

Accessibility of Higher Education in Georgia – Accessibility Criteria

Proposals For Public Policy

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DARE - „Developing Programs for Access of Disadvantaged Groups of People and Regions to
Higher Education”

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Goals

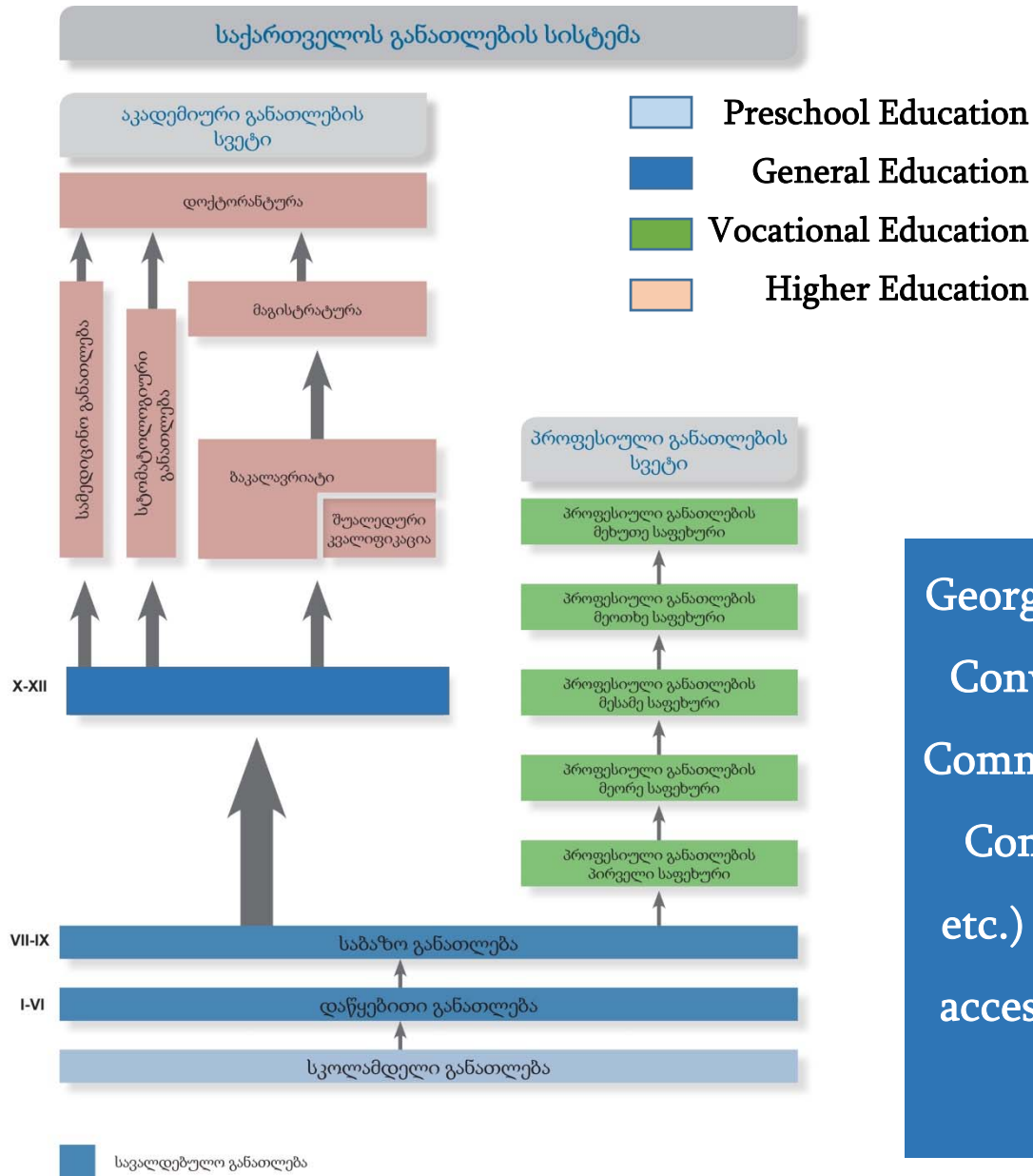
1. To support initiation of the complex vision and research on the various components of accessibility
2. To elaborate recommendations for improvement of higher education accessibility in Georgia

Methodology and organization of study

Study was organized into following directions:

- ✓ Overview and analysis of existing main State programs, strategies, legislation and literature focusing on HE accessibility;
- ✓ Identification of draft criteria of accessibility;
- ✓ Analysis of existing situation according to draft criteria and their correlation; Identification of challenges of accessibility according to each;
- ✓ Conducting Interviews and small-scale survey;
- ✓ Conclusions and recommendations.

General Information



Georgia is a part of: Bologna Process, (Lisbon Convention, Sorbonne Declaration, Berlin Communiqué, Bergen Communiqué, London Communiqué, Leuven Communiqué and etc.) thus admitted to the quality, mobility, accessibility and social dimension of higher education

Analysis of State programs, strategies, legislation and literature

Is accessibility of higher education stated as a challenge in the Government Strategies and Programs?

#	State Document	Accessible HE
1,	Strategy of Social and Economic Development – Georgia 2020 (GoG, 17.06.2014)	yes
2.	Strategic directions of Development of Education and Science System of Georgia (MoES, 2014, draft)	yes
3.	Country Basic Data and Direction (GoG, 2016-2019, draft)	yes

Analysis of state programs, strategies, legislation and literature

1. Strategy of Social and Economic Development – Georgia 2020 (17.06.2014)

- Quality and **accessible education at all levels** is priority of the Government of Georgia
 - To create competitive human capital it is important to **raise accessibility of Higher Education** and create effective financial mechanisms
 - The **Model of financing** of higher education will be improved
 - To decline the social risks created by poverty of population **and to support vulnerable groups** to participate in Social and Economic life of the State
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2. Strategic directions of Development of Education and Science System of Georgia (MoES, 2014, draft)

- Among priorities: equity, **accessibility** and inclusiveness of education system
- Challenge – education **accessibility** resulted from poor financing
- **Problems with transitions** from different educational levels: vocational-higher
- Strategic goal of Higher Education: **accessibility of the system**: student loans, support vulnerable groups, expand the list of beneficiaries

Analysis of state programs, strategies, legislation and literature

3. Country Basic Data and Directions (GoG, 2016-2019, draft)

- Ensure equity, accessibility and inclusiveness of education system
- Improvement of financing mechanisms of system of education and science
- Problems with transitions from vocational to higher education levels – to fill in the dead-end
- To overview the system of exams for optimization
- Concrete actions in Higher education: continue free of charge university programs and financing of PhD students
- Accessibility of quality education for ethnic minorities

Analysis of State programs, strategies, **legislation** and literature

Other Documents also analyzed:

4. Law of Georgia on Higher Education (21.12.2004)
5. Statute of the Ministry of Education and Science (21.05.2004)
6. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ratified, 26.12.2013)
7. Government Action Plan 2014-2016 for Implementation of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (20.02.2014)
8. Technical Regulations of Environment, Architecture and Planning Elements for Persons with disabilities (06.01.2014)
9. Statute of Authorization and Fees of Education Institutions (01.10.2010)
10. Rules and Conditions of Financing for Bachelor Students in HE (15.05.2015)

Analysis of State programs, strategies, legislation and literature

Literature analyzed:

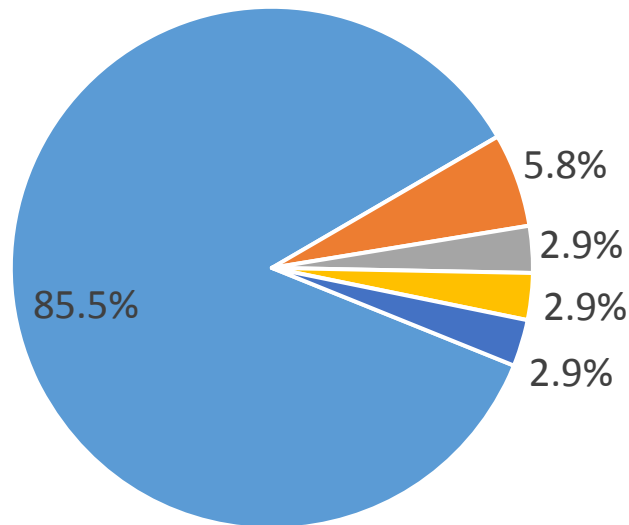
1. “Study of Accessibility of Education in Caucasus”, 2011
 2. “Study of Private Tutoring in Georgia”, 2011
 3. “Rural Disadvantages in Georgian Higher Education Admissions: A Mixed-Methods Study”, 2011
 4. “Georgia Marketization and Education post 1991”, 2014
- *Higher education has the problems of accessibility: poor financing scheme , high fees, low financial support and financial burden for preparation for university entrance exams*
 - *Private tutoring is widely used but not accessible for many families, especially vulnerable and poor families, thus accessibility of HE is the challenge for those groups*
 - *Rural and disadvantaged groups have lower chances to access higher education*
 - *Poor quality of general education creates additional barriers to access higher education*

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

Study is suggesting 8 accessibility criteria.

1. Geographical Accessibility

Universities in Cities of Georgia



■ Tbilisi ■ Kutaisi ■ Batumi ■ Telavi ■ Akhaltsikhe

Total 29 universities: 12 Public and 17 Private

- *Most of Universities located in Capital Tbilisi*
- *Geography of specializations is quite limited*
- *Geographical accessibility plays important role in decision making when choosing the desired universities and/or specializations for low income families from regions*

Geographical accessibility becomes less important if other criteria of accessibility are developed

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

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2. Accessibility on distance and/or electronic education

- *Legislation does not define “Distance Education”*
- *System of Distance Education is not elaborated yet. It doesn't exist even in the long-term strategic documents*
- *Accordingly none of Universities have opportunities for distance learning*
- *Electronic learning is defined by the legislation almost for 10 years*
- *State universities do not have /do not use electronic learning*

Distance and electronic education minimize the financial burden for low-income families from regions;

Distance and/or electronic education becomes very important when geographical and financial accessibility is very low

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

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3. Financial Accessibility

- *State grants to study on first and second levels of HE*
- *Tuition fee of private universities is higher than 100% state grants (if student receives 100% financing and is enrolled in private university where fee is higher, state does not pay, he/she should pay additional amount to study, but if student receives 100% financing and is enrolled in private university where tuition fee is lower than state grant – amount of financing equals to the tuition fee.). Low income families have less chance to apply to private universities*
- *Low amount of recipients of state 100% grants*
- *Full financing by state of 21 priority programs*
- *Support for students from territories bordering conflict regions*
- *State stipends (amount distributed among high academic performers, amount cannot cover even accommodation costs in big cities)*

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

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3. Financial Accessibility

- *Fees for study even in public universities are not accessible to low income and vulnerable families*
- *State has no diversified financial mechanisms (or needs based financing)*
- *Financial accessibility also plays role for preparation for exams (private tutoring)*
- *Financial accessibility ranked #1 among problems identified by parents interviewed*

Financial accessibility is main problem of accessible higher education

Financial accessibility plays role in decision making while choosing the university and/or specialization

Financial accessibility is a challenge not only to cover university fees, but also to prepare for university exams (plus school leaving exams, where the practice of private tutoring is widely used), so financial

accessibility is very critical when quality of general education, system of university entrance and financing of students are poor

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

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4. Accessibility of Physical environment and infrastructure

- *Almost none of universities have adopted infrastructure and physical environment for students who have special educational needs (students with disabilities)*
- *Very few institutions have ramps to enter the building but no other options inside building for SEN students . Also nothing is done in terms of adaptation of environment for deaf and blind students even with high academic skills*
- *Environment of cities, including transport is not adapted as well*

Not adapted Physical environment and infrastructure prevents students with academic skills but certain disabilities to participate in HE.

Development of distance and electronic learning will partially solve the accessibility problem for SEN persons , as well as other opportunities will support inclusiveness of HE

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

Study is suggesting 8 accessibility criteria.

5. Accessibility of educational resources (only SEN students)

- *Absence of educational materials for blind and deaf students, also absence of materials even on the level of general education, thus preventing participation of deaf and blind children in higher education*

Appropriate educational materials for general education level will raise the chance of participation in higher education;

Available educational resources and infrastructure will push the SEN persons to decide to continue study in higher education

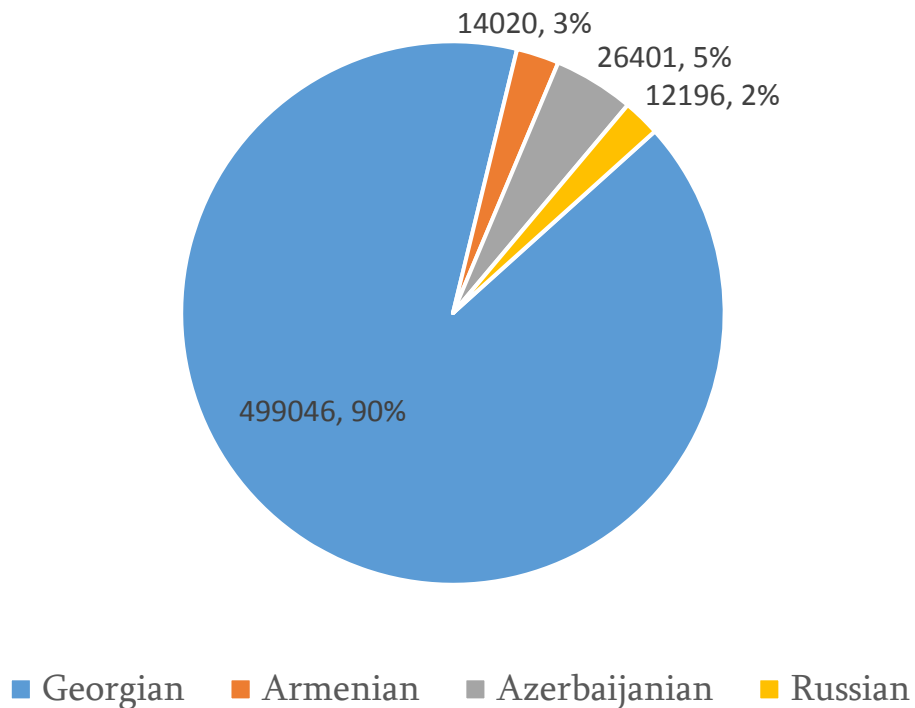
When infrastructure is a big challenge, distance learning with adapted educational resources will raise accessibility to HE for SEN students

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

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6. Linguistic accessibility

Number of school pupils by instruction language



- *Instruction language in universities – Georgian: barriers for non Georgian speaker ethnic minorities*
- *Quality of Georgian language teaching in general education is challenging*
- *Many ethnical minorities continue higher education in Armenia and Azerbaijan because of language and financial accessibility*

Linguistic accessibility is very much depending on the quality of teaching-learning of state language in schools and on the financial accessibility.

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

Study is suggesting 8 accessibility criteria.

7. Accessibility on Programs/specializations

- *Accessibility on desired programs and specializations is very crucial in long-term perspective*
- *When certain specializations (i.e. medicine) can be received only in Capital, families with low income cannot apply because they have to pay not only tuition but also living costs. In this cases motivated people are not able to access education of their choice*

Accessibility on programs and specializations very much depend on geographical and financial accessibility

Description and Analysis of accessibility criteria

Study is suggesting 8 accessibility criteria.

8. Accessibility of system – how system supports or prevents HE accessibility?

- *To qualify for participation in Unified university entry exams student has to pass 8 school leaving exams on certain level*
- *Then to pass 4 exams – university entry exams*
- *Most of school pupils use private tutoring to pass exams, which is financial burden for many families not only for low income ones*
- *All students participated in survey and all parents participated in interview say that they used private tutoring to continue education in universities. All of them used private tutoring for university entry exams, most of them used private tutoring for school leaving exams .*
- *It is not studied deeply if and how the quality of general education causes the need of private tutoring*
- *Transition from vocational education to higher education is dead-end of the system, also underlined in strategic documents of the GoG*

Problems of the system cause financial burden to families as well as costs of the state to carry out 12 exams should be analyzed what positive or negative effects do they have

Conclusions

- Accessibility of HE is stated as a priority of GoG and is very actual
- State in its documents does not provide the vision *how* to ensure accessible higher education
- State documents have no concrete actions plans and mostly represent wish list rather than implementation plan
- There are various accessibility criteria and all of them play role in accessible higher education system
- One criterion plays important role and influences the other, so it is important to think about all of them when making decision

Recommendations

- To ensure continuous and life long learning accessibility of education should remain among high priorities of the State
- Accessibility study should be conducted to have very detailed information, including the needs of each universities as well as needs and opportunities for young people
- Based on the study Education Accessibility Policy and strategic plan should be elaborated and supported by concrete actions and budget
- Financial models to support HE should be diversified and also needs based financing approach should be discussed i.e. family allowances, tax benefits for parents through tax deduction on educational expenses and etc.
- Existing financing should be analyzed in terms of effectiveness

Recommendations

- The system to continue in HE should be analyzed and the effective decision to optimize the number of exams should be made taking into consideration the ways to access higher education by results of exams, as well as other components (young people's skills, school achievements extracurricular and social activities). This will support fair selection as well.
- State should take it very seriously the very active practice of private tutoring (shadow education) and study in details the reasons to minimize its role for continuous education
- Educational programs fully financed by the state should be based on state priorities and should be the outcome of very deep discussions
- State should take into consideration the importance of distance and electronic education and work forwards the development of both should start. Distance and electronic education will solve problems not only for student but also will support adult education

Recommendations

- Audit of infrastructure to develop accessible environment is very important. Also the criteria of “adaptive environment” should be defined in university authorization documents
- Development of appropriate educational resources for SEN persons is very important for inclusive education system, so these resources should be supported on all levels of education starting from preschool
- Interventions to support language minorities wide participation in HE education should be created except existing one model. It is important to support especially those living in bordering and monolingual communities.
- Public-Private collaboration should be paid attention in terms to attract private sector to invest in HE and HR development

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION!