

Report

Of the LEPL – National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement for 2010

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1. Institutional and Structural Changes

The Legal Entity of Public Law – the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement (hereinafter the Centre) was founded on 1 September 2010 on the basis of the Law of Georgia on Educational Quality Enhancement. The Centre is the legal successor of the Legal Entity of Public Law – the National Centre for Educational Accreditation.

The mission of the Centre did not change: together with each and every member of the society and educational institutions the Centre cares about the quality of education, its continuous enhancement and improvement of the credibility of the local and international society in Georgian educational space.

The main goals of the Centre for the enhancement of educational are as follows:

- a) Promotion the formation of internal mechanisms of educational quality assurance, implementation of external mechanisms and their further improvement through cooperation with educational institutions and other stakeholders;
- b) Creation of the integrated database of educational programmes of the educational institutions, including the database of the personnel implementing these programmes and persons enrolled for the programmes concerned;
- c) Promotion of free movement of school, professional and university students and academic personnel with a view to ensuring their participation in learning, teaching and research activities;
- d) Promotion of the integration of Georgian educational institutions into the international space and increase of confidence in them;
- e) Ensuring the credibility of credentials and close links between awarded qualifications and the labour market;
- f) Assessment of the importance of the learning outcomes of acquired education and their compatibility with state-recognised qualifications;
- g) Promotion of the development of the Georgian language and establishment of common scientific-technical terminology;
- h) Rendering legal assistance to general education institutions.

For the attainment of these goals the Centre:

- a) Undertakes the authorisation of educational institutions and accreditation of educational programmes, supervises the observance of authorisation and accreditation terms and conditions and applies statutory measures in the case of detection of a breach;
- b) Undertakes the accreditation of teacher professional development educational programmes;
- c) Ensures the development, approval and further improvement of sectoral and occupational standards through setting up sectoral working groups and coordination of their activities;
- d) Provides consultancy with regard to improvement of the quality of educational programmes, authorisation and accreditation related matters, develops recommendations, arranges trainings, seminars, national and international conferences;
- e) Undertakes the validation of credentials issued in Georgia, amongst them, their legalisation and endorsement with an apostille;
- f) Undertakes the recognition of foreign education;
- g) Maintains the register of educational institutions;
- h) Promotes the process of free movement of school, professional and university students and academic personnel and administers student mobility procedures;

- i) Undertakes the recognition of: higher education acquired on occupied territories; higher education, acquired by persons, who enrolled at licensed higher education institutions; education and qualification of persons who graduated from educational institution, which are now liquidated or have ceased their activities, and who are unable to prove their education or qualification; education of refugees and internally displaced persons;
- j) Provides services in relation with the correct use of Georgian language on a contractual basis, sets up working groups and publishes integrated bulletin of scientific-technical terminology on an annual basis;
- k) Cooperates with relevant international and foreign organisations and independent experts, participates in the activities of these organisations;
- l) Certifies the compatibility of a specialty / list of specialties, submitted by basic units of a higher education institution, with Masters' educational programme directions of higher education institutions approved by the Government of Georgia;
- m) Ensures the transparency of information related to the performance of the Centre;
- n) Pursues publishing activities;
- o) Undertakes supporting economic activities;
- p) Discharges the other powers, envisaged by law.

2. Improvement of Educational Quality Enhancement Mechanisms

The legislative amendments of 21 July 2011 introduced the institute of authorisation for the acquisition of the status of a general, professional and higher education institution and also established the common accreditation principle. Until then the conduct of educational activities was subject to licensing and institutional accreditation. The licensing procedures were undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, whilst institutional and programme accreditation procedures – by the LEPL - National Centre for Educational Accreditation. Licensing mainly depended on the observance of quantifiable technical requirements, whilst programme accreditation was never done (except for several exemptions).

Owing to the amendments which were implemented with due consideration of the principle of “one-shop-window” and through the substitution of quantitative standards with modern qualitative-contextual ones, an applicant for the status of an educational institution will no more be required to undergo two different procedures – authorisation and accreditation – at two different institutions for the implementation of state-recognised programmes and issuance of qualification documents. An applicant institution is free to individually determine its mission within the educational space, the educational programmes to be implemented thereby and undertake the self-assessment of the resources, necessary for the implantation of the programme concerned. The external evaluation is based on the confirmation of the accuracy of the circumstances mentioned in the self-assessment report, what is to be done by the Board for the Authorisation of Educational Institutions on the basis of the assessments, carried out by independent experts and hearing the position of the applicant institution at a public hearing.

Authorisation is the procedure of acquisition of the status of an educational institution, which aims at ensuring the meeting of the mandatory standards set for the conduct of activities for the issuance of a state-recognised educational document. The authorisation standards are as follows: educational programmes, human resources and materials resources. The Regulation for the Authorisation of Educational Institutions, approved by Order No.99/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on 1 October 2010 established the mandatory requirements for meeting authorisation standards for general, professional and higher educational institutions.

Accreditation procedures verify the compatibility of an educational institution educational programme

with the accreditation standards. Accreditation aims at the establishment of regular self-assessment of educational institutions with a view to enhancement of the educational quality and promotion of the development of quality assurance mechanisms. Accreditation is a voluntary procedure and evidences the high level of teaching. Accreditation is related to the issuance of state study grants and Master's state study grants, also the implementation of regulated, teacher training, Georgian language studying, liberal education, Georgian language and Doctoral educational programmes.

The accreditation procedures are based on the following standards:

- The goals and learning outcomes of an educational programme and the compatibility of the programme with them;
- Methodology and organisation of teaching, adequacy of the assessment of programme mastering;
- Pupil/student achievements, individual work with them;
- Provision with teaching resources;
- Potential to further enhance the educational quality.

3. National Qualifications Framework

The Centre participated in the elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which was approved by Order No.120/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on 10 December 2010.

The NQF describes the educational system of Georgia, current qualifications and demonstrates their interrelation on the national and international levels, also provides for the exhaustive list of qualifications awarded in Georgia.

The elaboration of the NQF was preceded by working meetings with the representatives of both higher and professional education institutions according to directions. The interested persons also had the possibility to submit their written comments to the Centre. The Centre received hundreds of such letters, each of which was thoroughly discussed, whilst the proposals were summarised and accounted for.

4. Reform of Professional Education System

Based on the amendments made to the Law of Georgia on Professional Education five-cycle continuous system of professional education was introduced, which will exist along with academic education and will ensure the development of employment market-oriented educational programmes. Professional education of the respective cycle is defined according to learning outcomes. The representatives of different fields decide on the compatibility of the requirements set for an occupation with specific learning outcomes of an occupational standard.

The Law provides for the introduction of the system of community colleges. A community college implements professional education programmes of all five cycles; it is also entitled to implement:

- preparatory general education programme;
- academic liberal art education programme and
- Georgian language education programme.

The access to professional education is ensured both through the diversity of offered programmes and regional coverage. The state authorities, the employers of specific fields and regions intensively participate in the development of the system of professional and community colleges and creation of

respective occupational standards and educational programmes together with the educational institutions, what provides for the adjustment of the educational programmes to the labour market to maximum practicable extent.

The requirements set for professional teachers were simplified; specifically, the certification of teachers was cancelled. The requirements for teachers of the respective professional education programme will be provided by the respective occupational standard. The occupational standard will also provide for the essence and levels of each occupation, the learning outcomes of the respective level, areas of employment, additional conditions with due consideration of specific characteristics of the occupation.

For the enhancement of the quality of professional education the working groups were set up under the assistance of the Centre with a view to development of the occupational standards in each direction. The working groups consisted of the representatives of different sectoral fields, professional associations, employers' organisations, professional and higher education institutions. The draft standards were regularly published on the website of the Centre and then further improved owing to the feedback. In 2010 the Centre approved 107 occupational standards.

5. Institutional accreditation of higher educational institutions

Before the effectuation of the legislative amendments of 21 July of 2010, and also before the introduction of the authorisation mechanism, the Centre was carrying out the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions. Institutional accreditation recommendations for higher educational institutions were prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Accreditation Regulation for Higher Educational Institutions, approved by Order No.1030 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, on 20 November 2009 and was adopted by Order No.51 of the Centre Director on 24 May 2010.

Total 13 higher education institutions applied for institutional accreditation in 2010. 12 institutions were recognised as applicants for accreditation and were evaluated by accreditation experts. Institutional accreditation was granted to two higher education institutions. One institution refused to undergo the accreditation procedures.

In 2010 the institutional accreditation of two higher education institutions was withdrawn.

Of two disputes referred to the court of first instance in 2010 one was dismissed due to the withdrawal of the suit and the other was resolved in favour of the NCEA.

6. Launching the Authorisation of Educational Institutions

The approval of the Regulation for the Authorisation of Educational Institutions was preceded by intensive discussion of the content of the document with the stakeholder. The document was approved by full consensus with due consideration of the expressed remarks.

By Order No.94 of the Centre Director the forms of self-assessment questionnaires for educational institutions and authorisation expert's reports were approved on 5 October 2010.

Total 11 institutions applied for authorisation in 2010, of which one was applying for the status of a university, two – of a teaching university, two – of a college, two – of a community college, one – of a professional college, three – of a general education institution. 10 institutions were recognised as applicants for authorisation. As of the end of 2010 6 institutions were evaluated by the authorisation experts. Authorisation was granted to 3 institutions, (one teaching university, one – college, one –

professional college). One institution was refused authorisation. Administrative proceedings with respect to two institutions were discontinued on demand of the interested parties. In connection with 4 institutions the proceedings are still pending will be reviewed in 2011

7. Determination of Student Quota

Total 18 educational applied for the increase of student quota in 2010 (amongst them, one educational institution applied twice). The student quota was increased for 16 institutions after experts' evaluation. One institution refused to undergo the proceedings and one application for the increase of student quota was abandoned as the institution concerned did not remove the gap in the application.

In 2010 the student quota was redefined for three educational institutions owing to their reorganisation.

8. Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Education Institutions

By Order of the Centre Director No.26 the self-assessment report forms of accredited and newly-founded licensed higher education institutions were approved on 6 April 2010.

Of 71 accredited and newly-founded licensed higher education institutions the self-assessment reports were presented by 67 institutions. Respectively the administrative proceedings were ongoing with respect to 3 of 71 accredited institutions in connection with the consideration of an institutional accreditation application and one institution, according to the letter sent to the Centre, had ceased its educational activities.

Based on the analysis of self-assessment reports 5 higher educational institutions were inspected by experts and the authorisation of four higher education institutions was withdrawn. The case proceedings are still pending with respect to one institution.

Of 71 accredited and newly founded licensed higher education institutions total 44 universities, 16 teaching universities and 11 colleges were carrying out educational activities before submission of self-assessment reports for 2010.

As a result of authorisation and inspection of self-assessment reports total 25 universities, 28 teaching universities and 11 colleges were carrying out educational activities by the end of 2010.

9. Accreditation of Teacher Professional Development Educational Programmes

In 2010 the teacher professional development educational programmes were accredited commensurate with the procedure, envisaged by the Regulation for Accreditation of Teacher Professional Development Educational Programmes, approved by Order No.1102 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (dated December 4, 2009). Total 7 legal entities and one sole interpreter applied for 17 educational programmes, amongst them one legal entity applied twice. 10 educational programmes were accredited, two programmes presented by one legal entity were rejected by Council and with respect to 5 programmes presented by 3 legal entities the accreditation proceeding are still under way.

On the basis of Order No.11 of the Centre Director On the Approval of the Procedure of Selection of Accreditation Experts for Teacher Professional Development Programmes and Determination of the Composition of the Accreditation Expert Selection Commission (dated 17 February 2010) 40 persons applied for the participation in the competition. 23 candidates were selected on the basis of

recommendations of the Commission for the position of teacher professional development programme accreditation expert.

10. Compatibility with the Directions of Master's Degree Educational Programmes

To ensure the compatibility of higher education programmes with the Directions of Master's Degree Educational Programmes approved by Resolution No.129 of the Government of Georgia on May 5, 2010 total 47 institutions applied to the Centre. The compatibility was established in connection with 307 educational programmes.

11. Approval of the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia and recognition of the received education

By Order No.98 of the Minister of Education and Science the Procedure of Recognition of Foreign Education and Service Fees was approved on 1st October 2010, what allowed for the simplification and expediting of the servicing of the citizens.

In the course of validation of the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia, the Centre establishes the fact of issuance of the respective qualification document and passing educational programme partially or fully by the person concerned and their compliance with the requirements of Georgian legislation. Legalisation or apostille certifies the authenticity of the signatures on the document issued by Georgian educational institutions and bodies operating within the framework of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, authority of the person signing the document and authenticity of the seal.

The Centre is in charge with the recognition of education of refugees and internally displaced people, also of the persons who are not able to prove their education or qualification as they studied at institutions which were liquidated or ceased educational activities.

Together with the introduction of the institute of authorisation the legal mechanism for the recognition of learning outcomes of programmes, implemented at the licensed higher educational institution, was created. The new system enabled persons who enrolled for these programme to integrate into the new system continue their studies under the state-recognised regime in the case of sitting the Unified National Exams.

Within the framework of the recognition of foreign education the Centre undertakes the validation of documents and establishes the compatibility of the qualifications. Upon validation of the documents, the Centre verifies whether the educational document was issued on behalf of the person, specified in the document and whether the document issuing educational institution is recognised under the law of the country where the institution concerned carries out its educational activities, and in the case of establishment of the compatibility – compatibility of foreign qualification with the qualification existing in Georgia. In this respect the draft Recognition Manual was prepared within the framework of the fifth component of the "TWINING CEIBAL", which Manual aimed at establishing the system of education recognition in Georgia, which would have been compatible with the international standards and with the Lisbon Convention and supporting documents thereof.

In 2010 the Centre reviewed 3000 applications for the recognition of foreign educational documents issued in the following 42 countries: Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, USA, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Great Britain, Spain, Estonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Canada, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Nepal, Norway, Poland, Russia, Greece, Saudi Arabia, France,

Slovakia, Armenia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Sweden, Switzerland, Shri-Lanka, China. Of these educational documents 19% were issued in India, 14% - in Russian federation, 7% - Azerbaijan, 5% - in the Republic of Turkey.

12. Register of Educational Institutions

The Register of Educational Institutions is being continuously updated and upgraded. In 2009 the Register of the Academic Personnel was also created along with the Register of Students. In 2010 the creation of the Register of Educational Programmes was launched. As a result of the amalgamation of these Registers the Unified Register of Educational Institutions will be created. The Project will be accomplished by the beginning of 2011-2012 academic year.

Currently the Register contains data concerning educational programmes, amongst them, concerning the academic personnel implementing programmes (5713 professors and teachers) and persons, who had enrolled for the programmes concerned (92313 current students).

By the end of 2010 the Register of students with informal education (students who enrolled in former licensed educational institutions) was created, where over 20 000 students of 108 institutions were registered.

13. Student Mobility

The Centre ensures the lawful conduct of mobility procedures on the basis of the data of the Register of Higher Education Institutions, filtration of the applications, what excludes the participation of those persons into mobility procedures, who do not have the right to mobility.

In 2010 the mobility electronic portal was further improved, which provides information about the higher education institutions, which are involved in the mobility procedures, their student vacancies and possibility of enrolment of the applicants for mobility.

Over 7000 student exercised their rights to mobility through the electronic portal in 2010.

14. International Cooperation

The Centre is planning to intensify the cooperation with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and to discuss the reasonability of becoming their member in the future in order to become a full member of the European quality assurance dimension and to further increase confidence of the European education area therein, that, in its turn will promote the quality assurance and mutual recognition of the accreditation related decisions.

In July, 2010 the project “Promoting Internationalisation and Comparability of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PICQA)” was approved within the framework of the European Commission TEMPUS programme. The goal of the Project is to enhance the quality of higher education in Armenia and Georgia and to approximate with the EU standards. The participants of the three-year-project are: Georgia, Armenia, France, Spain, Netherlands and Germany.

The CENTRE continues working within the framework of “Twining CEIBAL” project started in 2009, which aims at efficient implementation of Bologna Process action lines within the relevant institutions and at preparing for integration in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

15. Summits

In 2010 11 academic, 2 professional and 1 general education summits were arranged under the initiative of the Centre; also 11 regional summits were arranged at Tbilisi, Telavi and Batumi universities. The academic summits witnessed the intensive participation of the representatives of various higher education institutions and the stakeholders in the discussion of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, classifier of the fields of educational and sectoral standards. At professional summits the representatives of professional education and training Centres and higher education institutions discussed the pressing issues of the reform of the VET system like learning outcomes of the cycles of professional education and the establishment of the uniform system of professional education. Several summits were dedicated to the internationalisation of higher education. The general education summit concentrated on ensuring the quality of teacher professional development educational programmes.

On 30 December 2010 the conference hall of Georgian University hosted final academic summit, where the Centre presented the results of its activities in 2010 to the representatives of educational institutions and the society at large and heard their recommendations, which are of great importance for planning the future activities of the Centre.

16. Researches

In 2010 the Centre conducted the offer and demand analysis with respect to Bachelor educational programmes, offered by the universities within the educational space of Georgia. The analysis demonstrated that the offer on Bachelor programmes in the country is highest in the field of business administration. The next priorities are humanities, social sciences and law. This year the offer of programmes in the field of business administration is 2% higher as compared with the previous year. The offer also increased on engineering programmes; the offer on natural science programmes remained almost unchanged, however the number of student vacancies for these programmes has slightly decreased. The percentage of student vacancies for programmes in Georgia is practically compatible with similar average showings of the Organisation Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), however, unlike these countries the demand on educational programmes in the field of engineering, natural science and agricultural is rather low – meaning that practically there is no competition.

17. Correspondence

In 2010 the Centre received total 9 205 letters, amongst them: 5 888 letters were received from legal entities and 3 317 letters - from natural persons. The number of outgoing letters amounted to 6 829.

18. Financial Statements

The budgetary assignments for the Centre amounted to GEL 1 199 610. The new organisational structure and number of payroll personnel (42) was agreed with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The expenditures from the state budget amounted to 1 159 048.94 GEL including:

1	Wages (inclusive the income tax)	644 873.13 GEL
2	Goods and Services	317 866.57 GEL

3	Social Security	0.00 GEL
4	Other costs and expenses	1 327.17 GEL
5	Increase of non-financial assets	194 982.07 GEL

The main non-budgetary revenues of the Centre are as follows: fees for services including fees, paid by higher education institutions for authorisation and accreditation purposes.

The actual balance of the amounts paid as service fee amounted to 139 021 GEL for the beginning of 2010. Additional own income of the Centre amounted to 261 784 GEL in 2010.

In 2010 total 224 704 GEL were expended on the remuneration of invited specialists and accreditation experts, business missions and also for other purposes, amongst them:

1	Goods and Services	165 516 GEL
2	Other costs and expenses	8 001 GEL
3	Increase of non-financial assets	51 187 GEL