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# **Understanding Motivations for Student Mobility**

## **The Case of Georgia**

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## **Abstract**

The study aims to explore the relationship between migration and the quality of education, considering the lowering quality of higher education in Georgia as one of the main ‘push-factors’. The research itself tries to identify the main motivations of *why* Georgian students migrate. Furthermore, the main gaps and disadvantages of the higher education system of Georgia are investigated. The findings are analyzed with the respect to the implications for country’s development processes, entailing that the lowering quality of higher education and active loss of human capital negatively affect ‘development’.

Key Words: international migration, ‘push-pull’ factors, higher education (HE), human capital, development.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centre
DOS	Department of Statistics of Georgia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HE	Higher Education
MED	Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sciences of Georgia
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# 1 Introduction

Recently, there has been an emerging trend of international students remaining in the country they have been studying in after graduation. Only recently, when granting scholarships to students for study abroad, it has been expected that they would return home in order to share their international experience and positively contribute towards their homeland's developmental interests. However, the profile of international students has shifted since then and, although some of them do return, many of them are choosing to remain outside their countries of origin (Gribble, 2008). This trend is gaining popularity in contemporary Georgia.

The Republic of Georgia - being a small country, both territorially and with a population just under 5 million, the net migration rate has fluctuated significantly in recent years. For the most part, migrants have been seen as only numbers: how many there are, where they go, and how much money they remit to their families back home. This study has attempted to go beyond the numbers and explore the motivations of Georgian migrants who leave the country for study purposes.

Compared to previous years, the unhappiness with the education system in Georgia is growing and especially the dissatisfaction with the quality of higher education (HE). More and more students enrolled in universities are migrating or are willing to migrate abroad for the pursuit of higher education. Mostly the reasons for their decisions to migrate are poor economic conditions at home and the prospect of a better life abroad; however it is assumed that the dissatisfaction with the existing HE quality in Georgia serves as the key driver for students to migrate. In 1997 in Lisbon the representatives of 35 countries signed a convention called *The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region*. Georgia was among the signatories. The convention was ratified by the Parliament of Georgia in the summer of 1999 and, since December, Georgia has become a full-fledged member of the convention. However, the reform did not go as smoothly as expected and resulted in quite a

chaotic situation. Since 2005, Georgia has also been participating in the Bologna Process.<sup>1</sup> However, many students are still frustrated and migrating abroad for better higher education. What exactly they are unhappy with in the system is unclear. This is what the thesis aims to explore.

The best estimates are that Georgia has lost at least 20% of its 1989 population to migration, and by the year 2007 the country has been hosting an ageing population with a high level of “brain drain” – the migration of educated people that leads to the migration becoming permanent (Tanner, 2005:5) – and low birth rates. In fact, Georgia experienced one of the highest rates of migration in the world between 1995 and 2000, and was ranked ninth in the world in 2003 with all experts expecting this pace to continue. UNDP estimates ranked Georgia’s official net migration rate between the years 1995-2000 (5.6 per 1,000) as the 16<sup>th</sup> highest rate worldwide for the period, and fourth among former Soviet states (CRRC, 2007).<sup>2</sup>

Since 2000, the net migration rate started decreasing (-35.2 per 1,000). However, due to the ‘Rose Revolution’<sup>3</sup> in Georgia in 2003 and president Saakashvili’s aggressive politics towards bringing back emigrants, the net migration rates started to increase (5.5 in 2004 and 76.3 in 2005). However, returned migrants soon started going back abroad and others also began to migrate. According to the most recent estimates of the Department of Statistics of Georgia, the net migration rate was -10.2 in 2008 which means that a lot of people are still leaving the country (DOS, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> On June 19, 1999, 29 European Ministers of Education signed a declaration in the oldest university town of Bologna. By signing the document, the ministers expressed their willingness to participate in the creation of a common European Higher Education Area (MoES, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Report submitted to the Danish Refugee Council in 2007 by Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC).

<sup>3</sup> The name ‘Rose Revolution’ comes from the bloodless overthrow of the Georgian government by young opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili and his political allies as they entered the Parliament building with roses in their hands, demanding the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze (1995-2003). The rose was the symbol of peaceful manifestations throughout the events of November 2003 in Georgia. .

## 1.1 Research Problem

The issues concerning migration are the central themes for debates all around the world as well as in Georgia. Remarkably, increasing numbers of international migrants caused the discussion about its positive and/or negative effects to become one of the top issues on the global political agenda. Migration issues also play a significant role in development discourse leading to the question of whether it benefits or hinders the development process itself. It has to be mentioned here that remittances exceed development aid provided by Overseas Development Assistance to developing countries (De Haas, 2009). Technological transformation and globalization processes serve as the main impetus for international migration and, in fact, these processes have been seen in a new light. Recognizing some of its negative aspects, international migration has been recently identified as a tool benefitting countries' further development in the case of both sending and receiving countries. From the sending country point of view, remittances – the money sent back home by migrants – have a large role in improving living conditions and the overall well-being of migrants and their families. They also positively affect the countries' economic development by generating working capital, triggering investments in health and education, and encouraging free enterprise (De Haas, 2009:20; World Bank, 2006). On the other hand, sending countries suffer largely from the 'lost labor' effect and 'brain drain' as well as the breakdown of traditional local communities, making them dependent on remittances (De Haas, 2006: 566). In the case of receiving countries, cheap and extra labor is always an attractive source of benefitting countries' labor market and economy.

Hence, the central elements of this study are students – citizens of Georgia who are going abroad for higher education. The main question is: Why do they move? The movement of people takes many forms, including voluntary and involuntary migration. Although the initial intention can be temporary movement, many migrants become permanent residents (Castles and Miller, 2003: 3). The students are also included in the categorization of migrants and are viewed in this paper as 'potential permanent migrants', also referred to as 'educational migrants'. 'Migrant' is defined here as the person crossing international boundaries and residing in a foreign country for

more than three consecutive months for the purpose of study or work (except for tourism, conferences, leisure, etc.) (CRRC, 2007: 9). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines internationally mobile students as the ones who study in a foreign country of which they are not permanent residents (UIS, 2009: 35). During the last couple of years, human mobility started to increase again in Georgia. Since they are an important ingredient of the nation's human capital, internationally mobile students have been chosen to be the main focus of the inquiry. Another reason for addressing the motivations of student mobility has been the threat of 'brain drain'.

The broad concept of migration concentrates on 'push and pull' factors facilitating migration flows. Taking into consideration the research interest – Georgian students moving abroad for higher education – simple questions arise: Is it because they are unhappy with the existing higher education in Georgia? Or maybe they are attracted by the better quality of higher education abroad and better quality of life in general? The quality of higher education in Georgia is hypothesized to be one of the main determinants of students' decisions to migrate. Among these factors are: expanding career opportunities, new and exciting experiences, more independence, better quality of life, and a tense political situation in their home country (especially after the events of Russia-Georgia war in 2008 resulting in an economic downturn).

Considering the fact of an active out-migration of Georgia's core human capital, the general idea emerged of formulating the main hypothesis followed by the research questions.

*Main hypothesis:* 'People tend to migrate from Georgia, seeking better opportunities by means of attaining quality higher education abroad and because the quality of higher education in Georgia is diminishing. Accordingly, the main motivation for Georgian students to migrate is the unhappiness with the quality of higher education'.

*Research Questions:*

N1 - What are the factors determining the drain of human capital? (quality of education, tense socio-economic and political conditions, attractive opportunities abroad, etc.)

N2 - What are the main disadvantages of the higher education system in contemporary Georgia?

## 1.2 Purpose of the Research

The intent of this study is to better understand the research problem by combining the trends in quantitative data and detailed information from qualitative research based on mixed methodology (Creswell 2003: 101). In the study, an E-mail survey was used to measure the relationship between the quality of higher education and migration. At the same time, the conditions of the higher education system have been explored using in-depth interviews with Georgian experts in the field of education familiar with student mobility issues.

The study expands the theoretical perspective of human behavior determinants to the context of Georgia's student mobility at the international level, linking it with the quality of higher education (HE). The study investigates the issues of human mobility and education from the standpoint of a sending country which has been scarcely discussed on the international agenda. In a larger perspective, it can also contribute to improving the quality of HE and management of student mobility issues in Georgia. Foremost, the study hopes to emphasize the importance of paying deserved attention to the fields of human mobility and education with regards to further development of the country.

## 1.3 Overview of the Previous Studies

Despite the fact that migration has been studied from various angles, it is obvious that some of its angles are less studied than others. For instance, much is known and said about the motivations of migration in general. However, less attention has been paid to the motivations of students' migration. International student mobility has been studied with respect to the formation of national policies and education strategies, as in the case of Asian HE focusing on creating a global education network (Sugimura, 2008). Additionally, the impacts of student mobility for both sending and receiving countries have been investigated with regards to the management of international student mobility in the study of Cate Gribble (2008). The nature of cross-border flows have been studied by Mei Li and Mark Bray (2007) in relation to the 'push-pull' factors

determining the motivations of Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau. It is also worth noting that the studies concerning student mobility motivations in so-called ‘developed countries’ address the issue in light of globalization processes and transnational identity. For instance, globally recognized prestige of international higher education does not serve as a primary motivation for UK students and only serves as a ‘second chance’ in accessing elite education, as highlighted in the study of Rachel Brooks and Johanna Waters (2009). Conversely, the motivations of student mobility in developing countries are being discussed from a considerably different perspective, where the decision to migrate is not only a matter of prestige, but the matter of interplay between significant ‘push and pull’ factors as it is outlined further in the paper.

As for finding out the relationship between human mobility, education and development from the sending country’s perspective, specifically addressing the context of Georgia, the scarcity of information originates. However, there have still been conducted several studies concerning the trends in human mobility, the most recent being ‘Voices of Migration in Georgia’ – a qualitative study of migrant’s households and returned migrants conducted by the Caucasus Resources Research Centre. Here, the idea of getting an education abroad has been widely supported, referring to the inappropriate quality HE of Georgia (Erlich et. al, 2009). However, no study has addressed the issue as in-depth as the given paper attempted to.

## 1.4 Outline of the Study

The introduction is followed by the contextualization of the research interest within the study. The subsequent chapter summarizes the theories of international migration and distinguishes the two mainstreams explaining the issues of human mobility and education within development discourse. In chapter four comes the review of the research design, methodological choices leading to comparing and contrasting the findings. The conclusive section outlines the implications of the research findings at the national level within the context of development.

## 2 Background

Migration is a broad concept involving individual and collective actions, spatial movement and long-term residence in another country. It also implies social change and affects social existence in both home and host countries (Castles & Miller 2003: 3). The study of migration is generally based on the changing of one's residence from one political unit to another, such as province, state or international border. When resulting in large-scale international mobility, social, political and economic impacts can be significant for the countries involved (Brettell & Hollifield 2000: 47, ff.).

International migration generally refers to 'push-pull' movements of a population across national boundaries; these are the people who emigrate (exit) from and immigrate (enter) to other countries (Messina & Lahav 2006: 9). 'Push factors' are those which persuade individuals to leave their country of origin, while 'pull factors' are those attracting people to move abroad where they see better opportunities (Castles & Miller 2003: 22). This interaction of 'push-pull' factors has been revealed further in the paper with the in-depth analysis of both types of factors determining students' decision-making in the process of migration.

## 2.1 Country Context: Georgia



The independent country of Georgia was absorbed into Russian Empire in 19<sup>th</sup> century, followed by its forceful incorporation into the USSR until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (CIA World Factbook). Since then, the country has undergone significant changes and experienced sharp declines mainly due to civil war and the two territorial conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which caused significant population shifts. Being the wealthiest republic in the Soviet Union due to its tourism industry and abundant agriculture, Georgia faced severe economic and social downfall during the 1990s, facing large rates of unemployment and a low standard of living (Bernabe & Stampini 2009: 380). Poverty increased significantly during the years 1997-2000.<sup>4</sup> After the 2003 Rose Revolution and the subsequent Western-oriented government of Mikheil Saakashvili actively pursued a campaign supporting expansive market oriented reforms, and an aggressive anti-corruption crusade resulted in GDP growth and the perception of an improved business environment. The population living below poverty line decreased from 52% to 39.4% in 2005 (CRRC, 2007). GDP per capita grew to 11.1% in 2003, with relative fluctuation throughout the years marking 12.4% growth in year 2007. However, it had sharply decreased in 2008 (2.1% due to the South Ossetia conflict and the global economic crisis) and has scored 2.5% in 2009 (MED Georgia).

Today, Georgia ranks 89<sup>th</sup> out of a total 182 countries and is included in the list of ‘Medium Human Development’ countries according to the UNDP Human Development Index, which includes the longevity, education and the living standard as measured by the real GDP per capita at PPP (UNDP, 2009). Despite the impressive leap ahead during only a couple of years, not all problems have been solved.

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<sup>4</sup> More than half of the Georgian population had US\$4.30 per capita per day at PPP throughout the years 1997-2000 when the recommended poverty line was US\$1.075 per capita a day at PPP.

The three main migration flows can be outlined in the case of Georgia:

From 1990 to 1995 – an estimated 650,000 people, comprising 12% of the 1989 population, fled the country as refugees and ethnic non-Georgians (CRRC, 2007).

From 1996 to 2004 – A substantial flow of Georgian citizens as labor and educational migrants left in large numbers to Western Europe and North America. Educational migration gained popularity among youth (ibid: 16). In 2003, Georgia had the ninth highest rate of migration worldwide, approximately 200 out of 1,000 people leaving the country, just behind El Salvador and just ahead of Moldova (Mansoor & Quillin 2007: 25).

From 2004 to date – it has to be indicated that more circular migration has taken place during recent years. However, this is a fragile trend relying on further economic and political progress. The unemployment rate was high in 2006 (75%) especially among 20-30 year olds (30%), pointing to low job creation as a primary cause (CRRC 2007: 13). This could have served as a solid incentive for emigration. It is also worth mentioning the August 2008 conflict which most likely has contributed little to return migration, if not ignited out-migration.

According to the UN Population Division projections, Georgia will experience the largest population loss in the world between 2010 and 2050. By 2050, Georgia is predicted to experience the fourth largest decline in population around the world (United Nations, 2008).

After the overall situation started to stabilize in the country starting from year 2003, the educational migration started to become more and more popular. Those parents who had opportunities for funding their children have been sending them overseas for study purposes. The number of scholarships also started to increase. Together with a stagnating educational system due to corruption, migration was the best outcome for highly motivated students (CRRC 2007: 17).

The changes in the higher education system being a strong foothold of a strong nation-state can have significant implications for the country. In particular, negative changes such as lowering the quality of education can solidly affect population mobility. Taking into consideration the future population prospects of Georgia, securing the education system might be an important step in human mobility management, avoiding threats as ‘brain drain’ and the loss of the labor force. When looking at student mobility trends all over the world, Georgia still has a remarkable number of educational migrants. According to UIS data, Georgia is classified in the region of

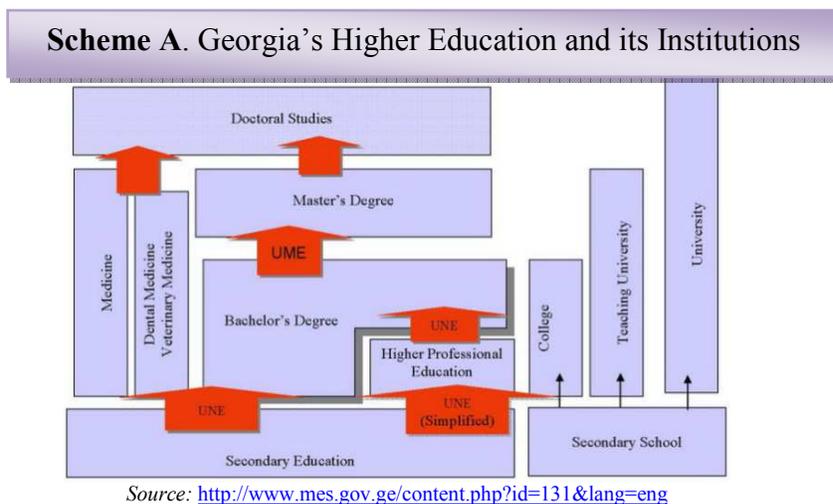
Central Asia, which ranks second in having the largest outbound student mobility ratios after Sub-Saharan Africa. Georgia places 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Central Asia region with 6% outbound ratio, with Turkmenistan (28%) and Uzbekistan (13%) taking the first and second position, respectively (UIS, 2009: 46). It is also worth indicating that from year 1999 to year 2007, outbound student mobility grew faster than local enrollment, meaning that more students preferred to go abroad rather than get a local tertiary education. Georgia is sixth among these countries, having the highest leap of a 9% increase in student out-migration since year 1999 (UIS, 2009: 38).

The information above can be regarded as the stimulus of this study, aiming to define the motivations of Georgian student mobility and the ‘push and pull’ factors, in particular, determining their decision-making process and the investigation of the deficiencies in local tertiary education.

## 2.2 Education Quality in Georgia

During Soviet times, Georgia stood out with its high level of educated and skilled human capital (MoES, 2007a). However, due to the large flight of people during the transition period and thriving corruption, the education system started to stagnate, and at the same time, the quality of education started decreasing over the years. In 1994, Tbilisi State University became the first to introduce a two-step higher education process comprising of 4+2 model. It was the first step towards improving education quality and approaching international standards, which caused massive critiques of the reform. The criticism has not been groundless and referred mainly to the spontaneity of the reform, lack of substantial aim and the purpose guided by the rapid denial of the Soviet education system and automatic implementation of the Western model into an inadequate environment (Kachkachishvili, et.al, 2000). The initial steps of higher education system reform were continued by Georgia’s incorporation into the Bologna Process in 2005, when the three-cycle degree system was adopted and vocational education was introduced as an innovation together with: National Examination Center, National Education Accreditation Center, National Curriculum and Assessment Center, Teachers’ Professional Development Center, and Inclusive Education (MoES, 2007a). The establishment of all the above mentioned is

commendable indeed, though their functioning is a matter of debate. Today, Georgia's HE looks as shown in the Scheme A below:



With joining the Bologna Process, Georgia automatically signed up for international cooperation and struggle for achieving Millennium Development Goals.<sup>5</sup> Directing its main attention towards accomplishing the goal of providing quality primary education equally by 2015, the unstable HE system has been gradually losing its weight. In planning to meet the international requirements concerning the quality of HE by embracing all its components, the definition of quality education has also been shared. The quality in the context of education includes: 1) healthy learners; 2) healthy, safe, gender sensitive environments providing adequate resources and facilities; 3) relevant curricula; 4) trained teachers oriented on a learner-centered approach and 5) outcomes encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to national goals. This definition views education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context (UNICEF, 2000). The quality in HE implies an appropriate infrastructure, academic peer review, international exchange of knowledge, teacher and student mobility, appropriate teaching and learning methodology, defining comparative standards of quality recognized at the international level, and the promotion of appropriate programs for academic staff development (UNESCO, 1998). The quality assurance service has been established in Georgia to support and monitor the process of meeting the defined standards.

<sup>5</sup> By adopting the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the international community pledged to eradicate extreme poverty around the world. Eight goals were set to be achieved by the year 2015 (United Nations, 2008).

The provision of quality HE encompasses the allocation of large financial resources, while public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure in years 2000-2007 was only 9% (UNDP, 2009). The ultimate goal of the reform has been to establish a system which will ensure the provision of highly qualified, self-reliant and internationally competitive human resources leading the country to poverty reduction, improved social welfare and economic growth. Thus, the education reforms in Georgia have been based on the globally acknowledged principles of a knowledge-based society and economy (MoES, 2007b: 32). However, Georgia is far from reaching international standards, as the research has shown.

The main focus of the study remains the decreasing quality of HE in Georgia serving as an impetus of student migration, whereas the exploration of what exactly has been going wrong can positively contribute to the functioning of the HE system.

### 3 Theoretical Frameworks

The initial aim of any theory applied to the research is to find out how and why the variables are interconnected. The mixed methods research can contain a theoretical lens focusing on several issues, which guides the entire study (Creswell 2003: 119). This study is mainly guided by the theoretical lens of human behavior, focusing on international migration, specifically temporary migration with educational purposes. However the paper includes more theoretical perspectives in order to distinguish the relationship between the chain of human mobility, quality of higher education and development.

The study of human behavior is embedded in the development of sociological theories. As it is complicated and has many angles, there is no single theory encompassing all aspects of human behavior (Giddens 2006:102). Human mobility has been the core interest of this paper, implying the main question of ‘why do people migrate?’ The question posed implicates the existence of certain circumstances determining the way people act (migrate), particularly pointing at the set of social structures (comprising of social institutions) playing major role in an individual’s

decision-making process. For instance, the unsatisfactory higher education system in Georgia pushes certain individuals to certain actions – moving to another country in search of better education. However, this interplay of *social structure* and *human action* are still being considered as theoretical dilemmas among some other scholars (Giddens 2006:102). This type of dilemma includes questions such as: How far are creative human beings controlling their own lives? Is the largest share of our actions derived from the general social forces from outside? These have been the issues causing large debates among sociologists stressing the creative nature of human beings on one hand and emphasizing the constraining feature of social influences on the other (ibid: 105). Emile Durkheim has developed a theory supporting the superiority of *social constraint* over the actions of the individual, arguing that social structure sets limit to the actions of individuals, hence not determining them (ibid: 106, ff.). On the other hand, Anthony Giddens tried to resolve the dilemma by bridging the gaps between structure and action, arguing that human beings actively produce and reproduce the social structure throughout their everyday lives. This notion has been further elaborated in his theory of '*structuration*', where structure and action are interrelated. This theory helps in linking social action (agency) and social institutions (structure), as well as their transformations, in order to explain social causation (Giddens 1979: 50). For instance, the fact that one uses a monetary system to some extent contributes to the existence of that system. If everyone, or the majority of people, would stop using it, the system would be destroyed (Giddens 2006:108). In the case of this study, following the logic above, if the students continue to emigrate in large numbers, the quantity left in the country will not be sufficient for keeping Georgia's higher education functioning, and would therefore dissolve the system. Consequently, the damaged higher education system would negatively affect the country's further socio-economic and political development. Concluding that, educational migration in Georgia should be given more attention and managed in a way so as not to cause negative effects for the entire country.

The study of migration is generally associated with the inquiries of Ravenstein and his "push-pull" incentives of migration still topical among the modern theories of migration. There are general theories emphasizing tendencies of people to move from rural to urban areas, from 'developing' to 'developed' countries, and from densely to sparsely populated areas. These approaches are known as 'push-pull' theories because they perceive that the causes of migration

lie in a combination of ‘push’: low standard of living, lack of economic opportunities, and tense political situations, and ‘pull factors’: better economic opportunities, a demand for labor, political freedoms, and so forth (Castles & Miller 2003:22).

All in all, almost all explanatory migration theories are addressing material benefits as the main motivation for migration, though they may also underestimate the complexity of human motivation in the same way as ‘Rational choice’ theories do. Although none of the theories can completely explain the phenomenon, the study can serve as a contribution to the theories.

### 3.1 Theories of International Migration

As far as the ‘educational migrant’ in this study is viewed as a *potential* emigrant, it is appropriate to consider the theories not limited with the differentiation of specific ‘migrant’ types, but encompassing the entire concept of international migration. In addition, there is no coherent, single theory for international migration, only a variety of fragmented theories have been developed and are mainly divided by various disciplinary boundaries (Douglas S. et al. 2006: 35). However, these theories do not completely exclude each other; they have even some commonalities. In order to see what these common features are, several theories initiating international migration have been briefly discussed:

Neoclassical Economics of Migration – mainly focuses on differentials in wages and employment opportunities between countries and considers the process of migration as the result of individual decision-making based on the calculation of feasible costs and benefits (Douglas S. et al. 2006: 36). This theory assumes that utility maximization is one of the basic needs of an individual (Castles & Miller 2003:23).

New Economics of Migration – this approach considers migration as the outcome of household decision-making, focusing on the conditions in a variety of markets. In this case, people act together not only to maximize their income, but also minimize the risks and constraints related to the market failures (Douglas S. et al. 2006: 39). It has to be noted that the absolute exclusion of individual decision-making does not seem quite realistic.

Dual Labor Market theory – rejects individuals and households as the only decision-makers in the migratory process and focuses on the demands of industrial societies. According to the theory, international migration is initiated through the demand of labor in developed countries. As the demand for the labor force grows in developed nations, the rate of emigration grows in the developing nations (ibid: 41). Although, it is rather a question of what Giddens ‘bracketing’ of micro-level factors and processes are. Thus, the explanation is based on macro-level processes and the relations between them.

World Systems Theory – is based on the works of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). This theory sees the main initiations of international migration in the structure of world market and outflows from the periphery to the center; thus also focusing on macro processes ‘bracketing’ individual motivations. According to this theory, migration is the product of disruptions that take place in the capitalist development. As the large share of the global population is tied to the world market economy, the land and raw materials within peripheral regions are controlled by foreign markets (Douglas S. et al., 2006). Hence, migratory movements arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries on the grounds of colonization, trade, political influence, investment and cultural ties (Castles & Miller 2003: 26).

According to the theories discussed, international migration is a product of individual decision-making as well as household. The structural state of affairs plays an equally important role in the process. It can be highlighted that micro- and macro- level processes are interrelated and the changes at one level can at some extent affect another.

The theories described highlight one common motivation for people to migrate which is economic incentive: individuals are striving for higher wages and improvement of their standard of living. However, economic theories of migration are often criticized for being too narrow for neglecting social, political, and psychological motivations for migration (Douglas S. et al. 2006: 31).

## 3.2 Human Capital Theory

Human capital is the central concept of the neoclassical economics micro theory. In addition to the motivations for international migration, it sees education as the prerequisite for enhanced life chances. This theory implies that there is no better capital investment than investment in human beings. Paying major attention to the labor force, the theory implies that people migrate for better job opportunities. People decide to invest in migration the same way they decide to invest in education and vocational training, because it raises their human capital and brings future financial gains. Individuals calculate costs and benefits of migration and the decision is made only when the return from wages abroad is higher than the expenses during travel (Castles & Miller 2003:23). The better education the person gains, the better his/her chances are in finding a better job. If a person has no access to high quality education, eventually his/her chances to find a better job decrease. This, consequently, leads an individual to migrate.

Investment in human capital is also related to the rates of returns in investments. Economists consider that an increase in investments in human capital throughout an individual's life cycle results in the rate of return on the investments made in any period. Human capital investments can play a larger role in developing countries. For instance, in the case of Venezuela, incomes vary over the life cycle of those with different levels of education. For those with higher education who started work at a later age, their incomes sharply surpass those who started working earlier (Todaro & Smith 2003: 370). As Todaro argues in his refined neoclassical model, the important factor in migration decision-making is the *expected earnings gap* and not the absolute real-wage differential (Douglas S. et al., 2006: 51). To sum up, the human capital theory argues that in order to get highly-paid jobs, people need to be highly educated.

The unhappiness with the higher education system in the home country is not explicitly outlined in any of the theories highlighted above as the main motivation of persons to migrate, however it is implied as being more of an implicit nature.

### 3.3 Capability Approach

The aforementioned theories mainly focus on the economic aspect of human lives. Usually, classical views of migration and development are mainly oriented on structural, economic macro forces ruling human lives and neglecting individual agency (De Haas 2009: 20). Though it should be highlighted that human agency plays an extremely important role in the processes of migration as well as development. This perspective is largely discussed and substantiated by Amartya Sen in his theoretical assumption of “human capabilities”. As he defines it: “development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999). Human development in this study is viewed as economic, social, political and cultural changes that enlarge people’s choices and capability to control their own lives (De Haas, 2009). However, when speaking about ‘development’, though economic progress is crucial for the countries’ further development and expansion of individual freedoms, it is not the only factor and a comprehensive nature of development should be taken into consideration.

According to Sen (1999: 36), ‘development’ encompasses the expansion of all kinds of human freedoms, starting with overcoming the deprivation of those capabilities such as starvation and premature mortality, as well as the right to literacy and political participation. Consequently, access to basic education should be guaranteed to all who are deprived of indicated capability. Moreover, in the case of Georgia, it is mostly an access to *quality* higher education that is limited, which in this sense is the deprivation of human freedoms. In this case, lowering the level of education can negatively affect the country’s further development as well as generate more out-migration with the aim of enhancing one’s individual freedom (education).

These freedoms are expressed in the basic needs of individuals to have healthy lives, to be well-clothed, to have access to at least a basic education, and to have the freedom of employment choice. Sen based his arguments on the concept of *human capabilities*, which associates with the ability of people to lead their own lives and enhance those real choices they have. Furthermore, increasing individual freedoms such as better education, freedom of movement, healthcare, and access to markets and politics are essential elements in promoting economic growth together with development also enhancing people’s human capital (Sen 1999). Sen bridges the gaps between micro and macro level approaches discussed above and develops a more all-encompassing theory. Accordingly, the freedom enhancing desire of getting better education for

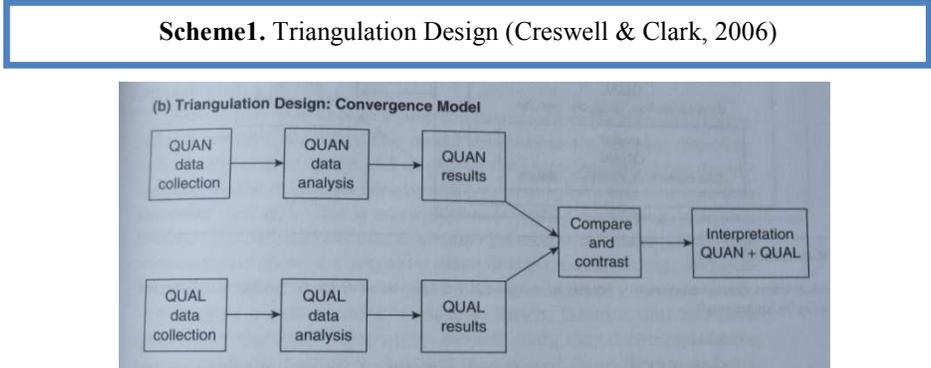
instance, can serve as a motivation for migration. Regarding human agency, their mobility is a potential force for structural change because it can alter social and economic conditions in sending as well as receiving countries (De Haas, 2009). In the case of developing countries, the role of institutional and natural environment in which people live substantially defines the extent to which people are capable in shaping their own lives. The main argument here is that migration can be seen as a livelihood strategy used by individuals or households to overcome developmental constraints such as unemployment, inadequate government services (insufficient quality of education), and access to those resources enabling them to increase their freedoms (ibid: 23).

# 4 Research Design

The mixed methods design has been identified as the framework of the entire inquiry. Mixed methods research is defined as the bearer of both philosophical assumptions: that which guides the collection and analysis of data and the methods of inquiry, and that which focuses on collecting, analyzing and mixing the quantitative and qualitative data in one or several studies. The combination of these two approaches provides a better understanding of the research problem rather than each approach separately (Creswell & Clark 2006:5).

In this particular case, the quantitative and qualitative data have been converged in order to provide as comprehensive an analysis of the research problem as possible. This has been the case when the researcher collects both types of data simultaneously during one study and then incorporates the outcomes into the overall analysis of the results (Creswell 2003: 16). Qualitative and quantitative data provide the analysis of the problems when just simple numbers and words are not enough. Quantitative researchers admit the importance of qualitative data as it contributes to quantitative research, and the qualitative researchers realize that reporting views of several respondents makes it impossible to generalize the results to the wider population (Creswell & Clark 2006:13).

Specifically, the research has been leaning upon the triangulation design of mixed methods:



The triangulation method (applying qualitative and quantitative methods in one study) is often used to prove the reliability of a certain research tool as well as to cross-check the validity of the

data obtained (McNeill & Chapman 2005: 22, 23). In this case, the quantitative approach has been applied to the first part of the research being more for descriptive purposes, though it is impossible to describe something without explaining it at the same time (McNeill & Chapman 2005:8). On the other hand the qualitative approach has been used to enhance and clarify the quantitative research findings, mainly focusing on the research question N2 – ‘What are the main disadvantages of Georgia’s higher education system?’ Hence, the common themes have been investigated throughout both quantitative and qualitative inquiries, such as the *incentives of student mobility; opinions about Georgia’s higher education system; evaluation of study process components; and international competitiveness of Georgian universities.*

## 4.1 The Research Methods

Every kind of social research tries to examine and study some kind of social phenomenon, set the problem and goals of the research, and find the answers with the help of various research methods. Correspondingly, the right choice of methodology and the research tools themselves play the most important role in the process. The choice of methods largely depends on the essence of research questions as well as the consideration of time, money and labour-power (McNeill & Chapman 2005: 25). Considering the research problem of this thesis and all the above mentioned, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been applied.

- ***The E-mail survey*** was carried out for the quantitative part of the research. Its aim was to identify such issues as: the most frequent reasons for student migration; what exactly they have been unhappy with in the higher education system of Georgia; and what has been the criterion for having an appropriate study process at a university.
- ***The Expert Interviews*** was carried out to enhance and clarify the quantitative research findings as well as provide a comprehensive picture of Georgia’s higher education system, pinpointing its advantages and disadvantages.

## 4.2 An E-mail Survey

An E-mail survey is a research tool that makes it possible to send a questionnaire to a respondent via e-mail and also samples respondents via e-mail (Porter, 2008). This method has been applied since the 1980s for research in social sciences. There is no ‘ideal’ or ‘all-encompassing’ research method, so this one also has its advantages and disadvantages.

A social survey usually has a form of self-completion questionnaire which can be handed to the respondent or sent by post or via e-mail or read by the interviewer to the respondent either face to face, or by telephone). The positive feature of this method is its efficiency in collecting a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time. Large groups of people can be surveyed thus raising the chances of them being more representative of wider society. Surveys are easily replicated and the data can be verified by others (McNeill & Chapman, 2005:28, 29). Including the aspects discussed, the E-mail survey has been chosen because it has been impossible to locate the research population in one certain geographical area. This was due to the fact that the ‘population of interest’ has been Georgian students temporarily residing abroad for study purposes at the time the survey was carried out. Consequently, it was unattainable to reach them all over the world with any other instrument than by virtual means, such as an E-mail survey, as the existence of available electronic connections nowadays should not have been a problem, especially for students getting higher education supposedly in ‘developed countries’. Ultimately, 400 students – citizens of Georgia - were selected according to the sampling frame discussed further in this chapter. The timeline in administering in the survey was approximately two weeks (specifically - 16 days).

E-mail surveys are even less costly than other types of surveys because of the lack of printing, postage or interviewer costs; moreover they enable quite rapid collection of the data (Porter, 2008). The main concern related to E-mail surveys are technical confusions, mostly from the side of the respondents. First of all, respondents must be aware of how to run an attached file on their computer and be comfortable with it. Despite any possible drawbacks in this manner, the response rate is usually quite high (Porter, 2008). In this case, more than a half of the sample responded.

In order to avoid those confusions, the questionnaire was constructed electronically, requiring just a single click of the mouse. The questions were structured in a logical way, in Georgian language, mostly being closed-ended (with the list of possible answers). With the aim of decreasing the chance of questionnaires going to the ‘spam’ folder, a preceding e-mail was sent out comprising of an introductory message about the research.

### 4.3 Expert Interviews

The qualitative research was conducted with experts in the field of education familiar with student mobility. Interviewing the professionals in the field gave the possibility to cross-check the extent to which the ideas of survey respondents and experts coincided or contradicted, in order to get more comprehensive information about Georgia’s higher education system and objective overall picture, either supporting or refuting the hypothesis. All in all, six persons comprised the group of experts.

The interview guide was semi-structured, outlining the major discussion topics and some open-ended questions. This form of interview gives more freedom of expression for respondent’s thoughts and ideas; moreover unproductive topics can be initially excluded from the guideline questionnaire (Flick 2006:165). Here, whether the interview will be relevant or not, the interviewer plays a large part in managing how to restrict and determine the interview to the major area of interest. Some of the limitations of the method are: 1) The expert can serve as a barrier to the interview because he/she proved not to be an expert in the field as previously assumed; 2) The expert can substantially lose the topic of the interview; 3) The expert’s roles keep changing between expert and private person which can result in gaining more information about the expert’s private life and experiences, rather than expert knowledge; 4) The expert gives a lecture on his/her knowledge and if this occurs in the beginning of the interview, the latter can be regarded as useless (Flick, 2006:165). Of course, gaining the benevolence of an interviewee will strongly affect the efficiency of an interview. The process of the interview was recorded as well as some notes taken on paper. At the end, transcripts of the interviews were done. The length of each of the interviews varied from approximately 25 to 60 minutes, and was carried out over 10 days.

## 4.4 Sampling

The researcher usually has to make a decision exactly *who* will be surveyed, because the ‘population of interest’ (all those people who could have been included in the survey) is often very large, sometimes several million, depending on the subject of the research. There are several ways of sampling such as ‘random’ or ‘probability’ sampling, ‘stratified’ and ‘quota’ sampling, etc. When the researcher chooses a certain group of people or place to study because it is known to be of type that is needed, ‘purposive sampling’ occurs (McNeill & Chapman, 2005: 46-50). As it was impossible to track down all educational migrants due to the non-existence of a common database, the following frame has been established:

The ‘population of interest’ were the students with education corresponding to a tertiary level education; citizens of the Republic of Georgia; and with experience of attaining higher education outside Georgia’s territorial boundaries. Scholarship, any kinds of projects and foundations, should have been their means of study and living abroad. Every such program or fund existing in Georgia was located and contacted and the database with the contact information was obtained. Most of the funds that gave scholarships to the students have been established since 1996, which means that some of the students surveyed are no longer ‘students’ in 2010. Nevertheless, the questionnaire was constructed in a way to be appropriate for everyone participating in the survey. All in all, 400 Georgian students were identified who have studied or have been studying abroad. Generally, the scientific research tries to make generalizations about the characteristics of the interest groups. However it is not the ambition of this particular research to do so (*see the study limitations on p.7*).

There is one limitation of the ‘purposive sampling’ – another researcher can always come up with different characteristics and typical elements to be included in the sample. Although, given the subjectivity of the selection mechanism, purposive sampling is more appropriate for a small sample size and restricted population definition when inference to the population is not a top priority (Battaglia, 2008).

Sampling for the Expert Interviews was accomplished according to the ‘snow-ball’ sampling principle. This technique can be applied in two survey contexts: the first context involves

surveying members of a rare population. The second involves studying mutual relationships among population members. In both cases, respondents are expected to know about the identity of other members of the same population group (Chromy, 2008). As far as the “experts” comprised of persons who have participated and given advice during the process of education reform in Georgia and have been involved in joint projects with the Government of Georgia and European Commission and other international bodies – Georgian politicians, professors of two major Tbilisi State Universities, and the persons managing the quality assurance of higher education system in Georgia – the snow-ball sampling was the most relevant tool to apply. Hence, it had proved that the first respondent’s personal contacts led to efficient results.

## 4.5 Pilot Survey

Conducting a pilot survey before launching actual survey research is essential. Here, the questionnaire can be tried out on a number of people who are similar to those investigated in the actual research (McNeill & Chapman 2005: 45). While testing the questionnaire on five Georgian students residing abroad, several important changes took place. For instance, the wording of some questions was changed; the layout of some questions came to be confusing for the respondents; some of the questions as well as answer choices needed to be defined and concepts required clarification. The questionnaire showed its strengths and weaknesses and was re-constructed according to all the requirements that showed up as a result of the pilot survey. In the case of the Expert Interviews, the questionnaire was not strictly structured and the actual process of the interview was dictating the rules (asking additional questions; asking for specifications, etc).

## 4.6 Reliability, Validity, Representativeness

Last but not least, the three concepts are extremely significant for social research. *Reliability* is directed to the method, which means that no matter how many times a researcher uses the method he/she should come up with the same results. The research method is reliable when certain research is repeated and the results are the same. For example, a method such as

participant observation involves a researcher in a situation that mostly cannot be repeated; this is why this method is often regarded as unreliable. *Validity* refers to the issue of whether the data being collected is a real picture of what is being studied. Often the data looks like a product of a method being used rather than the research interest. *Representativeness* characterises the sample of the research. The main question here is whether the group of people or the situation being studied are typical of others. If it is so, we can assume that what is true of this group is also true for others, so the outcomes can be generalised (McNeill & Chapman 2005: 9, 10). Questionnaire surveys usually maximise validity and reliability (Buckingham & Saunders 2004: 72).

## 4.7 Limitations of the study

There are several factors acting as obstacles to the generalization of the research. First of all, the non-covered part of the research population was quite large (Lee, 2008). The sample included only those respondents who have been granted a scholarship and none of those who migrated on their own. Furthermore, the non-response rate was quite high: 165 respondents out of 400 did not fill in the questionnaire and no one knows how their answers could have affected the results (Basson, 2008). The reason for a high non-response rate could be the time involved in completing the questionnaires. As some of the funds have been established since year 1996, by the time the survey was conducted in 2010, those respondents might have changed their e-mail addresses or just were not interested in the subject as they were not 'students' any more (out of 165 e-mails, only 28 bounced back).

# 5. Empirical Findings

## 5.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis

After collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, the next step is the data analysis leaning upon the mixed methods research design. First of all, the survey data analysis is outlined which is followed by the analysis of expert interviews; also the results of both inquiries are highlighted in this chapter.

As it has been hypothesized, the unsatisfactory conditions of Georgia's higher education system should have been one of the main drivers of student mobility, among many other incentives (enhancing career opportunities, having new life experiences, etc.). The best way of seeing to what extent all the above mentioned determine students' decisions in moving abroad for educational purposes has been conducting a survey and directly obtaining the information from the primary source – Georgian students who have already attained or have been in the process of attaining higher education abroad. The major focus of this survey has been getting a more general idea and mainly drawing the degree to which the educational migrants have been sharing similar incentives of migration. Furthermore, the aim of the survey was figuring out what exactly the students have been unhappy with while attending higher education institutions in Georgia. Also the parallel was drawn between the evaluations of different aspects comprising Georgia's, as well as foreign countries', higher education systems. The same topics were discussed during the Expert Interviews, conversely this time the opinion was expressed by the so-called experts, and not by the students. By merging those two methods of inquiry, it has been possible to get more comprehensive, interesting and valid picture about the topics of research interest.

## 5.2 Survey Data Analysis

When all the data was transferred to the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program, the analysis process was launched. Firstly, the data was analyzed at the ‘Univariate’ level followed by ‘Bivariate’ statistical analysis. In order to have a clear vision of what the analysis was aiming at, the main hypothesis should once again be outlined here, which is as follows:

‘People tend to migrate from Georgia, seeking better opportunities by means of attaining quality higher education abroad and because the quality of higher education in Georgia is diminishing. Accordingly, the main motivation for Georgian students to migrate is the unhappiness with the quality of higher education’. If this was so, there had to be the majority of respondents unhappy with higher education system of Georgia.

First of all, the respondents were asked the reasons that served as a stimulus in their decision to move abroad. The interviewed were given a variety of the possible answers and also they could include their own answer differing from those listed. Among the possible motivations such as: *tense political situation* in the country, *heavy economic conditions*, desire of a more *independent life abroad*, the desire of *studying and working abroad*, *unattractive tuition fees* at Georgian universities, and the desire of *improving foreign language skills*; there were three main reasons that the respondents named as the major determinant of their decision in moving abroad for higher education. These were:

- The desire of becoming highly qualified professional – where the majority of those surveyed, comprising **85%**, outlined it as one of the major motivations for them to move abroad.
- The desire of having new life experience in an environment different than their own – marked by **72%** of respondents as one of the main drivers of migration.
- The possibility of better career opportunities in Georgia – about **59%** of those interviewed marked this alternative as another major factor in their decision for moving to foreign countries.

The rest of the possible motivations were regarded as less important though still played an important role in the decision-making process: the desire of *studying and working abroad* – **33%**, the desire of *improving foreign language skills* – **26.5%**, the desire of more *independent life abroad* – **21%**, *tense political situation* in the country – **12.8%**, *heavy economic conditions* – **12.8%**, unattractive *tuition fees* at Georgian universities – **9.4%**.

To sum up, the major motivations of Georgian students in moving abroad for higher education were mainly the *desire of improving their professional qualifications, the expectations of new life-time experiences, and enhancing their career opportunities*. Enhancing their professional qualifications and career opportunities to be named as the major motivations can be implicitly related to the recent trend in Georgia. When one takes a look at the educational backgrounds of Georgian government officials, one can see their international degrees serving as a prerequisite for their successful career growth. Moreover, a degree attained at the institutions of higher education outside of Georgia is deemed as prestigious. On the other hand, it can also be assumed that higher education existing in Georgia is not a sufficient platform for further career growth and professional development. Consequently, the motivations highlighted above were at some point expected to come to the surface. Hence, the *'expectation of new life-time experiences'* to be one of the main determinants of students' decision-making process deserves to be outlined here, as it was quite a sincere statement which definitely was not expected to be supported by such a large share (72%) of those surveyed.

The next steps have been designed in order to find out the respondents' opinions about Georgia's higher education system.

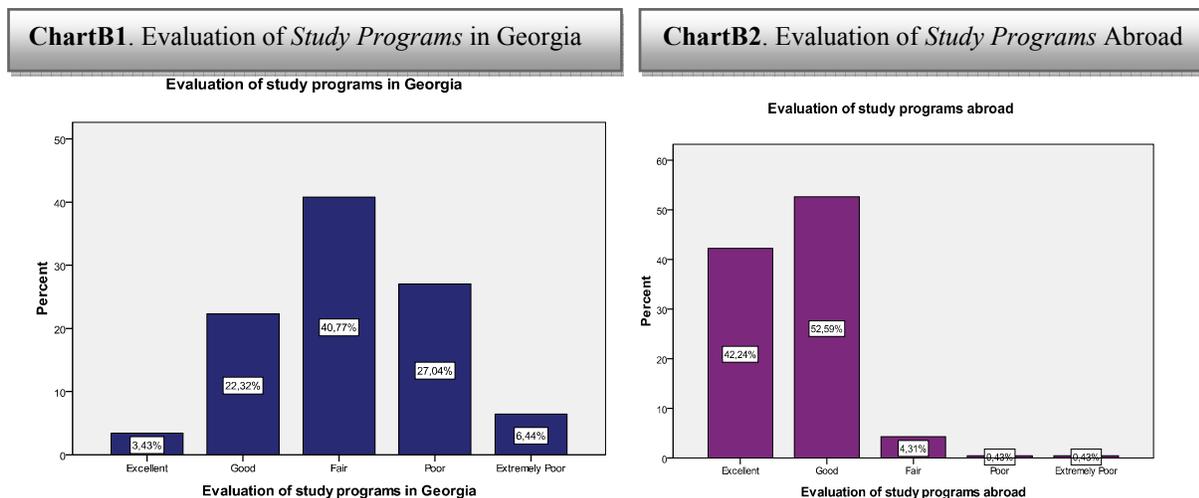
**Table N1. Evaluation of Georgia's Higher Education**

Evaluating Level of Education in Georgia					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Low Quality	27	11,2	11,5	11,5
	Low Quality	83	34,3	35,3	46,8
	Somewhere in the Middle	112	46,3	47,7	94,5
	High Quality	12	5,0	5,1	99,6
	Very High Quality	1	,4	,4	100,0
	Total	235	97,1	100,0	
Missing	System	7	2,9		
	Total	242	100,0		

The respondents were asked to generally evaluate higher education in Georgia as well as European countries, the United States of America and the Russian Federation. As it is evident from the table above (**Table N1.**), only about 5% of those surveyed considered the quality of higher education in Georgia being ‘High’. This pin-point the ideas that respondents have been quite unsatisfied with the higher education in Georgia and are not of a high opinion about it. It is especially clear when looking at the assessments of higher education in European countries and the US evaluated highly – with 96% and 97% respectively. However, this excludes Russia where 52% evaluated higher education neither being ‘High’ nor ‘Low’ quality (respondents seemed to have less or unclear information about the higher education situation in Russia).

After asking for a general evaluation of higher education in Georgia and other countries, the respondents evaluated different components of the higher education system one by one, in order to more specifically reveal their opinions.

First of all, the interviewees were asked to evaluate the *study programs* they were familiar with at Georgian universities and universities they have attended/have been attending in other countries, in order to expose the main elements of the general study process that they have been mostly unhappy with. The evaluations included five-level scales of measurement: ‘Excellent’ - ‘Good’ - ‘Fair’ - ‘Poor’ - ‘Extremely Poor’. (The results are shown in the ChartB1 and ChartB2).



About 26% of the respondents had a positive view about study programs in Georgia, which is not alluring at all; especially compared to the overwhelming 95% that had a high opinion about

study programs in other countries. It can be highlighted that those surveyed have given quite poor evaluation to the *study programs* available in Georgia. This is where the ‘Bivariate’ level of analysis/inferential statistics has been applied. Inferential statistics are used to identify to what extent the sample corresponds to the general population. In the case of tests of significance, it can be estimated whether an existing relationship between variables in the sample can be generalized to the larger population (Babbie et.al. 2007: 270).

In addition, it has been revealed that the results have been statistically significant.<sup>6</sup> It can be stated that the majority of all Georgian students are not of a high opinion about the *study programs* in Georgia.<sup>7</sup> However, it is not the ambition of this paper to claim the generalization of the results for the reasons outlined earlier in section 4.7.

All the subsequent variables of the study process evaluations analyzed further have gone through the same procedure – transform-compute routine in SPSS and came out to be statistically significant.

As indicated earlier, there have been several elements comprising the evaluation of higher education, such as: the assessment of professor qualifications, the infrastructure at the campuses, the course literature and libraries, as well as the level of the student’s professional skills training, assessed at both national and international levels.

The next component to be evaluated was the *professor qualifications*. As it is apparent from the survey results presented in the charts below, the interviewed again were not of a very positive opinion about the *professor qualifications* at Georgian universities with only 36% considering it relatively good.

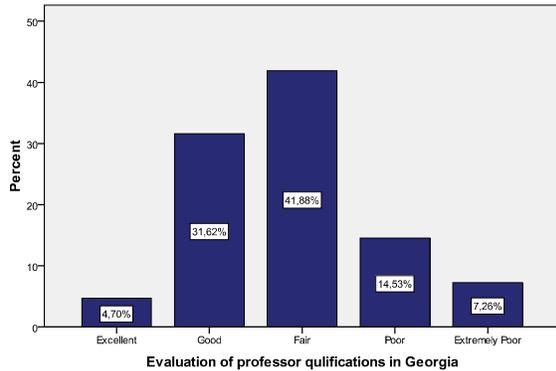
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<sup>6</sup> Statistical significance – the results provided above did not happen just by chance which means that the probability of accident or sampling error is less than 1 out of 1,000 ( $p=1<1000$ ) (Babbie at.al 2007:269).

<sup>7</sup> The two paired samples t-Test has been run helping to estimate the statistical significance between the mean differences of the two variables discussed above: ‘Evaluation of Study Programs in Georgia’ = ‘recoded\_studyprograms\_Georgia’ and ‘Evaluation of Study Programs Abroad = ‘recoded\_studyprograms\_Abroad’. These and all the following variables of the study process evaluations, have been transformed into ‘dummies’ (variable with only two values) beforehand so it could have been possible for t-Test to analyze the variables and compute only the values of ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’ transformed into ‘Good’=1 (*Excellent&Good is Good=1*) and all other values (Fair, Poor, Extremely Poor) equal 0, in the variables recoded as ‘dummy’.

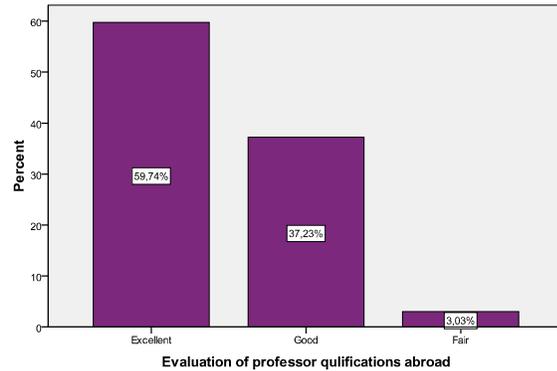
**ChartC3. Evaluation of *Professor Qualifications* in Georgia**

Evaluation of professor qualifications in Georgia



**ChartC4. Evaluation of *Professor Qualifications* Abroad**

Evaluation of professor qualifications abroad

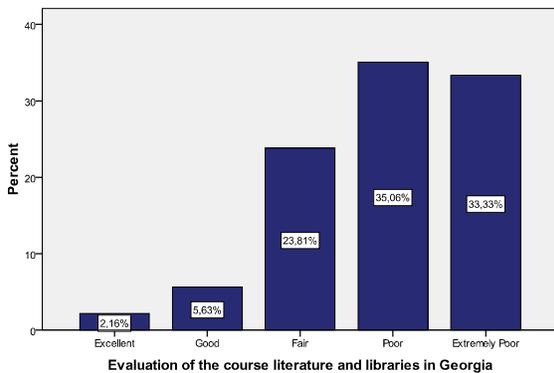


The assessment of *professor qualifications* at the foreign level showed an absolutely different picture. Almost all the respondents (97%) had a very high opinion about *professor qualifications* at universities abroad (Charts C3 & C4).

Another component of higher education to be evaluated was the assessment of *course literature and library* equipment at both local and foreign levels (please see Charts D5 & D6):

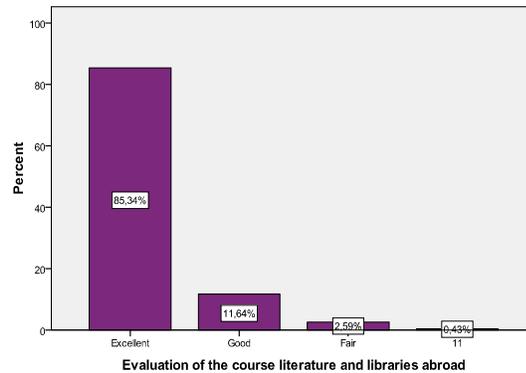
**ChartD5. Evaluation of *Course Literature and Libraries* in Georgia**

Evaluation of the course literature and libraries in Georgia



**ChartD6. Evaluation of *Course Literature and Libraries* Abroad**

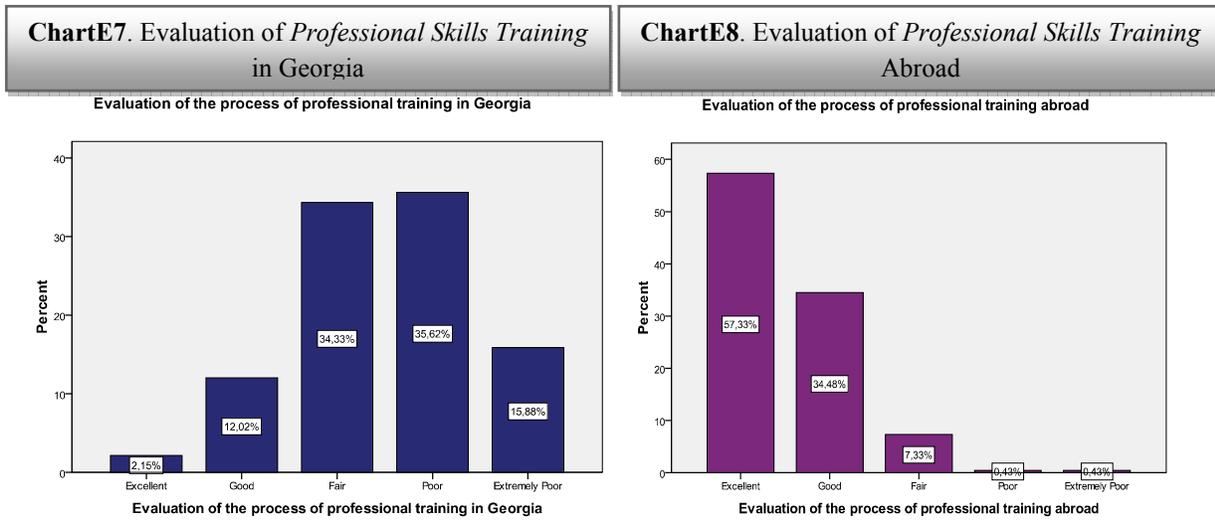
Evaluation of the course literature and libraries abroad



It can be highlighted that the minority of the respondents, only 7%, were of a positive opinion about the *course literature and library* equipment in the case of Georgia, whereas almost all of the respondents (97%) had a positive opinion about the *course literature and libraries* in case of

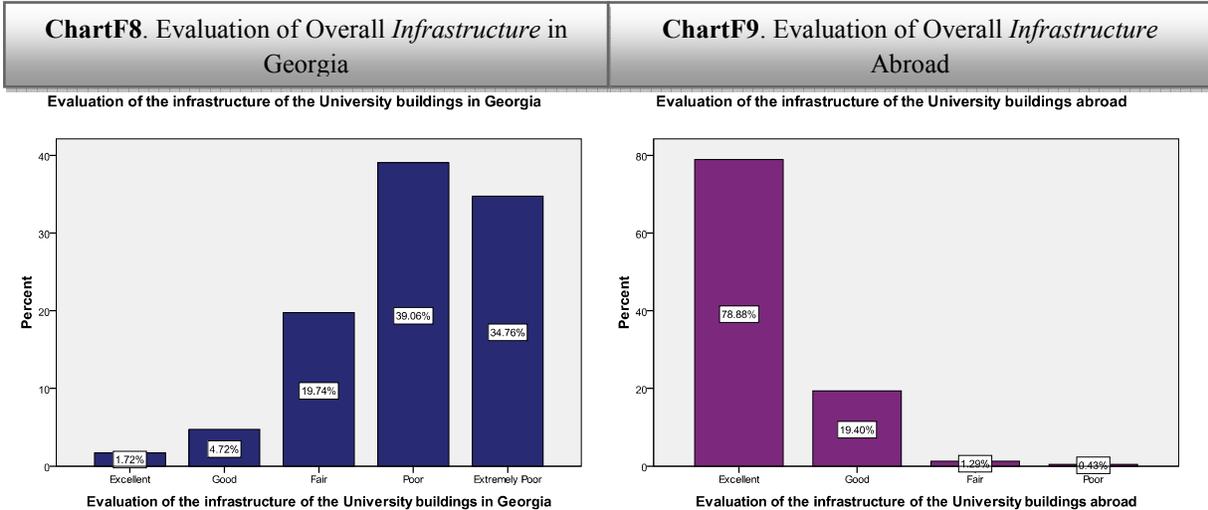
foreign countries. Again, the results are definitely not in the favor of Georgia’s higher education system.

When it came to the evaluation of individual *professional skills training*, Georgia’s higher education system had, once more, nothing to be praised of (please see Charts E7 & E8):



According to the above data, the respondents had quite a clear opinion about the professional practice provided by the higher education system of Georgia. Only 14% evaluated the process of *professional skills training* in Georgia positively as opposed to abroad, whereas 92% of the sample assessed the *professional skills training* at the foreign level positively. It can be concluded that the research capacities including laboratories at Georgian universities are quite poor, and are not capable of providing relevant professional training for their students.

The infrastructure was the final component of higher education to be assessed. (Please see Charts F8 & F9):



6% of the surveyed thought the infrastructure of universities was ‘Good’ in Georgia; conversely 98% considered it ‘Good’ in other countries. Here, the infrastructure includes the conditions of the class-rooms, technological equipment, research facilities, etc., which Georgian higher education institutions obviously lack, or possess in unsatisfactory conditions.

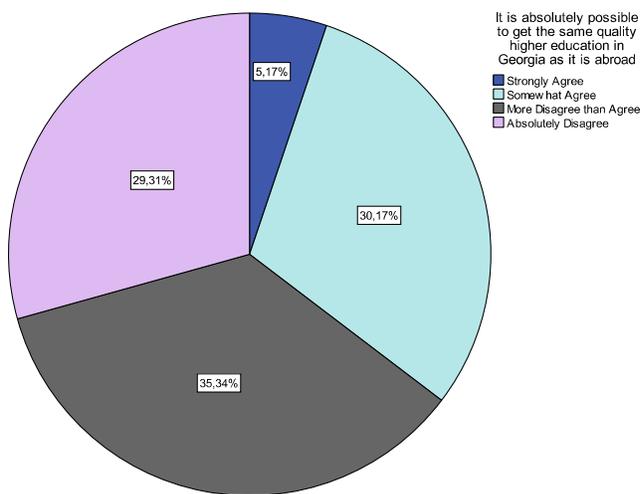
All in all, according to the variety of opinions expressed, all the components of the study process that have been evaluated in the indicated survey at local and international levels had overwhelming outcomes, especially at the local level. It is worth mentioning that these crucial elements of the entire study process had the lowest evaluations when talking about the universities in Georgia. It is a striking fact when the student has no access to relevant and up-to-date literature and the university has no responsibility for providing it. In this case, it is not surprising that the *infrastructure*, *professional training* and even *professor qualifications* had such a low assessment. After all, these assessments talk much in favor of a student’s motivations for seeking other sources and ways of getting better higher education.

Additionally, in contrast to previously asked questions about evaluating the components of the entire study process nationally and internationally, the respondents were also asked to evaluate the *importance* of earlier discussed elements. As a result, the impressive share of those surveyed, **96%** thought that having *highly qualified professors* was the ‘Crucial’ element of any higher education institution. The respondents (**85.5%**) considered well equipped *libraries and up-to-date course literature* as one of the most important ingredients of the entire study process.

The importance of *technological facilities* also comes high on the list, with **81.2%** of respondents thinking it is ‘Crucial’ and followed by the evaluation of the importance of appropriate *professional skills training* with **67.4%** of the interviewed considering it very important. All in all, every listed aspect has been regarded as an essential ingredient of the study process at a higher level education, hence it was still possible to outline the most necessary components among all, and these were: having *highly qualified professors* and *libraries equipped with up-to-date literature*. The evaluation of these components had to cross-check the respondent opinions expressed throughout the survey and the results above prove the mission to be successfully accomplished.

At the end, in order to acquire a more clear picture about respondents’ stands towards the existing quality of higher education in Georgia, they were asked to evaluate the following statement according to a four level scale: whether they ‘Strongly Agree’ – ‘Somewhat Agree’ – ‘More Disagree than Agree’ or ‘Absolutely Disagree’. Please see the results in the Pie Chart A. below:

**Pie Chart A.** Statement: *‘It is absolutely possible to get the same quality higher education in Georgia as it is abroad’*



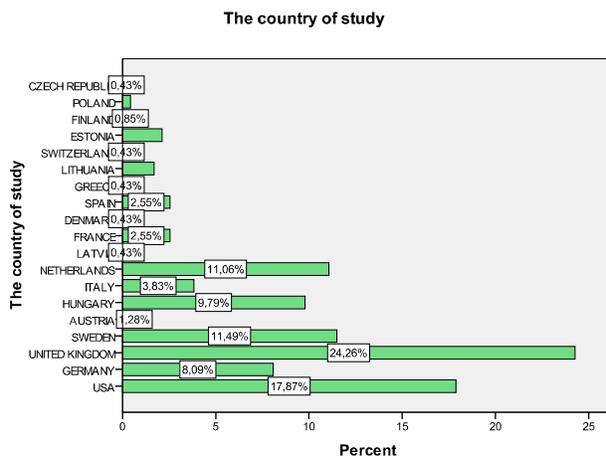
The majority of respondents, about **65%**, disagreed with the statement and believed that it is not possible to attain the same quality higher education in Georgia as it is possible in other countries.

In case if the opinion about Georgia’s higher education system was not evident throughout the former discussion, it should get clearer only with the above indicated results.

It was also interesting to find out the major destination of the students in order to make sure with what kind of higher education system they were making parallels throughout the whole survey process.

As you can see in the chart below, Western countries came to be the most popular destinations for Georgian students to migrate:

**Graph B. Receiving Countries**



More specifically, the competition has been mainly between USA and European Union countries. The first place goes to the United Kingdom with **24%** of the respondents choosing it as their destination. The United States of America takes second place, hosting almost **18%** of Georgian students, which is followed by **11%** of the surveyed residing in Sweden and the Netherlands. Afterwards comes Hungary with **10%** and Germany with **8%** of the interviewed gaining higher education there, followed by Italy (4%), France (3%), Spain (3%) and Finland, Poland, Greece, Czech Republic, Estonia, Switzerland, Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark and Austria hosting the least of interviewed. Remarkably, none of the respondents happened to have attained, or are attaining, higher education in Russia.

These indicators absolutely approve the idea of focusing more on the Western type of education throughout the study, as all of the interviewed have attained or have been attaining higher education in Western countries.

### 5.3 Expert Interview Analysis

The goal of conducting 'Expert Interviews' was obtaining as much comprehensive information as possible about the two major points of interest of inquiry: Georgia's higher education system reform and student mobility. Correspondingly, the respondents should have been highly qualified professionals in the field.

It is remarkable what a wide spectrum of ideas and absolutely contradicting opinions concerning some of the topics have been expressed throughout the interview process, as it has been anticipated.

It has to be underlined here that an indicated method of inquiry (Expert Interviews) has been applied to cross-check the validity of the data previously obtained (Student Survey) and was used to enhance and expand the quantitative research findings with qualitative data, which is the core element of the triangulation method (Creswell 2006: 62).

There were mainly four themes discussed throughout every interview which were followed all through the process of analysis: 1. Incentives of student mobility; 2. International competitiveness of local universities; 3. The outcomes of higher education system reform in Georgia – pros and cons; 4. The assessment of the institutional environment.

In order to follow ethical constraints and preserve the respondent's anonymity, the interviewees are referred to with fabricated names.

### *1. Incentives of student mobility*

As well as the surveyed, the experts were also asked to define the major incentives for Georgian students to study outside their own country. All of the respondents indicated the importance of the unhappiness with the existing higher education quality serving *one* of the main motivations of students to leave the country. However, some experts believed *less* that this was the case and some *strongly* believed that an inappropriate quality of higher education existing in Georgia was the main driving force for students to migrate. As one of the respondents indicated:

*“I would not consider the chance of getting limited higher education in Georgia as the main motivation for the students to migrate. . . I would say, this is one but not the only motivation. . . among getting international education, strengthening the language skills, increasing the employment opportunities in Georgia as well as abroad”* – Ms. Nino

The others avoided even the linkage between students’ motivations and the quality of higher education and basically named the reasons more emphasizing the positive aspects of Georgia’s higher education system rather than the incentives of migration:

*“ . . . now there are increasing numbers of scholarships and the most important thing is the scholarships established by the government of Georgia.”* – Mr. Giorgi

Other factors were also listed as the determinants of a student’s motivations to migrate. These were: the joint programs and agreements with foreign universities, better employment opportunities, better education and an internationally competitive degree, all serving as an impetus for student mobility. As one of the interviewee put it:

*“The reason is simple, they get ‘tradable’ diploma, because if you have here Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Diploma and you get a diploma of any other foreign university, the priority goes to the foreign one, nobody knows why and no one will take a look at whether or not is the study program adequate.”* – Ms. Ketevan

Some of the respondents had the clear opinion about the student's motivations to migrate. It was mainly the poor quality of higher education existing in Georgia as well as the country's socio-economic and political conditions:

*“First of all, they do not think that our education is appropriate and nobody can argue with that. Second of all, life here is not interesting and despite the fact that there is a lot of entertainment facilities here, life is also another thing and this another thing is not here. And at last, so many stressful situations, such as: fearing when the electricity will collapse, if the water will get cold while taking a shower and etc. This is boring and the social relations that are complicated here are much easier somewhere abroad as they obey the rules and it is easier. This is comfort and not in here. . . This is why they want to run away” – Mr. Davit*

Furthermore, as another respondent indicated, there are just two reasons why youth want to attain a higher education abroad. Firstly, it is the quality higher education and secondly, financial resources:

*“One is that the student who is well-motivated and is studying here (Georgia), he/she has the opportunity to make their study more adequate abroad, because he/she knows that education attained abroad is a real education first of all and second of all gives the student opportunity to raise on the social ladder by the means of salary assigned according to his/her level of education.” – Ms. Ketevan*

*“And another reason why they're leaving, they have the financial resources to leave if they're accepted by the university, because Georgia is country of contrasts, here 3% of the population has a lot of money and 90% has basically no money. . .and if I am the child of those families comprising the 3%, why don't I prefer to pay the money and study in Oxford or Cambridge?” – Ms. Ketevan*

In Ms. Ketevan's opinion, having financial opportunities at hand unconditionally means moving abroad to get better quality higher education and students strive for that, and even if they don't have the appropriate financial resources at hand, they look for scholarships and all possible funding.

Another interesting point of view was expressed by Ms. Nino, who differentiated the students into three different categories based on their aims. These were the students whose primary incentives were just emigrating from the country and using the study purposes as the cover for their illegal stay abroad. Another category were the students wanting to leave the country just for a short period of time and here, the low financial opportunities, independence from family, infantilism, tourism or everything together were named as the primary motivations for migration.

Lastly, the third type distinguished by the respondent, was migration for educational purposes with more permanent plans of living abroad.

*“These students already think very pragmatic. They want to get the degree abroad because they are building more forward-looking plans. For example, the bachelor degree attained abroad will make it easier for them to attain master’s degree which will be the successful platform for continuing their career abroad. This is the category of students being lost for Georgia as their primary motivation is not only education, but employment in West and not returning to Georgia.”* – Ms. Nino

From above discussed, two clear standpoints can be highlighted from the stance of the interviewees. One perspective was that students do migrate for higher education abroad, however this has not been especially determined by the low quality of higher education in Georgia, and in this case it has been the ‘pull factors’ that play a larger role in students’ decision-making. Another standpoint is that it has been exactly the low quality higher education in Georgia that encompasses the largest share in students’ decision-making processes. In addition, the socio-cultural and political factors were outlined as having played a crucial role being the ‘push factors’. Two more aspects filled in the list of student’s motivations: *strive for independent life and new experiences* and *better employment opportunities*. The latter points to labor market issues, also discussed by the interviewees based on the perspective that the variety and quantity of employment depends on labor market demands and certain specializations in Georgia are more requested than others.

Overall, there have been defined ‘push’ as well as ‘pull’ factors accompanying migration. This is when expert’s opinions diverged, one part of them giving advantage to the ‘push’ factors determining Georgian youth’s motivations of migration and another part underlining the importance of ‘pull’ factors.

## 2. The competitive advantage of local universities at the international level

Concerning the issue of Georgia’s higher education institution competitiveness at international market, there was an absolute consensus among the experts. All of them stated that local universities have not been capable of competing with universities abroad. An impressive gap

between the quality of higher education abroad and in Georgia has been widely discussed. As one of the interviewed indicated:

*“I don’t think that there is any university in Georgia at this moment that can be perceived to meet international standards. . . there can be some spheres that are more developed in Georgia. . . though I think that the country’s economic situation plays also important role.”* – Ms. Mariam

*“This country will not be internationally competitive because of one simple reason. For being competitive one requires serious financial resources and serious institutional changes and the vision of where are we going and what do we want. So, this is what this country has not done and these universities have not done. At this moment, this is the oasis for private institutions that are profit-oriented only.”*-Ms. Ketevan

The expert point of view is evident: still many steps have to be made while the international standard will be achieved. As Mr. Giorgi states, there is only one chance of raising the level of existing universities in Georgia, which is the large investment of financial resources as well as the establishment of strong quality assurance instances:

*“No one is demanding for further development of quality, which means that any kind of university can exist . . . There are about 60 accredited universities in Georgia and this many researchers simply do not exist. These are not universities, these are some kind of teaching institutions and they do nothing. Higher education institution means the integrity of teaching and research, just learning is possible in any teaching center.”* – Mr. Giorgi

As other respondent stated, the budget allocated for higher education system is too little:

*“530.000.000GEL is allocated for the entire education system which includes schooling as well as vocational education and higher education in year 2010 and this is the amount of money required for just one university and not the entire system.”* – Ms. Ketevan

Consequently, the solidarity of the experts on the issue of Georgian universities being internationally uncompetitive has led to the questioning of Georgia’s higher education quality and how different it has been from the higher education quality existing in Western countries. It is indicated that the content of courses are far from the content of courses offered by the Western universities. As support to the argument, the interviewee referred to the example of a graduate sociology student not being able to construct a questionnaire.

Another difference between the local and international quality of higher education has been named as structural disparity as well as some cultural aspects:

*“Three or four years ago, the diploma attained abroad would be viewed as panacea in Georgia . . . after some time, they realized that only the degree attained abroad could not automatically determine its owner’s high competence. In some cases, this also depends on the employer’s requirements . . . international organizations pay attention not only to the degree attained abroad, but also the study and work experience together, because there is another culture of studying and working, let’s say higher extent of responsibility than ours.” – Ms. Nino*

Furthermore, the main aim of higher education system reform was outlined as the purpose of raising the level of international competitiveness at Georgian universities:

*“The reform is being going on exactly with the aim of raising the competitiveness of our universities and the brain drain which we were seriously suffering from and were constantly losing our students and professors, should gradually transform into the brain circulation.” - Ms. Nino*

In conclusion, the evaluation of Georgian university standards, which has been identified as being much lower compared to international standards, has led to the discussion of higher education system quality and the results brought by the reform.

Throughout the discussion on the next topic, it can be seen how much has been said about the potential outcomes and negative aspects of higher education system reform, whereas only a few points have been highlighted as the actual results of the reform.

### 3. The outcomes of higher education system reform in Georgia- pros and cons

When discussing and evaluating the existing higher education system of Georgia, the respondents have avoided a single-value assessment of the system as being ‘bad’ or ‘good’. However, when going deeper into the discussion and listing the advantages and drawbacks of the system, a lot of compromising aspects became clear. Firstly, the positive results of higher education system reform in 2005 are being highlighted.

The respondents have mainly outlined three positive outcomes of the reform at structural level:

Corruption eradication named as the major result of the reform. While, in the past most parents paid a sufficient amount of money for their children to be accepted by universities and bribed professors for grades, this phenomenon has been eradicated. The importance of higher education has even overshadowed employment tactics. As stated by one of the respondents:

*“The role of education has risen in relation to the employment. Now the priority is granted to the level of person’s education rather than kinship or friendship ties.”* – Mr. Giorgi  
Another interviewee had some other concerns as well:

*“The higher education reform which first of all established the ‘Unified Entrance Examinations’, impressively freed university from corruption, hence left the private teacher tradition . . . and the quality of higher education is still of a great concern.”* – Ms. Ketevan

Despite the discrepancies between expert opinions in the assessment of Georgia’s higher education system reform, the fact of corruption elimination deserved unanimity.

Increasing student participation in the study process has been outlined as another indicator of reform being successful. It has been stated that the role of student participation in the sense of acquiring more freedom of choice and higher level of responsibility has significantly increased:

*“Now there is a freedom of choice, student can design own curriculum and knows that in order to get the degree in physics he/she has to learn this, this and that and afterwards is responsible for his/her choice.”* – Ms. Mariam

All in all, being actively involved in the designing one’s own study process raises student’s responsibilities at the same time, what has been considered as a positive event by the interviewee. However, it has also been indicated that increasing role of student in the actual study process creates more challenges for the university.

*“There should exist tutors, advisors, consultants, you name it . . . there should be a service that could lead the student that has just graduated from school to the right track and give an advice about which major suits which master’s program and etc. this process has been attempted to start in some universities.”* – Ms. Nino

Quality assurance system has been defined as another equally important product of the reform. This is a body of higher education system that has to control the quality of education and is responsible for it. The system involves the evaluation of the professors, education programs and students. The previous considers student surveys and the analysis of their feedback. Measuring quality can be defined by investigating how many students have been employed and where after completing their studies. Mainly, the *student* has been used as a tool for assessing the quality of education at the universities.

All the above mentioned have also been criticized and a lot of counter arguments were presented. One of the respondents even doubted if higher education system reform could have been referred to as a 'reform', and has evaluated corruption eradication from quite a different perspective:

*"First of all the word 'reform' is debatable, because when there is a change that is not accompanied by positive tendencies . . . it is very difficult to name it 'reform'. If there has been any change in Georgian higher education system and it was the attempt to make it better, at the end the point where it can be checked – the quality of education did not become any better, on the opposite, it got even worse."* – Mr. Davit

This idea was also supported by another respondent:

*"The quality of higher education still remains an unsolved problem; I would say it is oversimplified and more superficial."* – Ms. Ketevan

The statement above has been supported by the arguments that there has not been enough funding and the disciplines at the universities have not been based upon modern data and research.

*"Corruption has been eradicated at the entrance exams and at the same time the entrance exams have been eradicated."* – Mr. Davit

The respondent has supported the transparency of entrance exams, but at the same time emphasized decreasing criteria and the requirements of the exams. There were the same number of applicants and the places at the universities, which means that the competitiveness has been abolished. This has been named as one of the negative aspects of the reform.

Another problem named by the respondent is the oversimplification of the content of the examinations to the extent that anyone can pass them, which has resulted in the number of students more than applicable to the universities and the country resources of Georgia.

*“We have eliminated corruption – partially, because we could not defeat the lecturer who tells the student to buy his book, otherwise the student won’t get the grade and this cannot be defeated unless the lecturer has not enough salary to feed his family. Our methods in fighting against corruption have been impulsive and meaningless and we can be proud to defeat corruption, however we faced the result that today student has no sufficient education at the university.” – Mr. Davit*

The dissatisfaction with the higher education system of Georgia is evident throughout the discussion. The interviewee underlined student mobility as the main indicator of higher education system quality being low:

*“The main criterion determining how good the higher education system is, it is the number of those who are leaving. No one will run away if you have high quality education, on the opposite, you would rather attract people. Sweden, the country where you would not have wanted to go many years ago, but they passed ahead all Europe and invested in education and created more intellectual labor such as Sony-Ericsson and etc. I do understand why our students run away, but I don’t see anything good in it.” – Mr. Davit*

The experts also touched upon the legislation of Georgia’s higher education system, pointing out several discrepancies related to the reform. The 3 step education system (Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.) as a result of Bologna process instead of 5 step system existing in Georgia, has been evaluated as a positive factor; however the way in which the reform took place has been actively criticized. No changes have been applied to the study programs and the legislation still encompasses too many regulations insufficient to cover all the disciplines.

*“According to the Bologna process regulations, the master’s program should comprise either of 60 or 120 credits, whereas the law of education of Georgia allows master’s programs based only on 120 credits.” – Ms. Ketevan*

Consequently, the legislation itself is outlined as a hindrance. The main problem of the legislation is that instead of creating the framework, it has created strict regulations which have limited the freedom and independent knowledge production of the university, as indicated by the

respondents. Despite this, some other factors have been outlined as the barriers of improving the quality of higher education, such as: inexistence of adequate study programs and national frame for qualifications which should have been followed by the higher education system; the unclear curriculum; and limited or no linkage between school and higher level education supported by an interesting example:

*“First year students who have been accepted at the faculty of natural sciences on the specialization of chemistry do not know what the Mendeleev periodic table of elements is.”* – Ms. Ketevan

Linking secondary and higher education has not been presupposed or even discussed. There has also been confusion concerning the focus being on liberal or vocational education. The experts lacked the discussion of these aspects as a part of one system.

*“The students are purely prepared at school, which serves as a problem for a serious, good quality higher education.”* – Ms. Ketevan

Mainly there has been only formal frame that paid no attention to the content of study programs and the universities have not had adequate autonomy for designing relevant programs on their own. The basic problem of Georgia’s higher education system is the deficit of study program accreditation that would have led to the natural elimination of some universities. Both institutional, as well as program, accreditation should have taken place (as in Baltic countries) while the reform has been driven only at the institutional level, as indicated by one of the interviewees.

4. *The assessment of academic personnel, infrastructure including technological equipment, as well as the accessibility of modern course literature*

The opinion of all interviewed coincides on the issue of a professor’s qualifications. The university has generally been viewed as the institution of knowledge production. Existing academic personnel are still rooted in the Soviet past and are not keeping up with the developments in their fields:

*“They (professors) are not creating knowledge; they are just replicating what they have learned.” – Mr. Giorgi*

When there is no further development of already gained knowledge it becomes irrelevant. Another respondent questioned the pedagogical skills of the professors:

*“Their qualification has to be questioned not on the scientific level but on pedagogical level.” – Mr. Davit*

*“One can be a splendid scientist, but what kind of a teacher can he/she be is another issue” – Mr. Giorgi*

The most important thing that came to the surface during the interviews was the difference between the teaching methodology of Western countries and of Georgia. The professors at Georgian universities are used to the ‘monologue type’ of study process, labeled as ‘one actor play’ by one of the interviewed. There is a different picture in the West:

*“The classroom is a one actor theater at Georgian universities, when in Western countries professors introduce 17 different theories and don’t impose one of them on the student, you can critically analyze and support any of them, but you have to know all of them. That principal difference between the unique and universal knowledge does not exist in our system.” – Mr. Davit*

*“Some of the professors from Soviet era cannot switch from frontal teaching; they are talking all the time and the students are just listening, no interaction.” – Ms. Mariam*

Everything mentioned above has led to the issues of institutional governance and to what extent is the professor being required the development of their knowledge and what kind of methodology should they be referring to: ‘one actor play’ or ‘co-operational pedagogy’? These are the questions still left unanswered.

One of the respondents indicated the possible solution for the lack of qualified academic personnel by changing the law about academic personnel employment:

*“When we are talking about journalism or business administration, we do not have people with Ph.D. in these fields or those who have the degree obtained it during the Soviet times, so those who have new knowledge and have only Master degrees, because in order to become a*

*professional journalist it is not necessary to have written dissertation in the field, cannot be recruited.” – Ms. Nino*

Infrastructure in this case involves the general conditions of the study environment, including campus, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, sports facilities and technological equipment. The interviewed remarked the disastrous situation of libraries and laboratories:

*“Nobody cares about infrastructure and there is no separate budget for that. The 87% or 83% of university budget goes into salaries, so there are no funds left for infrastructure.” – Ms. Ketevan*

*“This is even funny that professors have no table, chair, and computer, internet . . . no chalk for the blackboard, not enough chairs for students and so on.” – Ms. Tamar*

*“The library of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University is territorially situated so far away that is unreachable for students and since it moved there, the loads of books still lie in its basement untouched. This library cannot afford buying books, is outdated and there is no network, no computers.” – Mr. Davit*

Modern course literature has been enormous problem. As a result of interviews, it has become clear that only some of the universities, such as Ilia State University, have purchased certain electronic databases and provide students with modern course literature.

*“The lowering level of higher education quality has been caused by two things: one was that the study programs have not been revised and designed as appropriate and the age of professors that does not give them possibility to keep up and have no appropriate qualifications.” – Ms. Ketevan*

All the respondents indicated the unavailability of modern course literature in Georgian language; it is either in Russian or English or translated voluntarily. In this case, the language barrier should also be taken into consideration. Mainly, providing students with modern and relevant literature has been up to the professor’s financial costs:

*“Half of my salary goes into buying those books and even when I design quizzes I have to pay to print them out and distribute in the class.” – Ms. Tamar*

The issue of modern course literature still remains a serious challenge.

Other suppressive factors listed by the respondents are: lack of heating and inappropriate study environment.

Also, laboratories that are named to be paid the least attention:

*“In Western countries the university laboratory budget spent on scientific research comprises the budget of the entire Ivane Javakhishvili State University.”* – Ms. Ketevan

It has been obvious from the discussion above that an overall study environment at Georgian universities is not satisfactory at all. Students have been experiencing a serious deficit of relevant course literature, universities lack highly qualified academic personnel and the infrastructure has been shown in the worst light.

## 5.4 Results - Comparing and Contrasting

This section tries to highlight the most important outcomes of both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as put forward the coinciding and contradicting results which can be followed by the bullet-points below:

- According to the survey results, it can be stated that an insufficient level of Georgia’s higher education has widely served as the driving force behind student migration. However, some of the experts had contradictory opinions on this issue.

As a result of the survey, the overall evaluation of Georgia’s higher education system has been impressively low. Career growth, wider professional opportunities, and new life experiences have been named as the main motivations of the respondents to migrate. This can imply the notion that higher education attained in Georgia is not enough for decent career opportunities. It could also be related to labor market demands. Hence, Georgia having the ambition of rapid development and inclusion in the global development processes should also have the ambition of meeting those international standards and demands (labor market, economy, etc.). There have been expressed two ideas in the point of view of experts. One part has been claiming that Georgia’s higher education quality had very little to do with the students’ decision-making

process and another part of the experts have been underlining the lowering quality of Georgia's higher education as the main determinant of students' migration.

- Some of the experts have been actively highlighting the newly emerged scholarship foundations and joint agreements with foreign universities as a positive aspect serving as an impulse for educational migration. Hence, the survey respondents have not mentioned the indicated aspect as a part of their motivations at all.

All this points to the positive changes that took place in Georgia during last five or six years, however it has less to do with the motivations of student mobility.

- Unhappiness with socio-economic and political situation in the country named by the experts as one of the main incentives of student mobility deserved the least attention of those surveyed – about 13% considered it as the motivation for their migration.

The experts expressed the idea that Georgian youth have been disturbed and intimidated by tense socio-economic and political conditions of the country which served as an impetus for their migration. However, this was not largely supported by the respondents.

- The experts, as well as those surveyed, found a consensus on the idea of higher education institutions of Georgia not being internationally competitive.

Roughly speaking, when any of the foreign diplomas is given priority over the diploma gained in Georgia, it definitely questions the functioning of the higher education reform and the system's incorporation into the Bologna process. The level of local higher education institutions being far from international standards is evident from the survey results as well. The majority of those surveyed have indicated the impossibility of gaining a higher education equal to the quality of higher education available in Western countries. Moreover, the components of the study process at Georgian universities have been assessed poorly, especially in comparison with foreign universities. The experts even named the lack of financial investments in education as the principal reason for universities not being able to achieve international standards.

- Both expert and surveyed opinions coincided concerning the low evaluation of academic personnel, infrastructure including technological equipment, and the accessibility of up-to-date course literature.

The pedagogical skills as well as the relevance of their knowledge and creativity have been questioned when assessing professor qualifications by experts. Different teaching methodology has also been outlined as a negative aspect of the teaching process. The extreme conditions of university infrastructures have also been underlined throughout both quantitative and qualitative inquiries. The lack of modern course literature has also been the issue of major concern. In experts' opinion, particularly no up-to-date course literature has been accessible in Georgian language and only some of the databases have been available in English. However, not all the students could reach that literature in English language because of the language barrier. If there is available reading material, it is only due to the efforts and financial costs of the professors. Lastly, the disastrous condition of scientific laboratories has been indicated, which has also been connected to the lack of financial support.

Furthermore, the experts have expressed their opinion concerning the outcomes of Georgia's higher education system reform as discussed in the previous section. In the table below the advantages and disadvantages outlined by the experts can be seen clearly:

<b>Georgia's higher education reform</b>	
<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
Corruption eradication	Not an absolute elimination of corruption.
Increasing student participation	Lowering HE quality: oversimplification of study material.
Establishing 'Quality Assurance System'	Lack of study programs accreditation; unclear curriculum.
'Unified Entrance Examinations'	Decreasing criteria and requirements of entrance exams.
	No or limited linkage between secondary and tertiary education.
	Increased level of educational migration.
	No national frame for qualifications.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

As it has been hypothesized, the unhappiness with Georgia's HE quality serves as one of the main drivers of student mobility. The respondents indicated the expansion of their human capital for further career growth as the determinant of their migration process which is related to the expansion of personal incomes. This proves the relevance of economic factors determining decision-making in the migration process as well as emphasizing the freedom-expanding nature of human behavior. The decreasing quality of HE and its institutions have been underlined as the important 'push' factor which can be regarded as igniting international student mobility in order to overcome those inadequacies. The argument has also been strengthened by the recognition of the significant gap between Georgian and Western HE standards. When there is no modern course literature provided by universities and the pedagogical skills of lecturers are doubted and there is a confusion related to the curriculum and the aim of certain study programs is unclear as well as the inexistence of national qualifications framework, it should not be surprising that students' desire to get local higher education gradually fades. The lack of public investment in HE has been mainly indicated as the root cause of all deficiencies mentioned above.

All those countries who had a substantial leap in the quality and standard of HE have significantly invested in their higher education systems in order to regulate international student mobility. China, Singapore and Brazil are among those countries who invested in strengthening and expanding domestic tertiary education by creating adequate research infrastructures and establishing links with the world's prestigious universities (Gribble, 2008). The public spending on education in Georgia in 2008 comprised only 7.2% of total government expenditure (World Bank, 2010). From the later data and research results, it is evident that this sector lacks sufficient funding. Considering education to be embedded in a country's successful development, an inappropriately functioning HE system, in addition to causing the drain of human capital, can have a negative effect on a country's further socio-economic and political development.

Striving for new life experiences, better career opportunities and higher life standards distinguished as the main 'pull' factors, once again pinpoints the freedom enhancing nature of

human beings. So people's movement is an intrinsic part of human development and not the cause or effect of it. However, taking place in large numbers, people's movements can comprise a threat for the entire country, acting as an obstacle to development. The latest waves of migration have led to political crises in both developing and developed areas of the world, causing concerns about state sovereignty and citizenship (Brettell & Hollifield 2000: 141).

The changes in the HE system regarding it as a social institution does not entirely determine human behavior though can have a valuable effect on the process of their migratory decision-making. By making the projections and weighing demand and supply factors of migration (human action) the role of human agency is emphasized. The loss of core human capital can cause the malfunction of the HE system (social institution) and negatively affect a country's further development and vice versa, highly educated human capital can have positive effects for both cases.

In this case, the improvement of the HE system is outlined to serve as one element contributing to managing international student mobility and backing up the comprehensive notion of development as well as raising some more questions for further research in managing migration and human development.

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## APPENDICES

### A1. Guideline for the Expert Interviews

Migration nowadays is a central subject for the discussions around the world as well as Georgia. The students are also included in the categories of migrants, the so called ‘educational migrants’. This research aims to find the links between the higher education system of Georgia and the motivations of Georgian students in going abroad for study purposes. The research also seeks to identify the main drawbacks and advantages of the higher education system of Georgia. Your opinion as a respondent is very important!

- The role of Georgian higher education system in the decision-making process of students in moving abroad.
- The general implications of the higher education system reform.
- The level of international competitiveness of Georgian higher education institutions.
- Discussing the opportunities at the job market after graduating from higher education institutions in Georgia.
- To what extent can it be stated that higher education in Georgia and higher education in Western countries are on the same level.
- The general motivations of Georgian students to get higher education abroad.
- What kind of changes could have been applied to the Georgia’s higher education system?
- Assessment of professor qualifications, modern course literature and infrastructure (including: class-rooms, technological equipment, libraries, laboratories, etc.).

Thank you for your participation!

## A2. Introduction Message for the Survey

Dear Respondents,

The survey is being carried out on the topic of international student mobility with regards to the evaluation of Georgia's higher education quality. The survey is initiated by Ketevan Gorgoshidze, the student at Lund University, Development Studies Master Program. The results will be utilized only for the scientific purposes. Your confidentiality is ensured!

The research mainly aims at exploring the major motivations of Georgian students deciding to attain higher education outside Georgia. Your participation is extremely important! By this, you can add one more brick to the possible improvement and development of Georgia's higher education system.

Filling in the 'Questionnaire' is easy and will take only from 5 to 7 minutes of your time!

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Ketevan Gorgoshidze

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A3.

## Questionnaire

It is easy to fill in the questionnaire – Almost all the questions have already defined answers. You can check the option that more coincides with your own opinion, otherwise you can express your ideas in the fields specially assigned that purpose.

Thank you for your cooperation!

1. How would you evaluate the existing level of education in Georgia?

	Very Low Quality	Low	Somewhere in the Middle	High	Very High Quality	N/A
Georgia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
USA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Russia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	More Disagree, than Agree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Higher education attained abroad will increase my chances in finding a good job in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education attained abroad is more efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will become a fully qualified professional abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education attained abroad serves as the guarantee for successful career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please evaluate the situation at the university faculties you have been attending in Georgia  
 Firstly in Georgia, Secondly Abroad

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Extremely Poor	N/A
Study Programs (Georgia)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Professor Qualifications (Georgia)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Development of Professional Skills(Georgia)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Infrastructure (study rooms, laboratories, sports facilities and etc.) (Georgia)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Course Literature/Library (Georgia)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

4. Please evaluate the situation at the university faculties you have been attending abroad?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Extremely Poor	N/A
Study Programs (Abroad)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Professor Qualifications (Abroad)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Development of Professional Skills (Abroad)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Infrastructure (study rooms, laboratories, sports facilities and etc.) (Abroad)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Course Literature/Library (Abroad)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

5. Which of the following factors were the major determinants in your decision to go abroad for study purposes? It is possible to check several answers

- Becoming a Highly Qualified Professional
- To have better Career Opportunities in Georgia
- Getting a new lifetime experience abroad
- A Tense Political Situation existing in Georgia
- Heavy Economic Situation
- To have Independent Life
- The desire of Studying and Working abroad
- Unattractive Tuition Fees of Georgian Universities
- Improving Foreign Language Skills
- Don't Know
- Other:

6. Where do you reside at the moment?

- Georgia (Please go to Question 8)
- Abroad
- N/A

7. Are you planning to go back to Georgia?

- Not going back
- Yes, but don't know when
- Yes, right after finishing the studies
- Undefined yet
- N/A

8. Could you please underline the importance of the following factors in creating an adequate study environment?

	Crucial	Somewhat Important	More Unimportant, than Important	Absolutely Unimportant	Don't Know
Library equipped with up to date Course Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highly Qualified Professors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Normal Infrastructure (study rooms, laboratories and etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technological Equipment (computers, network, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having Practice in the relevant Field	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. To what extent do you agree/disagree the following statement: "Student in Georgia, if she/he is motivated enough, can attain the same quality higher education as it is abroad"

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- More Disagree, than Agree
- Absolutely Disagree
- Don't Know

10. Gender

- Female
- Male

11. AGE

- 18-23
- 24-29
- 30-35
- 36-41

12. The University you have attended/are attending in Georgia?

- Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
- Technical University, Tbilisi
- Ilia University, Tbilisi
- University of Georgia, Tbilisi
- Medical University, Tbilisi
- Other:

13. Educational background attained in Georgia

- Attended Several Courses at Bachelor Level
- Completed Bachelor Program
- Attended Several Courses at Master's Level
- Completed Master Level
- Other:

14. Did you continue study on the same specialization as you have been studying in Georgia?

- Attending the Same Specialization
- Attending Related Specialization
- Attending Different Specialization

15. What country are you studying/have studied in?

1. \_\_\_\_\_