

# Aspects of internationalization in higher education

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Internationalization in higher education and relations with other scholars offer important opportunities for co-operation among universities. Current paper briefly considers how these exchanges have recently been employed to broaden the basic scientific base at the institutions of higher education in Georgia.

**Keywords:** Internationalization of higher education, Georgian Technical University, educational cooperation, scientific research

## Introduction

Internationalization of the higher education is an international principle that has to be undertaken as an integrated process, which will be generally recognized and accepted by the international community. Bologna Process aims to make higher education more attractive to students from other parts of the world and to facilitate intra-European mobility. However, numerous other activities are necessary to stimulate mobility and Bologna Process itself pursues many other objectives.

## Grounds for internationalization in higher education

The globalization of economy has had its impact on and has largely been influenced by research and education. After the Second World War and in the context of the Cold War, higher education has been at the centre of social, political, and economic developments during the process of regionalization (i.e. European Union, Northern American Free Trade Agreement, and others). Higher education has been challenged by these developments both from the inside and outside in redefining and/or reconfirming its historic role as the centre of universal knowledge and understanding. Terms such as international education, multicultural education, comparative education, cross-cultural education, and global education are the expressions of the mentioned developments.

The trend of international educational exchange expanded after the Second World War, initially in the USA and Soviet Union, the two new superpowers that emerged after the war. Both superpowers had clear political reasons for promoting international educational exchange and cooperation, namely, to gain a better understanding of the rest of the world and to maintain and even expand their sphere of influence. Europe was still heavily focused on recovering from the severe wounds of two world wars and on reconstruction and was not able to invest in international educational exchange and cooperation. Many of its academics were either a victim of the wars or migrated to other parts of the world, mainly, to the US, Canada, and Australia.

Internationalization of the higher education occurs at national, branch, and institutional levels, at which the purposes, functions, and the mechanism of providing educational services gain the international character. Internationalization of education becomes an object and a subject of purposeful policy from the state, focused on the solution of national, political, social, and economic problems. These are the rationales for the internationalization of education. According to this argument, internationalization of education has a positive effect on technological development and thus, on economic growth. Current argument is for both public and private sectors, which is perhaps the most important reason for the investment in international cooperation in higher education.

Another aspect of the economic growth rationale is the potential investment in future relations. This particular aspect of internationalization of education has been the main reason for many governments to offer scholarship programs for foreign students in the hope that they will become the future decision-makers of their native countries, who will then remember with gratitude their host country that had contributed to their personal development. It is hoped that such investment will result in the favored treatment of former host countries when negotiating international agreements. Germany can be shown as a country employing this rationale in offering thousands of scholarships to Russian students in management studies. It must be stated that this particular German program has served as a reason for taking an initiative by the government of Georgia. Priorities were drawn for the country and students were sent to different countries for Masters Programs to study agriculture, newest technological advancements, and other subjects.

Another ground for internationalization in higher education is closely related to the economic argument and it is the labor market argument. The demand in the labor market in a globalized economy is frequently used by politicians and international educators as a reason for internationalization of the labor market. However, the views of employers and labor market itself may be less clear in the need for 'international' graduates. There is some evidence that representatives of the private sector, in particular the multinational companies, are less outspoken on this matter than politicians and educators. Huebner (1994), for example, found out that international education was, at best, a fifth concern for a company looking for staff for an international assignment. However, the knowledge acquired from leading universities is extremely useful for a developing country such as Georgia, because the more individuals with international education a developing country has, the more it will be developed in the relevant spheres.

Internationalization activities, such as education based on paying tuition fee, admission of foreign students, and international education advisory service can be initiated for income generation purposes. For instance, the more are the foreign students paying high tuition fees, the higher is the economic return and the less the national government needs to invest in higher education. Within Europe, at present, this situation can be largely observed in the British higher education system.

In 1979 the UK government adopted a full-fee policy (the requirement that students pay a tuition fee equivalent to the 'real cost' of their education) with regard to students from outside the European Community. As a consequence, the internationalization of higher education in the UK has been understood in that manner. Indeed, many administrators in British higher education institutions have seen the exchange of students, where there is no net income gain, as an expensive burden rather than as something to stimulate.

Internationalization of research can be seen as interplay between internal and external driving forces and as responses made to those forces at institutional and individual levels within the research system. Among the outputs of this

internationalization more internationally co-authored publications and patents, international conferences, and research programs and projects, as well as contacts among individuals, institutions, and states can be seen. Along with these responses to the driving forces, there are also validations of output through evaluations, statistics, and benchmarking of research, its results, and the functioning of the research system.

## **Internationalization of higher education in Georgia**

In every culture the task of direct expression of that culture is performed by educational condition of it. When considering the history of Georgian higher education, it can be seen that its roots go deeply into the centuries. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia had already had its higher education school, which was known as 'Kolkheti Academy'. Great philosophers were raised in that academy, where philosophy and rhetoric were the main subjects taught in the academy.

The declaration of Christianity as an official religion in the 4th century and creation of a new written language in the 5th century reinforced literary and philosophic activities in the churches and monasteries. The 11th and 12th centuries assume the building of Gelati, Ikalto, and Gremi, which were famous Academies.

The first higher education institution of the Caucasian region, Georgian Technical University, was founded in 1917. The name of the institution was changed several times - in 1922 it became a Polytechnic Faculty of Tbilisi State University; in 1928 it emerged as an independent institute - Georgian Polytechnic Institute (GPI); in the '70s it had 15 full time and 13 part time faculties; in 1990 it was granted a university status and was given its present name - Georgian Technical University; in 2007 it was accredited by the National Centre for Educational Accreditation. At the university, internationalization involves students and academic staff mobility, joint educational programs, and research projects within the framework of international cooperation. The strategic development of the State Technical University of Georgia is based on the basic paradigms of educational environment, which is known as: Bologna, Lisbon, and Copenhagen processes and Lisbon Convention.

Georgian Technical University is the leading educational and scientific research institution, which offers facilities for higher education and scientific research based on international experience and innovation. Researchers pursue different scientific directions with the help of other highly qualified researchers and students at university laboratories and scientific centers.

The principles of European Universities' Great Charter and Bologna declaration are followed by the university, which is oriented on the ideals of democracy and humanism. The mission of Georgian Technical University is to expand the borders of knowledge and educate people in such a way in order to promote healthy, humane, and democratic development of the society through professional activities and scientific achievements based on honesty and hard work, for the good of the state and mankind. While the State Technical University of Georgia puts forth such a mission, the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement aims at promoting the integration of Georgian educational institutions in international educational arena and at enhancing the credibility towards them. In order to achieve the stated goal, the centre actively cooperates with relevant bodies of European Union, international organizations, and experts. The center facilitates the organization of summits, seminars, and conferences at international level. In order to promote the internationalization process, the centre undertakes the recognition of secondary, vocational, and higher education as well

as the recognition of the period of education. Together with the authenticity of educational documents, the centre undertakes the compatibility procedures of foreign qualifications with existing qualifications in Georgia. The National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement is actively cooperating with international organizations operating in Georgia, Ministries of Education, and accreditation agencies of different countries in order to enhance the quality of general, vocational, and higher educational programs.

During the two-year cooperation of European Union and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia within the framework of TWINING-CEIBAL project, the Recognition Manual was produced. The purpose 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 for the promotion of international education, students, academic staff, and researchers' mobility.

Georgian Technical University hopes together with other higher educational institutions of the whole world to discuss further such actual problems as freedom in the sphere of scientific research, justice in education, combination science and humanity, education and society in addition to many other issues that will not only promote the enhancement of internationalization of the higher education, but also the development of domestic higher education.

## **Conclusion**

Internationalization of the higher education is an international principle that has to be undertaken as an integrated process, which will be generally recognized and accepted by the international community. In order to achieve the internationalization of higher education, each educational establishment has to fulfill certain tasks. As for the Georgian Technical University, it hopes together with other higher educational institutions to contribute to the development of education that combines national and international elements. Mutual understanding, trust, and respect have been and will be the cornerstone, based on which friendly relations will be established and close cooperation will be maintained.

## **References**

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