

Student Involvement in Higher Education

Institutions' Management

Research Project Report
Executive Summary
(full text available only in Georgian)

Ilia State University
2010

Natia Andghuladze - research group leader

Students:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓ Nino Kovziridze | ✓ Tea Liluashvili |
| ✓ Sesili Sichinava | ✓ David Liparteliani |
| ✓ Lilia Baiadze | ✓ Nino Lobjanidze |
| ✓ Kristina Chelidze | ✓ Sopio Makharadze |
| ✓ Maia Chivadze | ✓ Natia Malidze |
| ✓ Maka Gatenadze | ✓ Nineli Neparidze |
| ✓ Nino Gazashvili | ✓ Tamar Orjonikidze |
| ✓ David Gelutashvili | ✓ Mikheil Tepnadze |
| ✓ Nodar Janadze | ✓ Giorgi Tvaliashvili |
| ✓ Tamta Kobakhidze | ✓ Natia Shengelia |
| ✓ Mariam Khutsishvili | |



European Commission
TEMPUS

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Introduction

The reform carried out in Georgian higher education system introduced changes to the Higher Education Institution management. According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, student self-governance was granted certain powers to participate in HEI management. According to Article 45 of the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, student self-governance, in compliance with its statute, is granted the powers to ensure students' involvement in the higher education institution management, to promote protection of students' rights, to elect representatives to the Faculty Council, to make recommendations on improving the faculty/higher education institution's management systems and quality of studying and present them to the Faculty Council, Senate and Academic Council and to exercise other powers as may be defined by the statute.

The research was carried out in May - September 2010 with the purpose for studying the aspects related to student role in the management of public higher educational institutions in Georgia and to answer the following questions:

- How accessible is it for students to participate in HEI management?
- How does the university administration foster students' involvement in HEI management?
- Does the HEI management take students opinions into consideration during decision-making process?
- Are students informed about their rights in HEI management?
- How far are students involved in decision-making process?
- What are the barriers against student involvement in HEI management?

Within the framework of the project, funded by National Tempus Office of Georgia, we have surveyed around 500 students, 17 self-governance heads (or representatives) and 17 HEI administration members. We have also collected and analyzed the HEI documents related to self governance work and looked for information on student self governances on university web sites. The report covers issues related to student awareness on self-governance rights and responsibilities, self-governance activities, the character of relationship between self-governances and students and self-governance and administration.

Methodology

The research has been carried out in three directions. Student survey, secondary data analysis, and interviews with administrative staff and student self-governance representatives were carried out within the framework of the research project.

Student survey was used to collect data from students. Methods of data collection in this part of the research were focus groups and questionnaires. Focus groups were conducted in order to develop questionnaires for the student survey. Questionnaires were administered with students of public HEIs. The goal of students survey is to find out the extent of student (who are not members of student self-governance) awareness of the functions and activities of self-

governance and their involvement in management. Student survey will answer the following main questions:

- What do the students know about student self-governance?
- What do they know about work of student self-governance of their university?
- What do they know about their rights in the university?
- Are they involved in self-governance's activities?
- Is self-governance free from political influence or not?

Eight students from various universities have participated in focus-group. Its goal was to specify the questions on the basis of which the questionnaire will be worked out. The questionnaire has been piloted on the students of Ilia State University. After this procedure, the questionnaire has been modified and its final version has been used for student survey.

Secondary data such as university web sites & university documents have been used to look for evidence of student self governance work in the university. The goal of this part of the research is to analyze the data on the basis of the documents received from student self-governance, which helped us to define:

- Are student self-governments involved in university management;
- What kind of projects do they carry out?
- What are the goals of the planned and done projects?
- How actively do they use the rights granted by the Law of Georgia on Higher Education.

This part of research defines the analyze of universities' web sites, presentations of self-governments projects, departments session proceedings and project estimates represented by the departments for confirmation of budget.

Interviews were conducted with HEIs administrative staff and student self governance members. The goal of interviewing the representatives of self-governance and Senate is to:

- determine the quality of self-governance involvement in HEI management;
- define the quality of self-governance involvement in improving teaching;
- examine what kind of relationship exists between students and self-governance;
- determine how the university administration procures students involvement in HEI management.

Sampling

Within the framework of the research all the universities having the status of legal entity of public law have been selected. In order to reduce traveling expenses, three smaller HEIs (of Zugdidi, Akhalkalaki, and Tsnori) have been omitted from the sample.

The research has been carried out in the following universities in Tbilisi and regions:

1. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
2. Tbilisi State Medical University
3. Ilia State University
4. Georgian State Agrarian University
5. Georgian Technical University
6. Vano Saradjishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire
7. Tbilisi State University of Economic Relations
8. Sokhumi State University

9. Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University
10. Tbilisi State Academy of Arts
11. Shota Rustaveli State University (Batumi)
12. Batumi State Maritime Academy (Batumi)
13. Akaki Tsereteli State University (Kutaisi)
14. Gori University (Gori)
15. Iakob Gogebashvili State University (Telavi)
16. Georgian Subtropical Farming State University (Kutaisi)
17. Akhaltsikhe State Educational University (Akhaltsikhe)

Main Findings

- The prevailing majority of students are not informed on the rights and responsibilities of student self-governance in HEI management; 70% surveyed students responded that they do not know what student self governance's rights and responsibilities are;
- Major focus of student self governances is planning and implementation of sports, educational, and entertaining activities. In this direction, activities implemented by self governances are quite diverse. Surveyed students most frequently recall sports competitions and beauty contests organized by their university self governances. In some cases, HEI prioritize financial support for students in need and conferences. Some self governances also help students in postponing tuition payment due dates. Overall, there are few events oriented towards improvement of education quality in HEIs;
- 59% of surveyed students claim that self governance members favour from certain privileges;
- On 10 point scale, students evaluate self-governance performance at 6 point level;
- Student self governance and administrative have stated that students are not active in cooperating with their self governance. 73% of surveyed students reported that they have never approached self governance with an initiative or request.
- In focus group discussions, students claimed that students do not have substantial influence on self governance decisions. Student survey has shown that quarter of students believe that self governances act under the influence of HEI administration;
- The role of student representatives in HEI decision making bodies is often ambiguous. Several students have reported that they have no influence over the decisions made by faculty boards or boards of representatives. Some administration members explain it by lack of competency in specific issues related to education quality and management;
- HEI self governance budgets are often below 1% of the university budget which is explained by the lack of financial resources. In some cases, self governances raise funds from other sources to implement various activities.