



National Center for
Educational Quality
Enhancement
Strategy Document
2016-2020

1. Introduction

LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement Strategy Document 2016-2020 reflects the vision of the National Center on educational quality enhancement in Georgia. It also defines the strategic aims of the Center, as well as, the ways to achieve them and the role of the Center in this process.

The Strategic Plan is a document that supports a coordinated work among the divisions of the Center for the effective achievement of the defined aims. The staff also considers it useful for sharing their vision with everyone interested. By sharing the Strategy Document, everyone can give feedback and contribute to the further improvement of the Center.

The Strategy Document is based on Action Plan approved by the Government of Georgia in which the development of education is recognized to be one of the priorities. It includes the implementation of the Principle of Life Long Learning, enhancing the quality of education and science, improving the system of result-oriented management and support, internationalization of general, vocational and higher education, introducing the principle of dual education, increasing the involvement of the private sector in general, vocational and higher education.

The Strategy Document takes into account the activities of the Center during 2013-2016 as well as international assessments¹ and recommendations of internal assessors. It also reflects the EFQM self-assessment document in 2016.

Review report of the European experts and the assessment by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), while applying for membership, shows that education quality management in Georgia corresponds with best international practice and is dynamically improving. However, both documents underline key areas for improvement. It is recommended to: 1. improve the independence of the Center and for this purpose, develop institutional guarantees and mechanisms; 2. improve the consultative role of the Center in order to support development of quality management systems in educational institutions and to implement quality assurance culture and practice; 3. Implementation of enhancement-

¹ Council of Europe's Review report of the current external quality assurance system in Georgia, by Ms. Ligia Deca and Dr. Achim Hopbach, 2014; The Report regarding the NCEQE compliance with ENQA membership criteria and the ESG by Josep Grifoll Sauri, 2013; PICQA project report, 2011-2012.

oriented quality assurance system. For this purpose, accreditation and authorization standards and evaluation procedures should be reviewed and support capacity-building of involved stakeholders.

The strategy also takes into account the commitments in the field of education undertaken by the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU. In May 2015, the Center prepared a long-term policy document in the framework of the Association Agreement to implement XXXII Annex concerning the European Parliament and European Council recommendations and decisions on higher and vocational education. The Strategy Document fully reflects the objectives of the policy document, including, the improvement of the quality assurance mechanisms in higher and vocational education, recognizing and supporting the principle of Life Long Learning, revision of the National Qualification Framework, active involvement of Georgia in an international and Bologna processes, improvement of compliance in supply of vocational education; improvement of mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning

2. The Mandate of the Center

After the reorganization of the National Center for Educational Accreditation in 2010, LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement was created to improve the education quality promotion in Georgia. The activities of the Center are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Center mandate includes three main competencies:

Quality Assurance

Development of quality assurance standards for educational institutions and programs, authorization (institutional evaluation) of the educational institutions and accreditation of the educational programs.

Support Quality Enhancement

Promote and strengthen quality culture and management practice at Georgian educational institutions; provide customer-centered services

Qualification Development and Improvement



Adopting and implementing the National Education Qualification Framework and Standards; introducing and improving the qualifications based on the Labor Market needs; providing education recognition services for individuals.

3. Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

The vision of the Center is that the Quality of education in Georgia fully complies with international standards, the Center is highly trusted nationally and recognized internationally.

Mission

The mission of the Center is to Support educational quality enhancement, promote and strengthen quality culture and management practice at Georgian educational institutions; provide customer-oriented services and ensure reliability of Georgian educational system.

Values

The Center is guided by the best interests of all stakeholders engaged in the learning process and acts based on principles of independence, transparency, cooperation with stakeholders and continuous improvement. The main values of the Center are:

Cooperation

Cooperation with all stakeholders and ensuring their involvement in the processes.

Independence

Is independent in implementation of its activities and decision-making processes. The Center acts under the principles of objectivity, impartiality and transparency.

Development

Permanent assessment and improvement of its activities.

Professionalism

High competence, effectiveness, and accountability of the staff; respect towards costumers and satisfaction-oriented services.

Social Responsibility

Awareness of the social responsibility and engagement in civil activities.

4. Basic Strategic Landmarks for Organizational Development

In order to adequately respond to existing challenges, raise effectiveness, service quality, customer satisfaction and the same time, become a sustainable and reliable institution, the Center should be driven by following principles and approaches:

- Increase trust in society and strengthen status of independent organization

Trust in society is a precondition for Center's recognition and further improvement. Various factors influence obtaining such kind of social capital, including one of the key factors is the quality of independence and impartiality of the institution. Therefore, the Center should be actively involved in dialogues with every stakeholder to strengthen the basis of an independent institution.

- Active support of the internationalization process

Internationalization of the education is an unconditional priority. It promotes educational quality enhancement, international mobility, international recognition and increases reliability. Internationalization also helps to bring closer Georgian educational system to European standards and realization of Euro-Atlantic integration objective set by the government of Georgia. In addition, the process of internationalization ensures the fulfillment of obligations undertaken in frames of EU-Georgia Association Agreement.

The process of internationalization may include the implementation of international standards in national activities and procedures, as well as cooperation with stakeholders (e.g. quality assurance agencies) abroad, participation of Georgia in international activities, application of international expertise, attracting international students by internationally recognized qualifications and etc.

- Increase the result-oriented approach and further development of quality assurance system

The Center has played an important role in reforming post-Soviet educational quality assurance system and adopting modern mechanisms. The changes were implemented. However, the critical assessment and further development of the system is still needed. It is crucial to base quality assurance process on effective assessment of the results of educational institutions and quality management system.

Therefore, the revision of authorization and accreditation standards should take place. In addition, it is important to improve relevant human resources (experts, the staff of the Center) and decision-making bodies (authorization and accreditation councils).

- Optimization of the Center operations

The Center is one of the most loaded bodies in Georgian educational system. In fulfilling its mission effectively it is crucial to implement a consistent optimization of the activities. To achieve this, it is necessary to critically assess the mandate of the Center and its delegated functions. In addition, it is important to commence the dialogue with stakeholders about the transitional functions. The mandate of the Center should be limited to activities and authorities due to its mission.

- More focus on support of the educational institutions and quality enhancement activities

Along with an external assessment of the educational system, it is important to increase the capabilities of educational institutions to achieve sustainable development of educational quality. Institutions should be able to introduce effective internal quality management system and stimulate a culture of strong, result-oriented organization. To exceed in this profile, the Center should improve its resources.

- Growing utilization of the modern technologies

Introducing modern technologies, maximum automation of working process and using social media as well as electronic capacities ensures optimization and increases efficiency in the Center activities.

5. Strategic Aims, Ways to Achieve Them and Expected Results

Strategic Aims of the Center are:

1. Improve the organizational management systems and build capacity of the Center as well as strengthen its institutional independence according to state policy, government priorities and international standards;
2. Develop result-oriented quality assurance system for educational institutions and programs and improve relevant services;
3. Improve services to support educational institutions;
4. Implement the principle of Life Long Learning in qualification system, using best international practice to optimize and improve education recognition services;
5. Raise awareness about Georgia in European Education Area, support internationalization of education.

Strategic Aim 1:

Improve the organizational management systems and build capacity of the Center as well as strengthen its institutional independence according to state policy, government priorities and international standards

To implement the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)² and international practice, the independence and the level of autonomy of the Center should increase, relevant legal amendments should be made in terms of its legal

² Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)

3.3 Independence (p. 22)

Standard: Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Abovementioned document and fulfillment of its standards are precondition for membership of ENQA and EQAR.

form and regulations. Furthermore, to support its independence, the Center is planning to form an Advisory Council through participation of external stakeholders. While forming the Council, the Center will take into account best international practice and recommendations of all stakeholders. Georgian and international experts will be involved in the Council and they will consult the Center with crucial issues and its development process. This will enable the Center, on the one hand, to act as an external impartial assessor, eliminate procedural gaps, ensure confidentiality while communicating with educational institutions and at the same time provide impartial and transparent quality assurance mechanisms. On the other hand, these changes will meet the requirements of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), regarding well-established procedures of the Center.

To improve the management system, the Center will ensure a structural reorganization. The relevant changes will be implemented according to the strategy and existing challenges of the Center. Renewed structure will optimize business processes. The human resources management will also be reviewed to improve staff motivation and professional development.

To improve the effectiveness of the Center's activities, in a short term, it is important to finalize the unified electronic information system and start its gradual implementation. At the same time, the above mentioned system, the Registry of the Center and Education Management Information System (EMIS) should be effectively synchronized.

One of the priorities of the Center is to improve internal quality management system. For this purpose, since 2015 the Center has been implementing European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model (EFQM). The Model will ensure forming strong organizational culture. In 2016, the Center has already received EFQM first level recognition (EFQM Committed to Excellence Award). In upcoming years, the Center is planning further development of the Quality Management practice (for additional information please visit www.efqm.org). The Center is planning to gain the partnership and membership of EFQM.

Expected Results:

- ✓ The structural mechanisms of accountability and independence of the Center are strengthened;
- ✓ Reorganization of the Center is completed and new structure is adequately responding to challenges and the strategy of the Center.

- ✓ A new system of Human Resources Management is enacted, which increases satisfaction and motivation of the employees;
- ✓ A new unified electronic information system is enacted;
- ✓ The quality management system is enacted and is in compliance with international standards, which increases the Center's efficiency;
- ✓ Customer satisfaction is increased.

Strategic Aim 2:

Develop result-oriented quality assurance system for educational institutions and programs and improve relevant services

The Center has planned a critical review and update of the quality assurance mechanisms in educational institutions. The first step in this process was taken in 2016 when the authorization standards were updated for higher educational institutions. Updated standards of authorization will be implemented and improved during upcoming two years.

Along with improved standards, it is important to further develop the competences and professional occupation of authorization and accreditation experts. To achieve this, the Center will adopt a new system of selection, reviewing and developing accreditation and authorization experts. The system should assure clear qualification requirements for experts, as well as, a complete selection process and effective review of their work. In frames of a new system, the responsibility, work ethics and the code of conduct should be adopted and improved for experts. The same time, the Center will work to improve the qualification and professional development of experts.

The Center is planning to update the rules of operation for the members of the accreditation and authorization Council. The rules of operation will determine the qualification requirements, responsibilities, code of conduct and professional development. Take into account the international practice the appeal system of the Council's decisions will be implemented. This will bring Georgian system even closer to the international best practice.

An effective quality assurance system is greatly based on reasonable monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Therefore, the Center will review and update scheduled and non-scheduled monitoring mechanisms. The monitoring system will be based on risk management approach. This means that number of key factors and criteria will be identified the change of which determines quality management risk level and the necessity for monitoring interference.

As for update of the accreditation system, legislative amendments are already made regarding conditional accreditation and it supports the formation of the flexible quality assurance mechanisms. This will promote the continued development and implementation of the result-oriented approach for accredited programs. Existing mechanisms will be evaluated and if necessary, further improved.

Internationalization of the process will also contribute to the increased quality of the accreditation process for the educational institutions. This can be maintained by the obligatory involvement of international experts in the assessment process. The mechanism will be implemented for English programs at first. It will cover all academic programs. The Center has already launched the registry of international experts and partnership with relevant international institutes.

To improve the accreditation services, the Center is planning to adopt optimal recognition system for foreign accredited entities. This will encourage Georgian educational institutions to adopt more internationally recognized programs and cooperate effectively with foreign institutes.

Update of the accreditation system for vocational educational institutions and programs will take place according to new vocational standards and modular vocational educational programs. The Center will continue improvement of vocational education quality framework, development and compliance with European standards (QEAVET).

Effective registration of relevant data and its reliability is very important for developing quality assurance system. Therefore, the Center should assure effective internal mechanisms of registration and review of the data reflected in the Registry. In addition, new legal obligations should be set for educational institutions entering reliable information in the Registry. This will ensure the accuracy of the entered data by external stakeholders.

Expected Results:

- ✓ Updated standards and procedures for authorization and accreditation and the mechanisms for their implementation ensure result-oriented quality assurance systems of educational institutions are in compliance with modern international requirements;
- ✓ A new system of selection and evaluation of authorization and accreditation experts is enacted and it ensures an objective assessment of the educational institutions and programs, improvement of quality assurance standards, as well as quality and reliability of relevant reports.
- ✓ Renewed system of the authorization and accreditation Councils ensures the transparency, impartiality, effectiveness and reliability in Council's decision-making process;
- ✓ New and effective system for monitoring the educational institutions is improved and enacted;
- ✓ The Registry of the Center is improved, which ensures data accuracy and compliance with existing requirements.

Strategic Aim 3:

Improve services to support educational institutions

To realize the mission of the Center one of the important priorities is to develop consultation/support function. The Center is planning to increase the intensity and coverage in this direction. The Center should improve relevant structural entity to effectively develop this function.

Supporting activities may include informative educational activities, creating and distributing materials, research and consultancy.

Special focus will be devoted to support institutions to create result oriented quality management systems and develop the good practice of self-evaluation.

In order to better analyze existing situation and set the strategy, it is important to comprehensively study the culture of quality and institutional development issues. To achieve this, the Center is planning to develop the practice of complex research about the educational institutions implementing different stages of education. This will enable the evaluation of the progress and support the Center as well as other stakeholders to develop fact-based policy in the field of education.

The Center will focus on the creation of the electronic information resources and will try to develop relevant electronic platforms.

In order to strengthen the supportive component, the Center is planning to develop implementation services for international standards of Quality management in educational area. At the first stage, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) standard implementation service will be provided. This includes trainings about the standard, consultancy for implementation of EFQM and ensuring validation of its implementation.

Expected Results:

- ✓ Internal quality management support mechanisms and recourses are developed that assures the increase of the volume and effectiveness of supportive services;
- ✓ Quality research practice and intervention planning mechanisms, oriented on the needs based on the information analysis, are activated;
- ✓ The Center supports the implementation of internationally recognized quality assurance systems.

Strategic Aim 4:

Implement the principle of Life Long Learning in qualification system, using best international practice to optimize and improve education recognition services

The Center has created a new National Qualification Framework document and internationally defined classifier for study fields that complies with (ISCED) for Life Long Learning through engagement of stakeholders. The enactment of this document will be an important innovation

in Georgian education area. Therefore, special focus should be devoted to its promotion and raising awareness in public. For this purpose, the Center will adopt a communication strategy and implement consistent information campaign.

The Center will provide self-certification for national qualification framework and continue active cooperation with international education networks (ENIC-NARIC) as a representative.

While adopting a new framework, the recognition system of a non-formal education has great significance. In order to effectively adopt a new system of recognition, a delegation process of non-formal education and a monitoring system of an authorized institution should be adopted and gradually operated.

Recognition and validation services optimization and quality improvement is one more priority for the Center. To meet this objective, the Center should improve registry data and increase its accuracy. Therefore, the Center should ensure the effective development of clear internal procedures of filling and verification of data.

In process of optimization of the recognition services, first, the legal basis of the existing practice of the recognition as well as the supply mechanism should be reviewed in terms of the best international practice.

For optimization and improvement of validation and apostille services of the educational documents, it is necessary to develop a justified procedure of uniform practice and synchronization of the supply service component with the Service Agency of the Ministry of Justice.

Expected Results:

- ✓ A new National Qualification Framework document and internationally defined classifier for study fields that complies with (ISCED) is enacted;
- ✓ Stakeholders are fully informed about the new National Qualification Framework document and classifier;
- ✓ A new system of non-formal education recondition is adopted and enacted;
- ✓ Quality of recognition, validation, and apostille services are improved.

Strategic Aim 5:

Raise awareness about Georgia in European Education Area, support internationalization of education

The Center is working hard to acquire full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Since 2013, the Center is an affiliated member of ENQA. At the preparation stage NCEQE will involve an international expert in the evaluation of compliance of the Center's activity with ENQA standards. On the basis of the final report the Center will implement appropriate changes and prepare ENQA full membership application. The ENQA membership will strengthen the credibility of the Center and Georgian education system. It will also raise awareness about the updates of the quality assurance. This will also enable the Center to host ENQA events and cooperate with other member organizations regarding education quality assurance. The membership of the ENQA is a prerequisite for the membership of European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Active participation in Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) is also very important. The Center aims to become a member of the Bologna Follow-up Group Board. Until that, the effort will be devoted to the fulfillment of undertaken functions in the working groups.

To support internationalization process, it is very important to create mechanisms to recognize the decisions of foreign accreditation bodies.

To support internationalization of vocational education, the concepts of introducing ECVET and of compliance among ECVET and ECTS and manual for credit calculation will be developed.

For internationalization of vocational education and compliance with European standards, the Center is planning to cooperate with European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

To support the process of internationalization, the Center will cooperate with European University Association as NCEQE became its member in 2016. The Center will support Georgian educational institutions to integrate in this Association and other international networks.

The fulfilment and recognition of European standards in higher education and vocational education will increase awareness at the international level and result in greater interest of foreign students to study in Georgia.

Expected Results:

- ✓ The Center has full membership status of European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA);
- ✓ The Center is actively involved in Bologna process and is involved in the activities of the secretariat as a member;
- ✓ Mechanism to recognize the decisions of foreign accreditation bodies is developed and introduced;
- ✓ To support internationalization of vocational education, the concepts of introducing ECVET and of compliance among ECVET and ECTS and manual for credit calculation are developed;
- ✓ Evaluation system is established in accordance with international standards;
- ✓ The number of foreign students interested in acquiring education in Georgia is increased;
- ✓ The Center actively participates in activities of European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).