

## Realities of internationalization of higher education in Georgia

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Internationalization of higher education has gained more significance in recent years with the purpose of improving the quality of education and promoting competitiveness of higher educational institutions. Internationalization embraces the mobility of students and academic staff, joint educational programs, and international cooperation within the framework of different research projects

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Globalization has created better conditions for the information exchange, technological, and economic activities of people. However, this process has always needed proper adaptation and special preparations. Therefore, unless the expenditure for education increases, particularly in the underdeveloped countries, the inequality between the two worlds will enhance further.

Education and science are closely related to other fields of social life including economics. A human being needs mainly two things most of all: the first - obtaining skills for physical or material activity, what is closely related to economics and the second, sufficient competence to fully meet the spiritual needs that depend on the development of the educational system.

Georgia is characterized by the feature natural to every cultural state, that is, it cannot live in isolation from other countries. Through active cooperation and exchange of cultural values, the country permanently promotes its culture and develops its own cultural phenomenon, which can clearly be distinguished from other cultures. The history of the Georgian culture clearly evidences that the western values were not alien to the Georgian world and that the two worlds have never conflicted in this respect. Some of those values appeared in Georgia during the ancient times and took lead of the same Western European values, while others fell relatively back. However, the main thing is that both worlds have much in common and are much similar in many respects.

The fact that one of the fourteen world alphabets is Georgian serves as evidence for the ancient roots of Georgian education. According to the Georgian legend, the first Georgian alphabet was created by Pharnavaz I, the first king of Iberia as far back as in the 3rd century BC. However, there is no earlier proof of this fact at hand. Furthermore, the most ancient Georgian literary monument survived to the present days: *The Martyrdom of Shushaniki* was written in the 5th century and the greatest international poem "The Knight in Panther's Skin" was created in the 12th century.

The historical and cultural development of Georgia was primarily promoted by its geographical location. Georgia is the country situated on the crossroads of big trade routes spread along the borders of two continents, namely Europe and Asia. The country located in the Caucasus isthmus, was situated in the area of the

greatest centers of the Mediterranean and Near East. Owing to its location, Georgia had close contacts with many countries and peoples from the ancient times. In Georgia, due to its geopolitical reality, different cultures and religions got interwoven. It is known that in 529, by the order of the Emperor Justinian I Athens School of Philosophy was closed and antique philosophical studies were prohibited. Dogmatism and Christian ideology became the ideology of Greek officials, which was fought by Ioane Italos, the representative of Byzantine renaissance and Ioane Petritsi, a Georgian philosopher with their unique world-view (Tevzadze, 2006).

Naturally, preaching these ideas could not be painless. Ioane Petritsi was patronized by Gregory Bakurianisdze, a great Georgian official in the Byzantine Empire, who, in 1083, founded Petritzonitissa Seminary in Bachkovo near Plovdiv, on the territory of present Bulgaria. It was here, where he gave shelter to Ioane Petritsi and gave an opportunity to his talent to flourish. Later, Ioane Petritsi was patronized by David the Builder, the King of Georgia (1089-1125), who offered the gifted scholar to continue his creative work at Gelati Academy (Nikoleishvili, 2000). The king of Georgian state founded another educational hearth, Ikalto Academy and appointed Arsen of Iqato, a similarly noticeable person, as its head.

An efficient way of consolidating cultures, languages, and religions is not their isolation what leads to the degradation of nations, but contacts and mutual enrichment. The civilizations cooperate and compete with one another, but conflict between them has never been the major spring in the history. The universal civilization is not a mere sum of individual civilizations, but a substrate of the experience and knowledge accumulated in the course of history showing a human essence and recognized as a common property of the mankind.

In Old Tbilisi, only one square kilometer area gives space to the houses of worship of five different confessions, but there has never been any conflict between them. On the contrary, the representatives of different confessions are so close to each other that marriages can be observed among them. This is one of the greatest examples of internalization of education and culture.

Nowadays according to the United Nations Organizations and World Bank data, the discrepancy between the states is increasing. In terms of marketization and neoliberalism, the Georgian government is unable to invest sufficient funds in education and as a result, people without funds are unable to take the advantage of the results of globalization.

Under the Budget Law of Georgia for 2013, the amount assigned for education and science equals approximately 8% of the budgetary assignments. Under the draft budget for 2013, the financing of the Ministry of Education of Georgia is to increase by 40 million Gel (Ministry of Finance of Georgia, 2013).

At present there are 128 higher institutions in Georgia (20 state and 108 private) with 1 027 000 students. The ratio between students and whole population of the country is 234 students per 10.000 people. The Ministry of Education and Science has made a decision about financing 17 specialties of the leading branches of Baccalaureate at higher educational institutions, in particular, agronomy, veterinary, educational sciences, teachers' education, engineering physics, power engineering, and building. Furthermore, the tuition fees of such specialties, as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, economics, archeology, and history along with history of Georgia, philology, and philosophy will be fully compensable.

Financing of the state educational system constitutes approximately 5.05% of GDP in recent years, which is 7.5 times more than private financing (0.67%). As regards Georgia, the indicator is 1.75% only (Ministry of Finance of Georgia, 2013).

Internationalization of higher education has gained more importance in recent years with the purpose of improving the quality of education and promoting competitiveness of higher educational institutions. Internationalization covers the mobility of students and academic staff, and joint educational programs, international cooperation within the limits of different research projects.

The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement operates in Georgia that aims at promoting the integration among Georgian educational institutions in international educational arena. In order to achieve this goal, the Center actively cooperates with similar EU organizations, international organizations, and experts. The Center facilitates the organization of summits, seminars, and conferences at the international level. In order to promote internationalization process, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement recognizes full general, vocational, and higher education and the education gained during one's study abroad. In addition to the authentication of educational documents, the Center sets the compatibility of foreign qualifications with the effective qualifications in Georgia.

During the two-year cooperation between the European Union and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in the framework of TWINING-CEIBAL project, the Recognition Manual was prepared. The goal of the manual is to establish the system of recognition in compliance with international standards and to ensure its compatibility with Lisbon Convention and corresponding documents. The recognition of education is essential to promote international education and mobility of students, academic staff, and researchers.

As regards the direction of the strategic development of Georgian Technical University, it relies on the basic paradigms of European educational environment known to the society as Bologna, Lisbon, Copenhagen Process, and Lisbon Convention. It should be noted that an urgent systematic need for the university's quality management and assurance is sharing international experience accumulated in the well-respected directives of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) developed in 1991 and are determinative of the novelties of sustainable development for GTU Quality Management and Assurance strategy in a qualitative respect.

An imperative question is the unification of educational programs with the basic international educational criteria allowing the graduates to be on the same level with other countries' professionals in their rights.

The modern system of education is enriched with new organizational structure, such as distant learning, virtual classes, digital labs, and others. Moreover, e-university technologies must be created and introduced, which will be a new step in the development of traditional, distant, and online classes. There are a number of projects realized in this direction. For instance, in the field of vocational training, essential results are achieved in establishing contacts among different educational establishments with vocational training courses (vocational colleges, public colleges, universities) in different regions of Georgia with the initiative of Georgian Technical University, through the university's center. At present, this group unites four regions what makes the vocational development of studying and teaching methodologies by using e-teaching methods and techniques possible for the students and teachers.

In 2009-2011, first attempts to establish a venture capital fund at Georgian Technical University managed by the Departments of Science and Commercialization and Office of Perspective Development were made. 90% of the financed scientific projects have yielded significant theoretical and most importantly, practical results at the University and beyond it. For instance, GTU's power supply monitoring system SCADA, contributing to the power consumption

optimization at the University, was realized and introduced. At the same time, this system is an academic and scientific laboratory for masters and PhD students.

Furthermore, biometric technology for student registration is being realized and introduced. This technology will improve the transparency of the teaching process, enable the impartial and accurate registration in addition to reducing material expenses. The given technologies are novel in Georgia and the introduced systems are a favorable basis for accomplishing scientific and research works in the field of biometric technologies. Other examples include mining gold from gold-containing quartzite ores with a microbiological method, technology to obtain hydrocarbon nanotubes, nanoparticles, nanowires, and new nano-composites, obtaining new diamond-composite materials in drilling tools, designing new technological equipment to obtain ecologically pure bio-fuel, designing a modern system to control hydropower stations and many others.

At present, a certain proportion of the designed technologies are considered to be an export oriented product. Some developed countries, such as Japan, Germany, and the UK have shown interest in these technologies. The present achievements stimulate the planning of a quick increase in the venture capital fund to make the University a polygon to generate and introduce modern technologies.

One of the functions of the Commercialization Department established at GTU in 2009 is the establishment of general-conceptual topology of GTU's industrial park and its introduction to the university scientific branch, where after the relevant expertise, the Office of Perspective Development has to organize a concrete cluster and industrial site, entrepreneurial, and technological base. It should be noted that the rich engineering intellect of GTU cherishes hope for the swift realization of a number of topical projects and production project proposals in material science, special processing instruments, building materials, agro-biotechnologies, bioengineering, soil science, automated control systems, medical instrument engineering, and in other branches.

It is true that the special scientific literature long ago recognized that each civilization is a unique and inimitable phenomenon and has its own way of development, specificity and regularities, but the fact that the mankind is based on the idea of unity and diversity of such a union should not be forgotten. Therefore, the world civilization is a unity that is a system with regional and local civilizations having the structural and functional relations with it.

## **Conclusion**

Like many centuries ago, the Georgian society carefully looks at the western civilization and various contacts between the students and lecturers of the Georgian Technical University and their participation in different exchange programs will help all the participants to develop curricula and studying methodology and obtain and further develop new teaching materials. The hope rests on the belief that the modern education system is based on the humanistic principles, being a valuable achievement of the mankind, which fosters the feeling of respect to the fundamental human rights, mutual support, and solidarity among the people and whole society.

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