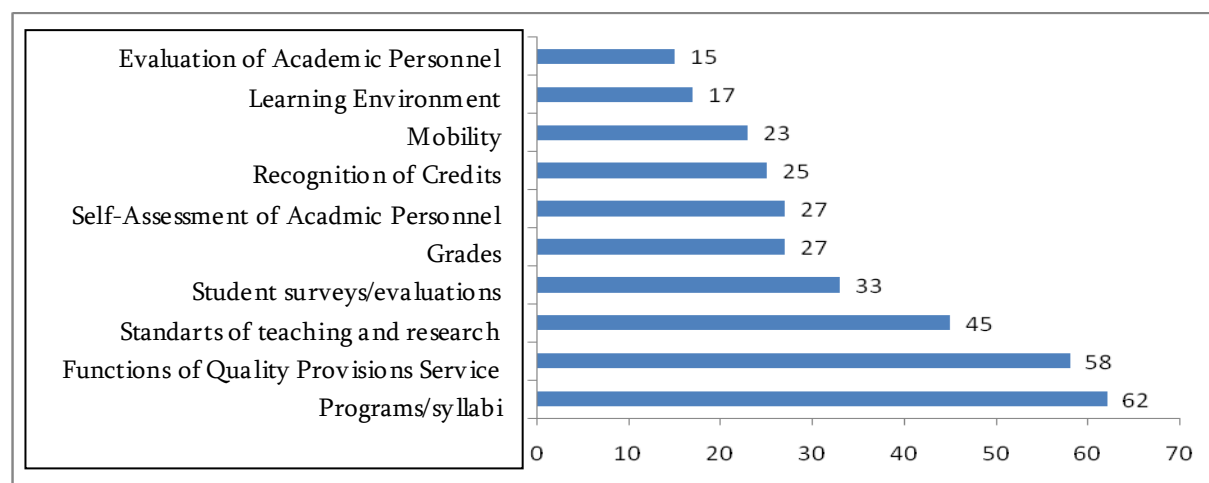
Quality Provision Services operate in the majority of Georgian universities for a three year term. During this timeframe this units mainly focus on the organization of educational process and preparation of self-assessment report for institutional accreditation.

Functions of the Quality Provision Service in legal entities of public law are clearly defined in the law “on Higher Education”. Research showed, that identical units in private HEIs, in fact, take up the same functions.

Number of employees in Quality Provision Services range from 1 to 22. In most cases, there are two staff members in such units (in 16 HEIs). In 80% of HEIs, there are not more than seven employees in the Quality Provision Service. More than 90% of HEIs have developed their Bylaws.

Figure #13 demonstrates those aspects, that are regulated by the documents of Quality Provision Services. Currently, in more than half of the higher education institutions accredited in Georgia, rules for developing program courses and syllabuses are documented; in most of the HEIs functions of the Quality Provision Service are defined; in 33% of the HEIs unified forms of student surveys are used; regulations for credit recognition and student mobility are comparatively insubstantial.

Figure # 13 Aspects that are regulated by Quality Provision Service (% of HEIs)



In all HEIs, academic personnel is assisted in the introduction of European system for credit transfer and accumulation – there are training programs offered, additional instructions are distributed. However, focus group with academic personnel identified that credit calculation system is still unclear for some academic staff. Even more, the focus group members used the irrelevant terms for the context and interpreted information inaccurately.

According to the focus group, students regularly participate in the evaluation of the instructional programs, the learning process and academic personnel. In a number of case, negative evaluation of the students resulted in the replacement of the professor. At the same time, students noted, that many of them do not give honest responses to survey questions. This may be due to indifferent attitude or shortage of time. By the end of the semester a lot of surveys are usually distributed and students give random responses: “For each subject or item, there are four to five page surveys, and not all of the students are willing to write 40-page evaluations.”

As the figure #13 shows, Quality Provision Services of higher education institutions use diverse methods for quality monitoring. However, such efforts are worthless unless they are integrated with the unified strategy for quality improvement and unless collection of information from surveys is not followed by transparent negative and/or positive incentives.

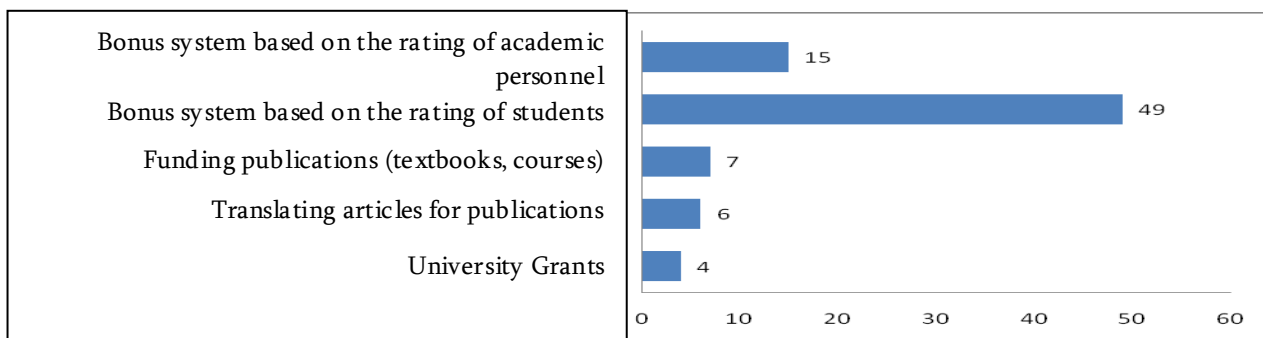
Strategy for Continuous Quality Improvement

According to the information provided by HEIs, 80% of the higher education institutions have developed a strategy for quality improvement. However, only half of the HEIs have such strategy posted on their web page. Review of the university web pages showed that in fact the number of HEIs having the strategy for quality improvement is much lower than reported.

In 70% of HEIs, they use schemes for learning and research quality improvement. However, mainly they focus on bonuses based on student ratings and less emphasis is made on the encouragement of academic personnel (figure #14).

Experts think, that so far connections on horizontal level among higher education institutions are weak –such events as the Rectors’ Conference are not organized, or the institutions like Professional Association of Professors do not exist etc.

Figure \$14 Schemes of Promoting quality of research and learning



Procedures for Launching the Programs

According to the survey, 62% of the HEIs maintain procedures that regulate the learning process, including the approval of programs and diplomas, regulations for monitoring and periodic inspection. Only four HEIs do not have a unified form of developing programs. From the HEIs that do have such system, only two do not have a section on competencies within the system and only in one HEI there is no formal procedure for approving the programs.

Educational Programs focusing on Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are one of the most important criteria for evaluating the educational programs during the licensing, as well as accreditation procedures of the HEIs. Therefore, at least formally, section on learning outcomes shall be part of all curricula. However, listing the competencies, general as well as by subject area, in the section of learning outcomes, still needs considerable work.

90% of the HEIs state that they organize some type of activities to raise awareness about the learning outcomes. However, after reviewing the list of methods, it becomes evident that Quality Provision Services do not themselves have a clear understanding of the concepts of learning outcomes and competencies. Approximately 20% of the HEIs state the Quality Provision Services have developed relevant guidelines, while about 30% of the HEIs conduct trainings and informational meetings regarding the learning outcomes and competencies. Responses from 37% of HEIs were not relevant, since some of the universities, for example, stated that “compulsory certification exams in foreign language and computer sciences” are considered as the events for raising awareness about the competencies.

Measuring Student Achievements

Introduction of the credit system automatically implies measuring student academic achievements according to pre-determined criteria. Course syllabi, shall undoubtedly include the student evaluation criteria. Similarly to the section on learning outcomes, system of measuring student achievements is a significant criterion for the process of institutional accreditation.

Student focus groups revealed that students are usually motivated to read the course syllabi just for the purpose of finding out about the evaluation criteria for the course. However, at the same time, students have noted that there are cases when the criteria determined under the syllabus are not then used in reality.

Higher Education Institutions named the following methods as the tools for measuring

Learning programs do not yet reflect the actual demand from the labor market – this is partly because that university professors do not fully understand the the importance of such dialogue , and partly because that the professional community finds it challenging to identify and express their demands clearly.

Expert

student workload and evaluation: student surveys (30%), attendance and participation analysis (13%), in 7% of the HEIs there are additional definitions and guidelines developed.

Multi-dimensional evaluation system of the students is positively evaluated both by the students and academic personnel, since it gives a possibility to evaluate a student more objectively.

However, higher education institutions faced some challenges when introducing this new system. One of the most common examples was an inappropriate distribution of evaluation components, as a result of which a student was losing motivation to attend lectures or take final examinations.

Access to information about Programs

Institutional accreditation requires the higher education institutions to post syllabi/abstracts of each discipline on their web-site. Therefore, all HEIs should be complying to this regulations, regardless of their legal status. The survey showed that 84% of the HEIs had the programs posted on the web site. At the same time, review of the university web pages identified that the quality of information on program curricula differed significantly among various universities.

In addition to that, academic personnel do not always have a good understanding of the purpose of the syllabus and who is it developed for. Language of the syllabus is difficult and not so much reader-friendly.

National Education Accreditation Center has very important mission – it provides a “entry pass” to the higher education market – therefore, the process should be very transparent. Otherwise, we will face challenges. *Expert*

Open access to the internal assessment procedures of Quality Provision Service Performance

Assessment results of the Quality Provision services, as an unified document, is practically never posted on university web sites. Relevant information with the results of the research conducted by Quality Provisions Services is sometimes posted on the university websites (such information is posted on Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and Tbilisi State Medical University).

It should be noted here, that National Education Accreditation Center currently carries out inspection of accredited HEIs. Self-Assessment survey requires open access to the performance outcomes of Quality Provision Service. It is expected that such requirement from the National Education Accreditation Center will result into more openness of HEIs and regular postings of information on the web sites.

External System of Quality Assurance

National Education Accreditation Center is responsible for carrying out external quality assurance procedures. By November 2008 the following accreditation procedures had been carried out:

- Institutional accreditation of HEIs in two phases (in 2006 and 2007)

- Programmatic accreditation of Professional Higher Education Programs – all programs had been accredited
- Analysis of annual self-assessment of accredited HEIs is currently ongoing – Deadline for submitting the documentation is 17.11., while by the end of December (around 20-24.12) it is planned to present the outcomes at national congress of universities.
- New criteria for institutional accreditation had been developed and is currently in the process of review
- Terms of programmatic accreditation for regulated programs – law and education – is being developed.

External Quality Assurance system involves four main components: writing the self-assessment report by HEIs and group of external evaluation experts, publishing evaluation results and carrying out follow-up procedures based on evaluation recommendations.

It should be noted that external quality assurance system had been extremely controversial. For the last two years National Education Accreditation Center had to act as a litigation party in 30 court cases. The Center won in 27 cases, while the other three cases had been sent back to court for a new review.

Introducing Quality Provision standards and guidelines of European Higher Education system at a national level

Operation of National Education Accreditation Center (www.nea.ge) had always relied upon the quality provision standards and guidelines of European Education system. New bylaws of the accreditation center, which is based on the mission of the center, is currently presented to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval and is in the process of review. In addition to that, self-assessment report of the accreditation center is being prepared so that the center can submit it to obtain a membership to the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA). USAID funded German expert is participating in drafting the report. It is expected that the self-assessment report will be ready by 25.11. This self-assessment report shall be attached to the membership application submitted to ENQA.

Student Participation in External Quality Assurance Procedures

Students are involved in the management of Quality Assurance National Agencies. Specifically, out of nine committee members of the National Education Accreditation Center one is a student of Technical University of Georgia.

The Student member is involved in external evaluation groups as an official representative. This means, that the student member of the committee is involved in decision-making process during the

external evaluation procedures. Position of an observer in the accreditation group, according to the bylaws of the Accreditation Center, does not exist.

International Participation in External Quality Assurance Procedures

Currently, international participation in external quality assurance procedures is limited. Up to now, there has been no involvement in the management of quality assurance national agencies, nor into external evaluation groups for programs and institutions.

Participation of international experts is planned from 2008 within the project of Twining and USAID throughout 2009-2011. It is planned to acquire membership into European registry of quality assurance agencies in 2009.

National Framework for Qualifications

In the fall of 2007, national framework for qualifications was developed. Currently the working draft of the framework is posted on the web site of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Representatives from higher education institutions of Georgia, National Education Accreditation Center, Ministry of Education and Science and non-governmental organizations participated in the preparation of the national framework.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) describes all levels of higher education relying on the learning outcomes and competencies; the document is open for discussion and is posted on the Ministry web site. (<http://mes.gov.ge/upload/editor/file/Boloniis%20Procesi/NQF-%20GE%20-%202005.pdf>).

Also, the document had been sent to the Academic Committees of all higher education institutions for review. Unfortunately, response rate is practically down to zero.

NQF has not been formally recognized, i.e. self-certified, yet in Georgia, as there are some controversies over the qualifications in the medical subject field. Field Committee has been created, which is responsible to review the specific features of medical education and include it in the qualification framework. This step will resolve the problem of self-certification.

NQF has not been introduced in practice, as it does not have a status of a normative document yet. However, many higher education institutions refer to competences presented in NQF when developing the curricula.

On November 27-28, Tbilisi is hosting a Bologna seminar on “Aligning National Against European Qualification Frameworks: The Principles of Self Certification”. Georgian experts will be actively participating in the seminars.

Quality Recognition and Duration of Study

Georgian law “On Higher Education” requires the HEIs to issue a transcript together with the diploma (article 46/3). Minister of Education and Science decree #149 (5.04.2005) defines the format

of the diploma transcript. Minister decree as well as the sample of the transcript is posted on web site of the Ministry of Education and Science (www.mes.gov.ge). According to HEIs, diploma at all levels is issued together with the transcripts, including short-term study programs and closing programs.

According to the Minister decree #149, diploma transcript shall be issued in Georgian and English languages.

Diploma transcript is issued for free. Format of the national diploma does not differ from the transcript formats of European Union, European Council and UNESCO.

Role of the Diploma Transcript in the process of qualification recognition

Diploma transcript is an official document that serves as a tool for foreign citizens to have the qualifications from the second or third level of higher education recognized. According to the Administrative code of Georgia, working language for the legal entities of public law is a state (Georgian) language. Therefore, a diploma transcript from international universities in a foreign language must be presented together with a certified translation. This means that for those people, who received qualification abroad and their transcript is in a foreign language, they are required to present official translation of the transcript, though, they are not required to present any other information as a verification of additional qualifications. Unfortunately, diploma transcript is not usually requested on the labor market currently and is not referred to as a source of information.

Implementing European System of Credit Transfers and Accumulation

Georgian law “On Higher Education” defines the concept of the credit system. Decree #3 (5.01.2007) of the Minister of Education and Science describes the credit system in detail. European system of credit transfers and accumulation was imposed over Georgian HEIs in 2005-2006, since the existence of ECTS was a requirement for institutional accreditation process in 2006. Consequently, European system of credit transfers and accumulation currently operates in all 100% of the HEIs. Credit system operating in Georgian HEIs is fully aligned with the European system.

It is still questionable though, how well the professors and students understand this system.

Results of the focus groups show that even though most of the students are well-aware of the credit system, some of the professors or teachers, despite all the training they went through, still do not understand the role of credit system clearly. Sometimes credits are just formally assigned.

Flexible (alternative) ways of Learning

Higher education institutions are independent in establishing flexible ways of learning. According to the law “On Higher Education” (article 43/1), a student shall have the right to choose and participate in the development of individual study programs in accordance to his/her interests and demands. Results of the survey showed that individual study programs operate in only 10% of the HEIs, elective subjects are available in 90% of the HEIs and elective modules are available in 60% of

the HEIs. This means that the student has an opportunity to independently decide on the content and profile of the learning process within the general curricula. This choice is well supported by modular curricula and existence of major / minor system.

Alternative methods of education are Professional Higher education programs, under which a diploma of a certified specialist is conferred to the graduates having accumulated 120 – 180 credits. Professional higher education programs are shorter than BAs and fit within academic programs. Admission to these programs is easier – passing successfully the test in general abilities. One can transfer from the Higher Professional Education program to a BA program after passing relevant exams.

12 HEIs offer Professional Higher Education programs. Ministry of Education and Science, as well as the National Education Accreditation Center supported the HEIs in the development of these programs.

To promote student participation, the following procedures are in force:

- access to education; national unified exams are also offered in the language of minority communities;
- curriculum structure: elective courses (90% of HEIs); (elective) modules (60% of HEIs) major/minor structure; individual study programs (10% of the HEIs).
- financing: bank loans, state social support programs.

Joint Degrees and Programs

The preceding research revealed that the issue of academic degrees and joint programs needs major work; Many HEIs have inadequate understanding of the concept of joint degrees itself. This has been attested by the probing questions that some of the HEIs posed.

It is unknown what kind of diplomas shall be issued. This has to be agreed with European or other partners. There are not legal restrictions, but specific mechanisms need to be developed. There are impeding factors, like non-existence of detailed procedures. This questions need to be raised and the format for joint diplomas shall be

Georgian law “on Higher Education” does not restrict implementation of the joint programs or granting joint diplomas. However, details and mechanisms of administering joint programs have not been stipulated. Experts think that this issue shall be resolved according to the guidance under European standards.

Guiding principle here is that, if something is not restricted by law, then it is permissible. However, as we already mentioned, the challenge is the non-existence of specific mechanisms. It has not been agreed what format should the diploma from the joint academic program shall have. In Georgia, a specific form of the diploma had been approved (see a decree #281, dated from 8.06.2005 by the Minister of Education and Science, amendments to the same decree in 2006 and 2007). Currently, it is necessary to discuss the details regarding joint program degrees and decide on relevant normative regulations, so that the universities have real opportunities to work on joint academic programs.

Higher Education institutions think that the main impediment to the introduction of joint programs is limited funds. In addition to that, surveys and informal conversations with many respondents revealed that another impediment to launching joint programs is the low rating of Georgian universities or low awareness about Georgian universities in the West. European colleagues do not have enough trust in Georgian partners to collaborate on joint academic programs and degrees.

Currently, joint programs operate in 12 HEIs (approximately 20%). According to the data provided by HEIs, total number of joint academic programs in the accredited higher education institutions is fourteen. Joint programs are offered in private, as well as in state higher education institutions. In this regard, the difference among private and public institutions is not significant.

Situation regarding the joint programs is relatively better. Joint programs are offered in about 40% of the HEIs with total number of 51 programs. In one HEI maximum number of the joint programs is ten.

Average evaluation of the joint programs/degrees and collaboration with local and international HEIs on a five point scale is 1.91. at BA level, 1.98 at MA level and 1.93 at PhD level. There is not significant different among different levels of education.

Table #7 presents the disciplines in which joint programs/degrees operate.

Table #7 Joint Programs/ degrees by their popularity

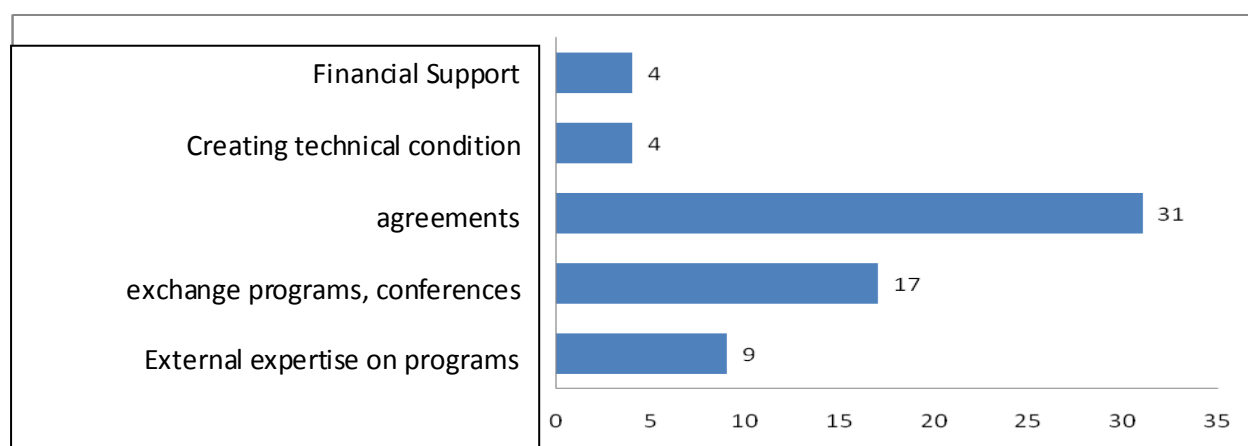
Discipline	HEI (quantity)
Business	6
Law	4
Pharmacy	4
Applied Biology	3
Medicine	3
European Studies	2
American Studies	2
Economy	2
German	1
Industry	1
French	1

Banking	1
Air trans exploitation	1
Social worker	1
Philosophy	1

Officially, there are no efforts made by the government of Georgia for the facilitation of joint degrees and programs. Experts think that this issue requires more attention. Universities are truly “autonomous” and independently try to collaborate with international partners.

Figure #15 presents current activities undertaken by the HEIs for the support of joint degrees and programs.

Figure #15 Activities to support joint programs/degrees (% of HEI)



Mobility

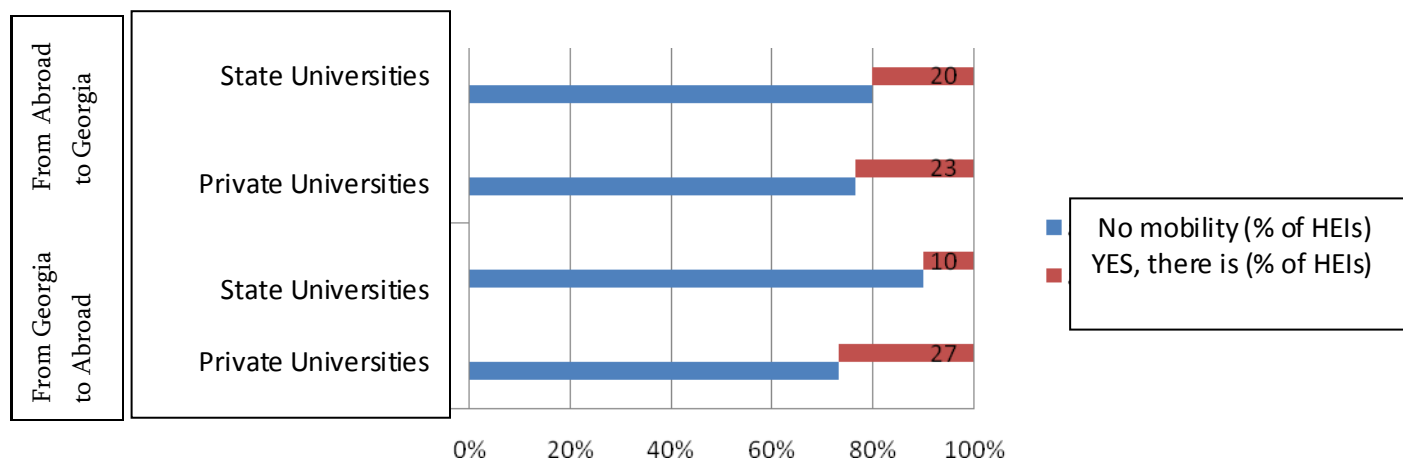
Student Mobility

Ratio of student mobility within the HEIs, among the HEIs and from abroad to Georgia has decreased in the last academic year (table #8). Decrease in internal mobility may be related to the completion of a large-scale re-organization process at universities. Number of students moving abroad for study is slightly increasing. Variety of international universities to which students are transferring is also diversifying. Ratio of external mobility (total number of students) is higher in several large-size universities. External mobility of students is higher from private HEIs (figure #16).

Table # 8 Internal and External Mobility of Students

	YES	NO	Maximum	Total	Median	Average	Standard Deviation
Inside the HEI 2007 - 2008	55%	45%	1198	1800	1	36	170.7
Inside the HEI 2008 - 2009	53%	47%	109	448	1	8.8	20.5
Among HEIs 2007-2008	80%	20%	835	2824	15	55.4	141.8
Among HEIs 2008-2009	85%	15%	505	1795	12	35.2	85.5
From Abroad to Georgia 2007-2008	16%	84%	29	41	0	0.8	4.1
From Abroad to Georgia 2008-2009	10%	90%	2	8	0	0.2	0.5
from Georgia to Abroad 2007-2008	12%	88%	4	9	0	0.2	0.6
from Georgia to Abroad 2008-2009	16%	84%	10	27	0	0.5	1.7

Figure #16 External Mobility of Students by Private and State Universities



According to the data on internal mobility (table #9) there were 10 most popular fields with biggest number of applications. Rate of competition in each field varied by universities.

Table #9 Openings by Fields

Subject Field	Average number of applications/ openings	N	Standard Deviation	min.	max.
Directing Drama	5.0	1		5	5
Pharmacy	3.2	2	4.02	0.31	6
Medicine	2.8	7	3.25	0.17	9.6
Architecture	2.1	1		2.1	2.1

Law	2.1	1		2.1	2.1
Social Sciences	1.9	3	0.95	0.9	2.8
Law	1.3	8	1.61	0.3	5
American Studies	1.2	1		1.2	1.2
Art	1.1	7	0.70	0.2	2
Business	1.0	14	0.68	0.2	2.7
Humanitarian	0.9	6	0.77	0.12	2
Finances, banking and insurance	0.8	3	0.45	0.4	1.3
Marine Engineering	0.7	1		0.7	0.7
Agriculture and Forestry	0.6	9	0.39	0.03	0.9
Information Technologies	0.4	2	0	0.44	0.44
Languages	0.3	2	0.30	0.12	0.55
Natural and Exact Sciences	0.3	5	0.17	0.17	0.6
Pedagogy	0.3	3	0.46	0	0.8
Engineering-technical department	0.3	2	0.21	0.1	0.4

Mobility of Academic Personnel

Ration of mobility among academic personnel has also decreased in the last academic year. Number of those HEIs that invite academic personnel from abroad increased. About one fifth of the HEIs send their academic personnel abroad for research or study (table #10).

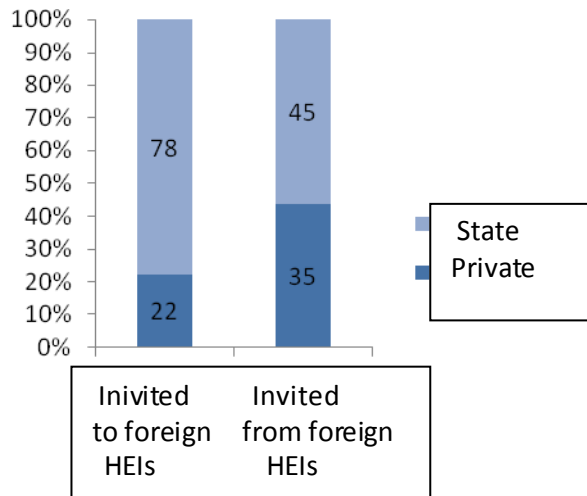
Table #10 Mobility of Academic Personnel

	NO	YES	Min	max	sum	average	Standard Deviation
Invited from a foreign HEI (2007-2008)	65%	35%	0	58	133	3	8.5
Invited from a foreign HEI (2008-2009)	60%	40%	0	39	88	2	5.7
Invited to foreign HEI (2007-2008)	73%	27%	0	52	96	2	7.4
Invited to foreign HEI (2008-2009)	82%	18%	0	18	38	1	2.7

Number of invited academic personnel in private and state HEIs is almost the same, while the invitations of academic personnel abroad is primarily from state universities (figure #17).

Professors noted during the focus groups that low rate of personnel mobility is linked to the poor command of foreign languages. Knowledge of English language is higher in students, therefore opportunities for mobility is higher.

Figure # 17 External Mobility of Academic Personnel by Private and State HEIs



With the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia a letter to European Union Countries on behalf of the government of Georgia had been prepared. With the letter, the government of Georgia is requesting more liberal regulations on issuing European Union visas to the students and academic personnel of Georgia. European students and professors have no challenges with obtaining visas when coming to Georgia. European Union residents do not at all need to obtain any visa.

65% of the HEIs take some steps to support external mobility of students and academic personnel. All HEIs recognize the international academic experience of students. It is a priority for universities to recognize the credits accumulated by students at universities abroad as long as the ENIC-NARIC service approves the authenticity of the academic studies. All leading HEIs have established specific procedures for this process.

60% of the HEIs provide some kind of financial support, 30% of HEIs provide accommodation. Universities identified other forms of support towards the process of external mobility such as: raising awareness of students and academic personnel about the advantages of mobility, intensive foreign language courses, agreements concluded with partner universities and scientific-research centers; Exchange programs for students and academic personnel; joint scientific conferences for students, joining international network of HEIs.

Disciplines

Higher education institutions listed the disciplines, within which there is high student and personnel mobility abroad.

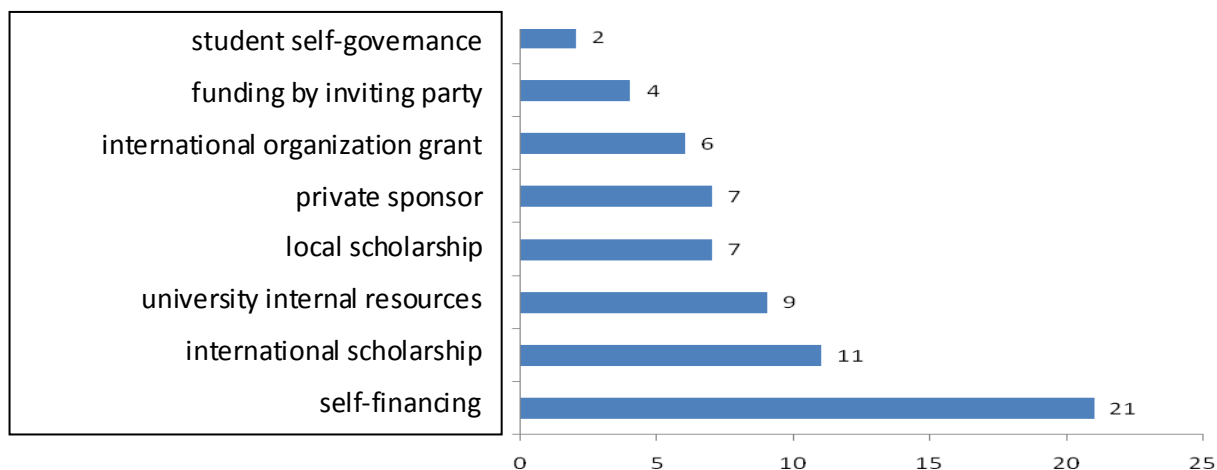
Student and academic personnel mobility is high in the fields of medicine, stomatology, public health, pharmacy, natural and humanitarian sciences, law and business, French, conserving biology,

environmental studies. In terms of academic personnel mobility numbers are high in pedagogy, Caucasian studies, history, bio-chemistry and psychology.

Funding Outer mobility

Mobility of students and professors (departure from Georgia or arrival from abroad) is usually self-funded or financed by foreign donor organizations. Most common way for funding study abroad is self-financing. (figure #18).

Figure #18 Forms of funding study abroad (% of HEIs)



Donor organizations/programs within which the students or academic personnel go abroad for teaching or study, are the following:

- Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP)
- Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State
- WHO
- Erasmus Mundus (LOT 5)
- Foundation “Open Society Georgia”
- Georgia FDF Program
- Irish Aid
- TEMPUS
- DAAD

- Fulbright foundation
- Volkswagen foundation
- Thuringia Federal region (Germany)
- Yale University
- Friedrich Schieler University for doctoral studies
- ZBA
- IREX
- NED – National Foundation of Democracy
- British Council
- Humboldt Foundation
- American Councils
- Onassis International Charity Foundation
- Costopulo foundation
- Greek Scientific Academy Costa and Helen Uranisis foundation
- European Commission Project (TACIS): “European Institute of Research”
- International Education Center
- UN Development Program
- World Bank Project: “International School of Economy”
- USAID

A program implemented by the Development and Reforms Foundation of the President of Georgia shall be highlighted here. This program finances MA studies in leading foreign universities since 2005. Throughout 2005-2007, 160 MA students had been funded. In 2007, 2 million GEL had been allocated to the foundation. The program mainly funds students from law, business administration, economy, international relations, architecture, urban management, medicine and communications, public administration programs (source: www.drf.org.ge).

From 2008, with the initiative of the government of Georgia, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in collaboration with the local banks started subsidizing the loans for MA student candidates in international higher education institutions. Loans are issued without mortgage requirement, with 3 year deferring period and for a 10 year term. Annual interest rate for such student loans is 9%. This program helped 60 students who continued MA studies in European or American universities mainly in MA programs in business administration, finances and law. Annual budget of the program was 6 million GEL. Half of this budget was issued by the Ministry of Education and Science, while the other half was allocated by the banks. During the 6-month period, 2.5. million GEL had been spent within the program and 60 students were given a loan.

Embassy of United States in Georgia together with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is launching a new three-year program in 2009. One of the goals of this program is to send post-graduate students from Georgia to the leading universities in US to conduct research projects. This program will be partially funded by the government of Georgia with the annual budget of 100 000 USD.

Mobility of Grants and Loans

Currently, grants and loans are only internally mobile in Georgia. There is a formula: “Money follows the student”. Internationally, there is no other precedent of grant transfers from one university to another.

There have been no specific measures taken to facilitate internal mobility of grants and loans. If a student transfers within universities in Georgia, s/he can negotiate with the bank individually to transfer loans as well. In case of international mobility, loan transfers are not possible.

Recognition of Credits Accumulated in previous study programs

In Georgia, an only avenue for admission to higher education is successful completion of Unified National Examination. If, for any reasons, a student is expelled from a university and later wants to re-enroll, s/he is required to pass the Unified National Examination again.

According to the decree #120 (16.02.2007) by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia “Credits accumulated within an accredited higher educational program before the enrolment to another higher education institution, may be recognized by the higher education institution, where the person continues or starts to study”.

Student mobility among universities operates based on the above regulation. Universities have individual procedures, within which the compatibility of competencies acquired by the students in specific educational programs is determined and the credits are recognized respectively.

Social Dimension of Bologna Process

Georgian higher education system is represented by diverse strata of local society – in terms of national, geographical and gender representation.

Introduction of Unified National Exams (in 2005) practically eliminated the corruption as an impeding factor to the accessibility to higher education. Formally free higher education was also revoked in 2005. The same year, the government started to give out meritocratic and social grants. Both grant programs are designed to cover the university tuition fees fully or partially. It should be highlighted that the grants are issued to the students of private HEIs as well. This means that voucher system instituted in Georgian educational system applied to higher education system as well. Since 2005, meritocratic grants fully financed the tuition for state HEIs. Starting from 2006, the grants were diversified and 100%, 70%, 50%, 30% tuition waivers were offered through government funding.

Year	Number of Applications	Number of Students Enrolled	Number of Students who received waivers	State Expenditures on higher education grants
2005	31.171	16.507 (53%)	4188 (25%)	GEL 6 400 000 (Approximately USD 3,250,000)
2006	32.791	19.479 (59%)	8273 (42%)	GEL 6 500 000 (Approximately USD 3,420,000)
2007	39.278	15.444	7881	GEL 6 500 000 (Approximately USD 3,420,000)

In addition to that, state social grants are issued to students from mountainous areas, conflict regions, minority communities, refugees and children of families who lost a member in the war. State assistance to socially underprivileged students is provided at BA level. However, in case of refugees and students residing in conflict zones state assistance applies to all three levels of higher education. Social programs are funded mainly by the Ministry of Education and Science, Social Services department and Cultural Municipal services of City hall, banking system, internal resources of the universities and student self-governance. Number of beneficiaries of social programs is 1868 (4% of the total number of students). It should be noted here, that this number maybe a little higher

than the actual number of beneficiaries, since one student may be benefiting from several programs simultaneously.

As a result of the negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Science and local banks students started to receive loans from 2006. Interest rates for student loans ranged between 14% and 18%. In 2007, 5 500 students received a student loan in the total amount of 6 million GEL.

2009 state budget incorporated funds for student vouchers at BA level and scholarships for the second and third level of higher education (MA and PhD state scholarships). Unfortunately, due to the consequences of Russian intervention state funding at MA and PhD level is being delayed for the upcoming years.

National minorities of Georgia are represented in 90% of the higher education institutions. Ratio of national minorities among total number of students is 4.3 %. In two HEIs, share of national minorities exceeds 10%. There are no differences noted among state and private universities.

Unified National Exams take the rights of minorities into account – exam tests are available in the languages of minorities residing in Georgia – in Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Ossetian and Abkhazian languages.

HEIs indicate a problem of student owing as of average importance (average rate 2.8 on a 5 point scale, standard deviation – 1.5). Half of the higher education institutions have not expelled any students due to financial debt. Number of expelled students ranges up to 5% of the total pool of students, while the average rate is 3%. One of the outliers, with a 26% ratio of expelled students is Zugdidi Meskhia State University.

In some cases, university applicants are compelled to choose least desired HEIs due to lower tuition rates. On the other hand, system of student loans is already well developed in Georgia to ensure funding the university tuitions.

I. Prospects of Bologna Process Implementation in Georgia

All respondents of the research were asked a question about the challenges and prospects of Bologna process implementation in Georgia. It should be noted, that despite the status or experience of the respondents (a student vs. a professor, Ministry representative vs. independent expert), responses about the potential challenges were very similar. Perspectives on future opportunities were somewhat different among respondents.

Challenges related to the Bologna process implementation may be divided in several categories:

1. Limited time for the implementation of the reform and speedy introduction of Bologna process principles – Georgia officially became part of the Bologna process in May 2005 (though major requirements of the Bologna process were incorporated in the law on Higher Education – 12.2004, i.e. prior to officially joining Bologna process). Unlike other European countries, we joined the Bologna process later and with relatively difficult initial conditions, while the deadline for achieving the goals is the same for all countries and it is 2010.
2. Not all members of the Bologna process have a full understanding of the Bologna principles. Even today many members have a very broad information about the implications of the Bologna process. University professors, for example, do not fully understand the goals of the process, while they possess the methods, like credit system, which without the understanding the ultimate goal is just used formally. Many respondents relate Bologna process with such sensitive aspects of reform as reducing university staffing levels. Research revealed that there is an obvious lack of awareness or misrepresentation of information – attitudes to the reform are strictly imperative; decisions are made from the top in official structures, while there is a lot of work to be done out on a community level.
3. Lack of resources – financial, as well as intellectual. Experts especially emphasize shortage of education managers, who need to lead the reforms in the

In the context of Bologna process implementation, one of the significant achievements is the formation of good normative framework for future actions: there is legislation in place; it is time to start implementing it.

Expert

We should have an understanding of why we choose this path. Then we should develop a framework in a cultural context and be adapted to different spheres.

Student

When the goal was set that by 2010 we will achieve some results within Bologna process, it was necessary to profoundly study current situation in certain countries, in order to understand to what extent were the goals realistic in our context.

Professor

universities. Lack of financial resources, on the other hand, decreases competition on the market – universities find it hard to attract highly qualified specialists. This in the end is reflected on the quality of learning and research.

4. Lack of information about the higher education system of Georgia and a consequent lack of trust from Western colleagues.
5. Low involvement of social partners; gap between the academic and professional fields; lack of horizontal linkages among universities.

Georgia needs to take significant steps for the implementation of strategies under “European Higher Education in Global Context”. It was planned to develop “Strategy for International Collaboration”. The work should have started in September, but due to the August conflict in Georgia, funding was cut and no work had begun in this direction; the project was delayed until 2009.

Bologna Process Implementation Prospects in Georgia:

With the clear priorities in mind and properly planned action plan, it is very realistic to implement Bologna process in Georgia. For the ultimate success in this process, except for the financial resources, interested parties should be well-informed. And it is not about the formal delivery of the information to interested parties, but its actual understanding.

Research respondents, considering the principles of Bologna process, identified the following aspects for the successful reform:

1. Developing a general strategy for education; defining vertical and horizontal linkages clearly;
2. Active collaboration with European colleagues; internationalization of the processes, more specifically:
 - Increasing participation of international professors in the educational process,
 - Developing joint programs;
 - Implementing joint research projects;
 - Increased participation of international experts in quality assurance matters;
 - Increasing mobility of students and professors.
3. Programmatic accreditation, as a guarantee for quality higher education.

II. Major Findings and Recommendations

Higher education reforms have achieved a lot of progress since 2005 up to today. Based on the analysis of the outcomes, it may be concluded that at a formal level Bologna process implementation is progressing well in Georgia: Despite some flaws, current legislation serves as a solid legal basis for the implementation of all major requirements of Bologna process: In all higher education institutions there are three-level programs, credit system is established at BA and MA level in all universities, and in most universities at doctoral level as well, all higher education institutions issue diploma with transcripts. Two areas to be improved are the mechanisms of granting **joint academic degrees** and procedures of **recognizing credits from previous study programs**.

Research also identified challenges to actual enforcement of Bologna principles: universities fulfill the requirements, introduce new mechanisms, though information is never or rarely shared. At least vast majority of the participants do not understand what they are doing and why. General impression is that, the higher education institutions implement initiatives of Bologna principles only because these processes are vital for the purpose of institutional accreditation of higher educational institutions. Thus, the formal regulations are adhered to, but the process lacks **genuine understanding and authentic quality control**.

- Universities shall have increased **autonomy** in the process of strategy development and implementation. Currently they are dependent on the Ministry of Education and Science and hence the process is directed from top to bottom. During the external quality control, participation of social partners and other interested groups should increase as well.
- Currently student self-governances do not function adequately, there are no associations of rectors and professors, there is no dialogue among higher education institutions, the practice of peer review works very poorly so far. It is necessary to establish **horizontal networks**, increase participation of different interested parties in the process of internal and external quality assurance processes and ensure transparency of the procedures.
- Educational programs do not reflect realistic market needs – partly because ongoing efficient dialogue is absent with professional circles and partly because the professional circles themselves are not able to clearly express their needs. It is necessary to strengthen the **connections among academic and professional fields**.
- Ratio of external mobility is very low presently (especially as it relates to academic personnel) and this number tends to even decrease gradually. It is recommended to improve the mechanisms of administering **joint programs** and **joint academic degrees**, as well as **mechanisms of recognizing credits previous study programs**.

- **Career paths** are not clearly defined – higher education institutions rarely work with potential students in this direction. University applicants do not have information on higher education programs and further employment opportunities. As a result students are usually concentrated in one or two dominant subject fields.
- Higher education institutions have not clearly developed their **mission and vision**. **Research potential** of universities needs to be improved significantly. Currently, having a funded thesis for PhD is not a requirement for PhD program admissions in most of the universities. Supporting a structured research-based doctoral programs is possible through external mechanisms, for example by introducing certain incentives in National Scientific Foundations grants for integrated research projects, which will then serve as the basis for doctoral programs.
- There need to be important steps taken in **internationalizing** quality improvement process (at the national level as well). Presently, one of the most important objectives for Georgia is to obtain an ENQA (European Network of Quality Assurance) membership for the National Accreditation Center. Involvement of international experts in quality assurance system will significantly increase transparency and trust towards the higher education system of Georgia.
- In general, it is very challenging to lead the reform unless all parties involved have a full understanding of the process and well-established strategy. Current reforms lack clear framework and openly declared goals. Number of universities have not developed a clear mission, while at a national level main priorities and stages of higher education development have not been established. Some obvious consequences of these conditions are the regular legislative changes and amendments and volatile budget for Education and Science.
- Georgia needs to do a lot of work towards the implementation of the strategy - “European Higher Education in Global Context”. It was planned to develop “Strategy for International Collaboration”. The work should have started in September, but due to the August conflict, funding was cut and no work had begun in this direction; the project was delayed until 2009. **Well-developed strategy for Higher Education** will significantly contribute to effective implementation of the reform.