NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Annual Report for 2014

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Abbreviations and concepts

NELE	Non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) Legal Entity
MINISTRY	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
LEPL	Legal Entity of Public Law
FEB	Foreign Enterprise Branch
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
Ltd	Limited Liability Company
CENTER	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE)
BA	Bachelor Program
BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
CEDE/POP	European Center for the Development of Vocational Training
EMIS	Education Management Informational System
ESG	European Standards and Guiding Principles for Higher Education Quality Assurance
ETF	European Training Foundation
MA	Master Program
PhD	Doctoral Program
SKVC	Higher Education Quality Assessment Center of Lithuania
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present you the annual report of National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement highlighting the results for 2014. The analytical section, traditionally attached to this report provides comparative analysis of the dynamics of the data, including quantity and the composition of educational institutions, academic programs and student profiles.

On the basis of the long-term strategy of NCEQE, accomplishments in 2014 mainly resulted contextual refinement of our activities. Work was carried out in three main directions: the elaboration of the quality assurance mechanisms for development-oriented education.

In 2014, the priority was placed on bringing about improvements in quality assurance in systems of higher and general education. In higher education area, the development of flexible procedures of authorization was started and this includes accreditation guidelines and outcome assessment oriented standards. Concurrently it was decided to involve international assessors in authorization and accreditation visits. In terms of general education, the school development concept has been further elaborated and this includes the presentation of a quality assurance system as a supportive instrument for schools. In addition, the concept of the accountability electronic system was developed by introducing the school card, thus enhancing the level of school accountability to the state and on the community level.

Another prioritized direction of NCEQE is to perfect the Qualifications Framework. The package of legislative amendments and the action plan for their introduction, contributing to the approximation of the National Qualifications Framework with the European system, were developed within the framework of the project implemented in this area. This decision was based on the analysis of compliance of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework.

An important change which will significantly improve functioning of NCEQE in the coming year is the introduction of an electronic platform of education quality management. This will enhance the data reliability as found in the system of higher education. Realization of this ambitious project became possible with a support of the UNDP and the active involvement of the Education Management Informational System.

The program "Vocational Qualifications Development Program" successfully was continued in 2014 and this resulted in updating of Occupational Standards and the development of relevant program modules. The program will be continued in 2015 as well.

NCEQE accomplished the reorganization process in 2014 and the objective was aimed at enhancement of education quality assurance functions. The components of the internationalization and development of the qualifications framework were also placed at the forefront.

In 2015, NCEQE will continue its activity in line with the priorities defined in its strategic development plan: piloting of the updated quality assurance mechanisms will be launched at higher and general education institutions; new mechanisms of vocational education quality assurance will be established; legal changes developed in relation to the qualification framework will be introduced gradually; education quality management electronic system will become fully operational.

It would not be possible to implement such ambitious plans as launched by NCEQE without a highly dedicated staff. It is because of their commitment that I want to thank everyone; I also want to thank all those people who have been constantly responsive to NCEQE.

Hopefully, the information reflected in the 2014 report will be most insightful valuable to our readers and many other stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Elene Jibladze

Director of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

PART 1.

Annual Report for 2014.

National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (hereinafter, called NCEQE) is a Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Its purpose is to promote quality enhancement in education throughout Georgia. NCEQE was founded based on the reorganization of the LEPL – National Center for Educational Accreditation on September 14, 2010, pursuant to Order #89/N, issued by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia.

Vision

Educational institutions in Georgia should serve as solid and sustainable knowledge based networks dedicated to continuous development. In keeping pace with the rest of the civilized world, they will constantly strive to form competent and independent individuals and further contribute to the scientific, cultural, social and economic development of the country.

Mission:

It is our mission to, in accordance to the country's overall strategy and collective goals of integration into the international community, continuously work on the development of the education quality concept, create and maintain up-to-date standards and ensure related mechanisms for compliance and continuous improvement. Hence the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement supports the establishment of the necessary teaching and academic conditions within higher, vocational and general education institutions.

Scopes of the activity:

In meeting such objectives in terms of external quality assurance, NCEQE authorizes educational institutions and accredits various educational programs. It also assures that the expectations and conditions of its authorization and accreditation standards are followed. NCEQE ensures the development and establishment of both external and internal mechanisms. It elaborates subsequent recommendations to assure continued quality assurance in education.

NCEQE assists in the design and development of educational programs. In order to ensure compatibility and conformity with the European education area NCEQE further aims to improve the National Qualifications Framework. It operates the Register of educational institutions and administers students' mobility procedures.

It guarantees the reliability of credentials and establishes fixed procedures. These ensure the compatibility of learning outcomes with state-recognized qualifications. NCEQE has established procedures for the recognition of educational documents including the verification of various credentials, apostillization and legalization. It also checks state issued educational documents - for accuracy with regard to the correct use of language and

technical terms. NCEQE also collaborates with relevant international and foreign organizations; this includes its participation in a range of international projects.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2014, NCEQE predominately focused on the contextual development and refinement of its activities. NCEQE works in four main directions:

1. Improving services as provided by NCEQE;
2. Perfecting mechanisms for the authorization of educational institutions and accreditation of educational programs;
3. Developing the National Qualifications Framework;
4. Promoting Vocational Education.

1.1. CHANGES IN THE STATUTES OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Organizational structure of NCEQE, functions and priorities of its services have been revised in 2014. Consequently the draft amendment to the statutes of NCEQE[1] has been developed pursuant to the Order #169 of the Minister of Education and Science. The amendments clarified the goals and functions of NCEQE. It changed its organizational structure and functions have been distributed amongst its structural units (See: Appendix #1). Subsequent changes in the statutes have enhanced the function of educational quality assurance and pushed to the forefront various components of internationalization and the development of Qualifications Framework. These correspond with the strategic priorities of NCEQE. The Order of the Minister became effective January 5, 2015.

1.2 SATISFACTION SURVEY OF NCEQE SERVICE USERS

On request of NCEQE, the satisfaction survey of NCEQE service users[2] was conducted by the Applied Research Company (ARC) in 2014.

The objectives of the survey were formulated as follows:
- Study of the moods and attitudes of NCEQE's customers;
- Assessment of the services rendered to the customers;
- Study of the quality of services rendered by NCEQE to the identified target groups; Identification of the gaps;
- Detection of existing challenges and finding ways for service improvement;
- Identification of new services, considered as necessary for customers.

Both, legal and physical entities participated in the inquiry. The survey covered the full range of services provided by NCEQE. In particular, the legal entities presenting educational institutions were questioned in relation to the authorization of educational institutions, accreditation of educational programs and services of

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[1] Order of the Ministry of Education and Science #89/N, dated September 14, 2010.
[2] Survey of Customers Satisfaction with Services Rendered by NCEQE" ARC, October 27, 2014.

the Registry of educational programs. Physical entities were inquired regarding the validation of education, appostilization and legalization, student mobility and recognition services:

The time - frame of the procedures and service environment was nominated as the main challenge in rendering services to physical entities. In terms of authorization of educational institutions and accreditation of educational programs, the inconsistency of experts' assessments and decisions, as well as the uncleanness of standards were named as most problematic issues by the representatives of educational institutions.

The survey revealed that application of the Registry of Educational Programs is problematic both in technical and functional terms. These required adjustment, including the development of customer-oriented interface and the including of additional functions.

NCEQE actively worked on issues identified by the survey during the year; in particular, the revision of standards and procedures was implemented with bringing about improvement of authorization and accreditation procedures. Education quality management electronic infrastructure has been developing to keep up with improvement of technical and functional problems faced by the Registry. This technology will also improve the service procedures. Optimization of the procedures and environment adjustment is also carried out is providing better services for citizens.

The survey revealed the need to provide additional services to educational institutions, in particular:

- Providing Information (e.g., information on legislative amendments, international experience and latest issues);
- Conducting training (e.g. on quality assurance mechanisms, registry maintaining, etc.;
- Delivering consultation services (related to program development).

1.3 EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ELECTRONIC MANAGEMENT PROJECT

"Education Quality and Electronic Management Project" is being implemented by NCEQE with the financial assistance of the UNDP. The project aims to create of quality management electronic infrastructure for NCEQE, one that will contribute to automation of business procedures. Electronic infrastructure implies the virtual space for the staff and for students to interact at educational institutions; the system will simplify and improve the quality of services rendered to educational institutions and citizens alike; such data will be complete and reliable. The implemented system will also simplify the proper operation of NCEQE internal procedures.

The first cycle of the project was completed on December 31, 2014 and completion of the second cycle is planned to be completed prior to May 31, 2015.

1.4 NEW INITIATIVE OF NCEQE: "DISCUSSIONS ON EDUCATION"

In November, 2014, NCEQE started a series of seminars, "Discussions on Education". These aimed to develop the platform, providing a forum for discussions on most topical issues facing the educational sector, analyses of the educational theories and connecting them with application. Three meetings, led by the educational experts Paata Papava, Simon Janashia and Revaz Apkhazava have been already conducted within the framework of the initiative. The cycle of seminars will also be continued in 2015.

2. EXTERNAL MECHANISMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

2.1 ACCREDITATION AND AUTHORIZATION COUNCILS

The credentials of the Accreditation Council for educational programs, Councils of general, vocational and higher education institutions expired in summer, 2014. To assess and improve the functioning of the councils, inquiry with participation of educational institutions, experts (evaluators) and the council members has been carried out. Each member of the various councils was assessed by the representatives of educational institutions and experts based on 11 criteria[3]. The same criteria were applied for the assessment of the council as a whole.

Tripartite inquiry has revealed main challenge, common to all four councils: consistent assessment and establishment of the unified practice of decision-making. Individual assessments based on their own inquiry were sent to the council members. Continuing its co-participatory practice, NCEQE has engaged educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, employers and other stakeholders in the council member selection process. At the same time, to ensure the continuous and consistent practice of the councils, NCEQE carried out the rotation, bringing at least one member of the old council to the new one. It's also remarkable that students are also presented in accreditation and HEI councils.

Working meeting for new members of the council was organized by NCEQE in Bazaleti Hotel, on December 6-7, 2014. The aim of the meeting was to improve the functioning of the council based on the analyses of work, undertaken by the previous councils. The main topic of the meeting was definitions of the authorization and accreditation standards and elaboration of the unified approaches to the assessment.

2.2 AUTHORIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

As of December 31, 2014, there are 72 higher, 89 vocational and 2,333 general education (among them 247 private) institutions in Georgia (See. Appendix #2).

74 decisions on awarding, refusal and cancellation of authorization were made during 2014. Seventy-eight (78%) of all decisions were positive. Diagram 1 shows the data on decisions made by NCEQE in 2014. (აქ ქართულ ტექსტში მგონი შეცდომაა, ტექსტში წერია 2013, ხოლო დიაგრამას აწერია 2014, ამიტომ ინგლისურ ვარიანტში მე ჩავსვი 2014). Six HEIs out of 21 granted authorizations during 2014 are newly established and six HEIs are Orthodox Theological HEIs, considered as of having the status of authorized before January 1, 2015[4].

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[3] 11 criteria used for the assessment of the Council members:
1. Council members are aware of accreditation standards and procedure;
2. Council members are ready for the council and are aware of the topics to be discussed;
3. Council members clearly and understandably express their position;
4. Council members comply with ethical norms when asking questions or expressing their opinion;
5. Council members self-reject in case of conflict of interest;
6. Council gives qualified and objective assessment to expert's decisions;
7. Council is consistent in assessment of issues and establishes unified practice;
8. Council member separate essential and unessential issues of a case;
9. Council members develop valuable recommendations;
10. Council members demonstrate principality and do not get influenced;
11. Council members are collegial and friendly.

[4] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 89[4].

It should be noted that the authorization period of two HEIs had expired in 2014. One of them did not apply to NCEQE for new authorization and the second one was refused.

Thirty two VET institutions were granted authorization in 2014 among them those private VET institutions that were considered as authorized until September 1, 2014[5] and had to undergo the authorization process before September 1, to continue educational activity. 25 institutions (out of 33) passed the authorization, one was refused and 7 did not apply to NCEQE with authorization application. Six out of all VET institutions granted authorization in 2014 were newly-established.

2.3 ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In 2014, the Accreditation Council made 302 decisions, among them 267 (88 %) on granting of accreditation to educational programs, (Diagram 2). It should be noted, that no negative decisions were made relative to accreditation of PhD programs.

The majority of applications received in 2014, were on accreditation of BA and MA programs (135 and 85), that significantly exceeds the applications on accreditation of PhD programs (33). (Diagram 3)

diagram #3

2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL MECHANISMS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE

REVISION OF THE STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES OF AUTHORIZATION AND ACCREDITATION OF HEIs

Since 2014, NCEQE has been actively working on development of authorization and accreditation mechanisms. The main aim for revision of quality assurance mechanisms is establishment of development and outcome-oriented system, contributing to compliance of higher education quality with the European standards. To revise the standards, 12 working groups have been founded, one of them working on revision of the authorization standards, and 11 groups – on development of the field accreditation standards in line with 11 directions provided in the National Qualifications Framework. At the same time, the work is performed for the improvement of authorization and accreditation procedures, considering the prolongation of the assessment process, improvement of HEI self-assessment procedures, promotion of the flexibility of procedures and engagement of international experts in assessment process. Piloting of revised quality assurance mechanisms and standards will be started from the second half of 2015.

To discuss changes in higher education quality assurance system, the conference "Challenges in Education Quality Assurance System and Ways of Improvement", organized by NCEQE was held on November 10, 2014. Representatives from HEIs, Council of Europe and the Ministry of Education and Science were invited to the conference. The experts of the Council of Europe, Ligia Deca and Achim Hopbach introduced the report on assessment of education quality assurance mechanisms in Georgia[6].

Elene Jibladze, Director of NCEQE introduced the draft amendments to higher education quality assurance system, providing the space for discussion of the key topics with representatives of HEIs.

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[5] Law of Georgia on Vocational Education, Article 40, Paragraph 2[2].
[6] http://eqe.ge/uploads/NEWS/prezentaciebi/Quality_assasment/Reviewreport.pdf

UPDATING OF EXPERTS DATABASE

Updating of accreditation and authorization experts, launched in 2013 has been completed. Selection was conducted at three stages. At the first stage, the applications were reviewed, then the shortlisted candidates were interviewed and at the third stage, the training and accreditation/authorization simulative visits were provided for selected candidates. The candidates were assessed based on their involvement in trainings and the reports developed by them. The status of "Expert" was awarded to selected candidates. NCEQE selected 17 experts for authorization of VET institutions, 8 for HEIs and 42 accreditation experts in different directions. At the same time, 25 additional accreditation experts, nominated by "HR Professional' Guild" were selected. The need of the rule for suspending of expert's authorization has been identified and this topic has been developing now.

ELABORATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

In 2014, the Code of Ethics for authorization and accreditation councils, as well as for authorization and accreditation experts (evaluators) has been developed by accreditation and authorization service. The aim of the Code development was to agree on unified ethical norms, so each party should be initially aware of the guiding principles and values of work. This will promote transparency and objectiveness of the procedure and enhance trust to authorization and accreditation procedures. The Code of Ethics will become effective from 2015.

STUDY OF LITHUANIAN EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT

With the purpose to study with international experience in educational quality assurance, a study visit to Higher Education Quality Assessment Center of the Republic of Lithuania (SKVC) has been conducted by NCEQE on October 19-25, 2014, within the framework of European Commission Technical Support and Information Exchange (TAIEX) program. NCEQE staff members got familiar with Lithuanian educational quality assurance system, together with international experts, participated in institutional and program evaluation visit. Memorandum of Cooperation between Georgian and Lithuanian parties has been signed within the framework of the visit, thus enabling NCEQE to involve SKVC affiliated international evaluators as part of authorization and accreditation procedures.

2.5 PROMOTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In 2014, revision of the quality assurance mechanisms for general educational institutions has been activated; in particular, the "Concept on Quality Management in General Education Institutions" was developed. The Concept considers formation of school development-oriented quality assurance mechanisms, engaging each member of a school community. So called "School Card", reflecting key information about the school, such as material resources, students' results and teachers' qualification will be introduced.

With a purpose to introduce school card system, electronic platform has been developing. The system will unite already available data, so the efforts required from schools for data updating will be minimized. Data, needed for authorization will be also reflected in the school cards. The school card will cover all the public and private schools throughout Georgia. Information reflected in the school card will contribute to identification of

schools, requiring special assistance, thus enabling the State to provide timely and targeted reaction. The aim of the school card is to enhance schools' accountability to the community and especially to the parents that will contribute to information-based decision-making.

School card indicators and their calculation formulas were developed by the working groups, at the same time with a new measurable standard for authorization of general educational institutions. Package of legislative documentation was also developed that will be approved in 2015.

3. NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Since June, 2014, NCEQE has been implementing the project "National Qualifications Development and Provision of its Compliance with the European Qualifications Framework", aimed at the development of the National Qualification Framework, complying with the European Qualifications Framework, taking into consideration the Higher Education Qualifications Framework of the European educational area. As a result, National Qualifications Framework will be developed, contributing to curriculum development and quality assurance in the country. Transparency and international recognition of the qualifications awarded in Georgia is also part of this qualification framework.

A working group with participation of educational experts, representatives of educational institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science and NCEQE has been founded. The stakeholders were actively engaged in National Qualifications Framework development process, resulting in:

- 8-levels qualification framework project was developed based on currently existed three (general, vocational, higher education) qualification-frameworks[7] and European Meta-frameworks descriptors;
- Package of amendments for implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and the project for its implementation has been developed.

The first cycle of the project was completed on December 31, 2014. The second cycle, considering the introduction of developed amendments will be started from 2015.

3.2 AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK IN 2014

In 2014, 4 new qualifications were added to the list of the National Qualifications Framework, including 1 field/specialty, 1 subfield/specialty, 2 professional specializations; Only 1 field/specialty has been modified. (See. Appendix #3).

4. STUDENT MOBILITY

Based on the data of the Register of educational institutions, NCEQE administers student mobility procedures. Before 2014, technical support of the mobility process was undertaken by the private companies and since 2014

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[7] Order of the Minister of Education and Science #120/N, dated December 10, 2010.

it has become the function of Education Management Informational System (EMIS), enabling NCEQE to save about 80,000 GEL.

In 2014, mobility procedures were held twice – in autumn and spring semesters. 6203 students were granted the right to mobility. As diagram 4 shows, three times more students participated in the mobility procedure in autumn compared to spring semester. In addition, the number of vacancies announced by HEIs for the autumn and spring mobility procedures exceeded the number of mobility applicants by 3.7 and four times more respectively.

<mark>diagram #4</mark>

5. RECOGNITION OF GEORGIAN AND FOREIGN EDUCATION

5.1 RECOGNITION OF EDUCATION

NCEQE conducts recognition of foreign education and validates the education obtained by the refugees, internally displaced persons and individuals who studied at institutions, liquidated or ceased educational activities. NCEQE also conducts recognition of higher education, obtained on the occupied territories.

Recognition documents developed by NCEQE in 2013:   აქ 2014 ხომ არ უნდა იყოს ?
- Recognition of foreign education – 5405 (mostly: Armenia, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, India, Turkey, Nigeria, Germany, Greece);
- Recognition of education obtained on occupied territories – 0;
- Recognition of education obtained at institutions, liquidated or ceased their activity - 147;
- Recognition of education obtained at licensed HEIs – 157;
- Recognition of education obtained by refugees or internally displaced persons - 0;
- Information requests concerning the status of foreign educational institutions - 278.

LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS MADE IN 2014

Amendment to the "Law of Georgia on Higher Education" was implemented on October 30, 2014, introducing the concepts: "exchange educational programs" and "students' participating in exchange educational programs".[8] In result to the amendments it was defined that student participating in exchange educational program in HEIs, recognized by foreign country legislation, is entitled to continue education in partner HEI of Georgia at the relevant cycle of higher education, pursuant to the decree issued by the administration of this HEI. At the same time, the status of students obtaining education with the framework of exchange program will not be suspended.[9]

The above-mentioned amendment significantly simplified the procedure of foreign students' enrollment to exchange educational programs within HEIs of Georgia. The institutions became authorized to admit foreign students participating in exchange educational program to the educational process without a document on recognition of education obtained abroad and permission of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia.

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[8] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 2.

[9] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 49^2.

Such change will contribute to international mobility and positively affect the increase of the number of foreign students, participating in exchange educational programs in HEIs of Georgia.

The amendment to the "Rules of Validation of the Authenticity of Educational Documents Issued in Georgia and Recognition of Education Obtained in Foreign Countries"[10] was made on October 9, 2014. Pursuant to this amendment, learning outcomes obtained within the study component of a third cycle educational program in HEIs, recognized by foreign countries became a matter of recognition by NCEQE and HEIs, chosen by individuals to continue education, were assigned as authorized bodies for recognition of the research component performed within the scopes of PhD program during a study course in foreign countries (before finishing the scientific work).

5.2 VALIDATION OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF EDUCATION, LEGALIZATION AND APOSTILLIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS

NCEQE conducts the validation of the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia, namely, NCEQE establishes the fact of the issuance of respective qualification documents and certificates, confirming the passing of educational programs, either partially or fully, and their compliance with the requirements of acting Georgian legislation. In 2014 the Centre reviewed 2,640 applications related to the validation of the authenticity of educational documents and 1,189 of them were validated.

NCEQE conducts the validation of the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia through legalization and endorsement with an apostille seal. Legalization of educational documents and apostilles are used for documents issued in Georgia, for the submission to foreign countries.

In 2014 NCEQE received 5,029 applications for legalization and apostillization of official educational documents intended for submission to 72 countries. The majority of these documents were intended to be submitted to the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America (Diagram 5).

To improve the services of legalization and apostillization of educational documents, in 2014 NCEQE started cooperating with the Public Services Development Agency. The aim of this cooperation is to provide the customers with simplified and convenient services. Thus, starting from 2015 the services of legalization and apostillization of educational documents will be available for the customers at Public Service Halls and the recognition of the authenticity will be carried out by NCEQE.

diagram #5

6. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

6.1 VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTING PROGRAM

Within the strategy of the vocational education and training system of Georgia for 2013-2020,[11] NCEQE has been implementing "Vocational Qualifications Development Program" since September 18, 2013; the program aims to improve the quality and relevance of VET programs through the adoption of the labor market-oriented methodologies. To achieve this goal, the program works on revision of the occupational standards,

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[10] Order of the Ministry of Education and Science #98/N, Article 5, Paragraph 62, dated October 1, 2010.
[11] National VET development Strategy for 2013-2020 http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=213&lang=geo

development of the modular programs and relevant materials and assessment tools. Activities carried out within the framework of the program:

- A modular vocational program methodology has been developed;
- A total of 101 occupational standards have been developed through DACUM methodology with participation of more than 500 companies;
- More than 500 teachers have been trained in modular program development, vocational program teaching and assessment methodology;
- Sixty two modular occupational programs, consisting of 1,198 mandatory and selective occupational modules have been developed and examined with participation of private and public educational institutions;
- General skills development modules, being the mandatory component of the occupational programs have been elaborated (including foreign languages, entrepreneurship, communication, interpersonal skills, and quantitative literacy).

On December 20, 2014, presentation of the 2014 annual report of "Vocational Qualifications Development Program" has been held at Tbilisi Marriott Hotel. The event was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, State and private colleges, social partners and facilitators working on vocational standards and programs. The program will be continued in 2015 as well.

6.2 TORINO PROCESS

In 2014, Georgia participated in Torino process, launched by the European Training Foundation (ETF). The activity was carried out by NCEQE. Torino process implies the assessment of the policy in the field of vocational education and development of the report with participation of the stakeholders. Georgia participates in this process since 2010, though first independent analytical country report was developed in 2014. On July 17, 2014 the meeting was held for validation of the first version of the report, where the stakeholders involved in the process discussed the report and presented their considerations. Development of Torino process report was completed in November.

Torino process Eastern Partnership regional summary conference has been organized by the Ministry and NCEQE on December 3-4, in Tbilisi. Analyses of the VET system, established within the frames of Torino process has been presented at the conference by eastern partnership courtiers. The challenges, priorities of Eastern Partnership courtiers and potential directions of regional cooperation were also discussed. The conference was attended by about 60 delegates from 6 partner countries, EU Commission, European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

WORLDSKILLS GEORGIA

In order to promote vocational education and quality enhancement, and approximate the education received in Georgia with EU standards, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, NCEQE conducted the Worldskills Georgia's Second National competition with the assistance of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The opening ceremony of the competitions was held on December 18, and the national competition with participation of the welders, web-designers, cooks, florists, catering and hairdressing specialists under the age

of 22, was held in VET colleges "Spectri" and "Ikarosi". The winners of the Worldskills Georgia 2014 National competition in each occupation will participate in the 43rd Worldskills International competition that will be held in Sao-Paulo, in Brazil, in August, 2015.

7. INTERNATIONALIZATION

7.1 BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG)

Starting from 2013, NCEQE is the representing body of Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) from Georgia. Georgian representation is actively involved in the working group on structural reforms, one of the sub-structures of BFUG. At the end of 2014, on February 2, BFUG council meeting was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, where the working groups presented their reports on conducted activities. A meeting of the working group on structural reforms was held on March 10-11, in Vatikan, discussing the issues: promotion of the graduates' employment, internationalization of education and development of a system of social responsibility.

BFUG meeting was held in Athens, Greece on April 9-10, which discussed the need to revise quality assurance European standards and set guiding principles (ESG) within the European higher education area; accreditation of joint programs was also a topic of discussion. On September 18-19, BFUG extraordinary meeting was held. The main goal of the meeting was revision of Bologna process and discussion of future changes. The issues discussed at this meeting will be placed on the agenda at the Ministers' Conference that will be held in Erevan in 2015. Development of the 2015 communiqué that will be signed by the Ministers in Erevan and serve as a background for Bologna process strategy for 2015-2018 also reached its active phase. Meanwhile, communiqué document was discussed at the meeting held on November 27-28 (Rome).

To become active within the international education area, Georgia has applied for realization of secretarial functions for the next three years and to seek hosting of the Ministers' conference. The decision will be made at the meeting that will be held on January 26-27, in Riga.

In 2014, NCEQE participated in the inquiry with the main goal to collect the data on Bologna process implementation. To develop the report, NCEQE has collected and analyzed information available in the system according the main directions of the Bologna process, namely: educational quality and qualifications, quality assurance, graduates' employment, lifelong education, internationalization and mobility, educational grant mobility and social dimension. The inquiry results will be incorporated into the Bologna process implementation report, giving an opportunity to see the level that Georgia achieved in terms of realization of Bologna process principles, compared to other member countries. BFUG has positively evaluated Bologna process implementation report development period for 2015, as provided indicators make possible not only describe the situation, but also to interpret the fulfillment of responsibilities by the Ministries of Education of member countries.

7.2 PROJECT MAHATMA - MASTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

In March 2012, NCEQE got involved in the MAHATMA - Master in Higher Education Management – project implemented within the framework of the TEMPUS program. The project is aimed at the promotion of the Master's program in Higher Education Management at Georgian and Armenian partner universities. Apart from NCEQE, Georgian Partners of the project are Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Batumi State University, Black Sea International University and

the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. MAHATMA is the three year project and will be completed in September 2015.

7.3 MODERNIZATION OF MATHEMATICS CURRICULA FOR ENGINEERING AND NATURAL SCIENCES IN SOUTH CAUCASIAN UNIVERSITIES BY INTRODUCING MODERN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES (MATHGEAR)

In 2014, NCEQE joined MathGeAr project, supported by "Tempus" program. The project is aimed at modernization of Mathematics curriculum for engineering and natural sciences in South Caucasian universities by introducing modern educational technologies.

HEIs of Georgia, Armenia, France, Germany and Finland are involved in the project, coordinated by Saarland University. Georgia is presented by NCEQE, Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association GRENA, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Akaki Tseretei State University, Technical University of Georgia and Georgian University. The project will be completed in March, 2017.

7.4 TNE-QA - "PROMOTING QUALITY AND RECOGNITION OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION IN ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

In July, 2014 NCEQE joined the project TNE-QA – Promoting Quality and recognition of Transnational Education in Armenia and Georgia".

The aim of the project is to establish internal quality assurance mechanisms in line with OECD/UNESCO guidelines, enhancing quality and promoting regulation and recognition of transnational higher education provisions in Armenia and Georgia.

HEIs and educational institutions from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Georgia and Armenia are involved in the project. Development of a training manual for the staff of HEIs and quality assurance agencies; elaboration of TNE quality assurance frame in line with OECD/UNESCO guidelines and the realization of the pilot accreditation of the programs by the agencies is planned within the framework of the project. Experience of local HEIs in the area of transnational education will also be studied; based on agreement achieved in 2014, NCEQE will become an official partner of the project from 2015.

8. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

In 2014, NCEQE was funded from the following sources: targeted funds allocated from the state budget of Georgia, fees for services rendered by NCEQE and the targeted grant, provided by the UNDP. NCEQE has a completed balance and account with the Treasury.

table

PART II
EDUCATIONAL TRENDS

The data accumulated in NCEQE provides an opportunity to track some educational trends. This section outlines trends in several directions, in particular: changes in the number of educational institutions in 2011-2014; changes in educational programs in 2011-2014; dynamics of authorization and accreditation decisions in 2011-2014; dynamics of student mobility in 2012-2014 and changes in the contingent of students in 2013-2014.

1. CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

According to the data for December, 2014, there are 72 higher and 89 VET institutions in Georgia. Among HEIs there are 28 universities, 32 teaching universities and 11 colleges, while VET institutions include 60 community and 29 vocational colleges. 50 HEIs are located in Tbilisi and 22 in regions; 39 VET institutions are located in Tbilisi and 40 in regions. As for general education institutions, there are currently 2,330 schools throughout the country, among them 2,085 are public and 247 private. Below given analyzes applies only to private general education institutions.[12]

Diagram 6 demonstrates how the number of educational institutions has changed since 2010 till now. The number of general education institutions has decreased by nearly half in 2010 and increased by 40 during the subsequent three years. The number of VET institutions (27) has noticeably increased in 2012. The number of HEIs has increased by 15 in 2011-2014.

diagram #6

2. STATUS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORIZATION RELATED DECISIONS

To date, 69 HEIs out of 72 have passed the authorization procedure, while 2 HEIs operate in the mode of institutional accreditation.[13] 17 out of 19 HEIs with such status had to undergo the accreditation process in 2014 that explains the increased number of authorization decisions compared to the previous year. 16 HEIs out of these 17 applied to NCEQE for authorization and only one of them failed the process. 6 out of 15 HEIs authorized in 2014 (holders of the status equalized to that of an authorized institution until 2014) were Orthodox theological HEIs.[14] 6 newly established HEIs also passed the authorization procedure (See. Appendix #2).

diagram #7

Thirty three VET institutions were remaining by September 1, 2014, and they had to undergo the authorization process before the expiration of this date in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education.[15] Twenty five of out of these institutions passed the authorization process. At the same time six new institutions were granted authorization. Namely this explains the significant increase of authorization decisions, made in 2014. At the same time, the number of VET institutions compared to the previous year decreased by two.

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[12] Law of Georgia on General Education, Article 59, Paragraph 6 - before the beginning of 2015-2016 academic year is applicable only for private schools.

[13] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 89, Paragraph 20.

[14] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 89[4].

[15] Law of Georgia on Vocational Education Article 40, Paragraph 2².

No significant changes related to the number of authorized general education institutions have been made in 2014. 21 private general education institutions, licensed prior to July 21, 2010, but not authorized yet, are still considered to be authorized. Pursuant to the Order issued by the Minister of the Education and Science of Georgia, they have to apply to the Centre for authorization before July 1, 2015.[16]

Diagram 10 shows the percentage indicators of positive decision out of all authorization decisions according the years and types of educational institutions. The dynamics of positive decisions made relative to the authorization of VET institutions and HEIs is similar. The tendency regarding these institutions is comparatively stable and increasing, but for private general education institutions this indicator significantly changes annually and in 2014, Sixty percent (60%) of decisions were negative. The possible explanation is that the majority of VET institutions and HEIs were already established institutions, promoting their own sustainability. As for the general education institutions, the applications submitted to NCEQE were aimed at their primary authorization.

3. STATUS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND ACCREDITATION RELATED DECISIONS

Accreditation is voluntary, though the State grants for Bachelors and Masters Programs are issued only for the funding of accredited programs.[17] Considering that, the vast majority, (90%) of available programs are accredited. Accreditation is mandatory only for regulated, Georgian Language Teaching and Doctoral educational Programs[18], with the exception of Orthodox Theological Doctoral educational programs, provided by the Orthodox Theological HEIs.[19]

From the commencement of program accreditation (2011) until the end of 2014, the Accreditation Council granted accreditation to 1,699 programs, while 99 programs were rejected. Diagram 11 shows the dynamics of positive decisions related to accreditation of educational programs during the last four years by the educational cycles. Despite the fact that the majority of decisions are positive, the tendency shows that number of positive decisions is 10 % less during last two years, which might be the joint effect of newly selected experts and the appointment of the new Accreditation Council (Diagram 11).

Diagram 12 shows the data on accreditation of educational programs by cycles. Compared to the last year, the number of accredited Bachelors and Masters Programs has doubled. One of the reasons was that, institutional accreditation of 17 HEIs, providing the accredited programs, has expired; therefore, these institutions (15) applied NCEQE for the accreditation of existing programs. During the period of 2011-2014, accreditation was granted to 1.450 academic programs in total.

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[16] Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia N 84/N, dated May 19, 2011.
[17] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 63, Paragraph 3.
[18] Law of Georgia on Educational Quality Enhancement Article 17, Paragraph 3.
[19] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 63, Paragraph 4.

As of December 31, 2014, HEIs of Georgia provide 1,642 higher education programs in total, among them 1489 programs are accredited (or regarded as accredited[20]) and 153 have no accreditation. The number of accredited programs according to higher education cycle and legal form of HEIs is shown in Table 1.

Table #1

Nearly two thirds, 63 percent of higher education programs are provided by public HEIs and only 27 percent by the private educational institutions. According to the directions, the majority of programs are provided in humanitarian, engineering, interdisciplinary and business administration directions. Although the number of educational programs provided in public HEIs is 1.7 times more than in private educational institutions, the share of business administration and law directions is two times more in private, than in public HEIs. Diagram 13 reflects that private educational institutions show especially low interest in the delivery of programs in the directions, such as natural sciences, education and art.

A total of 145 foreign language programs are provided in Georgia. The majority of them (57%) are conducted in English, and nearly a third, (28%) are Russian language programs. The remaining programs are bilingual (Diagram 14). According to the directions, most of the English language programs are provided in directions of Health Care (33, among them 19 English language), Engineering (30, among them 16 English language) and Business Administration (29, among them 21 English language).

diagram #14 and diagram #15

4. NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The National Qualifications Framework outlines the qualifications obtainable in Georgian educational system, shows their interconnection at national and international levels, and also includes a list of qualifications awarded in Georgia.

During the last four years, 54 academic and 32 vocational qualifications have been added to the National Qualifications Framework. No changes were made in the National Qualifications Framework in 2011. This demands the adding of new fields/specialties and there has been a significant decrease from 2014. One of the reasons can be that existed list already contains mostly requested qualifications. In addition to this, the rule for adding of qualifications has been changed from 2014[21], requesting from the interested parties to present the justification for adding of new fields/specialties (also sub-fields/specialization and vocational specialization) to the list of qualifications, fields/specialties, thus increasing their responsibility for changes.

Table #2

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[20] Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 88, Paragraph 71.
[21] Order of the Director of National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement #112, dated March 7, 2014.

As of December 2014, the National Qualifications Framework includes 11 directions. The table shows the number of fields/specialties, sub-fields/specializations and vocational specializations falling within each direction. As far as 1 field and 1 sub-field was added to higher education and two specializations to vocational directions in 2014; no significant impact was made on the last year tendencies.

Table #3

5. STUDENT MOBILITY

Based on the data obtained from the Register of Educational Institutions, the Centre administers student mobility process, regulating students' transition from one to another HEI. Mobility procedure is held twice a year – in the fall and spring semesters.

Diagram 16 shows that more students participate in the autumn, rather than in spring mobility. In the 2014-2015 academic year about twice as many students participated than in the fall mobility, while in 2013-2014 academic year this figure was three times more.

Diagram #16

It should be noted that the number of students applying for mobility, annually increases at all cycles of higher education. Mobility right was acquired in total by 4,905 students in 2012- 2013 academic year, by 5,690 students in 2013-2014, and 4,188 students acquired mobility right in first mobility procedure of 2014-2015 academic year.

6. STUDENTS CONTINGET IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF GEORGIA

According to the data of December 2014, 163, 923 students are listed in the Registry of Educational Institutions, at higher education programs of HEIs of Georgia, among them 127, 411 are active students (78%) and the balance (22%) has suspended status. Thirty percent of students are attending private institutions and 70% in public HEIs. Only one in five, (19%) of students are being educated in HEIs located in the regions.

Diagram #17

As expected, the majority (78%) of students is taking Bachelor Program (BA), while the minority of the students is in Doctoral programs (Diagram 17).

Diagram 18 reflects the percentage distribution of active and status suspended[22] students according the higher education cycles. Unlike Bachelors and one-cycle medical programs, the percentage of students with suspended status in Masters and Doctoral programs is significantly high.

Diagram #18

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[22] Suspension of student status means the relieving of students' and their institution's rights and responsibilities for not more than a period of five years. (Order of the Minister of Education and Science #10/N, dated February 4, 2012, Appendix #1)

The data of status suspended students in 2013 and 2014 are nearly similar at all cycle of education, except the Doctoral programs, with 9% decrease of the number of status suspended students (Diagram 19). One of the reasons can be the funding of Doctoral programs started in 2013, pursuant to the order of the Ministry of Education and Science[23]. As it is stipulated in the order, the LEPL Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation provides educational-research grants for Doctoral program students on a competitive basis. Holding of the active status is mandatory requirement for receiving and retaining of the grant.

diagram #19

The cumulative percentage indicator of the status suspended students in 2014 was one percent (1%) higher than compared to the same data in 2013. The reason of the status suspension can be financial issues, illness, enrollment to the international study course, etc. In most cases, financial indebtedness is named as the main cause of the status suspending (55% in 2014), but it should be stated, that this indicator in 2014 was three percent (3%) lower compared to the 2013 data (Diagram #20). At the same time we have the positive tendency in the ratio of status suspending-restoration. In 2012, the ratio was 0.48, in 2013 – 0.53, in 2014 – 0.59.

Diagram #20

According to the 2014 data, 4% (6582) of the students are international students and the majority of them are from Azerbaijan (1950) and India (997). (Diagram #21)

diagram #21

PRIORITIES FOR 2015.

Priorities declared by NCEQE in 2014 are the long-term strategic priorities; therefore four main directions outlined in 2014 will remain topical in 2015 as well:

- Formation of development-oriented educational quality assurance system;
- Provision of legislative amendments to the National Qualifications Framework;
- Promotion of internationalization of Educational system of Georgia;
- Improvement of the services rendered by NCEQE.

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[23] Order of the Minister of Education and Science #147/N, dated September 23, 2013 and Order of the Minister of Education and Science #128/N, September 30, 2014.