



Research

The governance model of higher education institutions (HEIs) and external mechanisms of educational quality development in Georgia

Main findings and recommendations

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I. MAIN FINDINGS

1. In the 1990s, the governance model of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Georgia deprived them of autonomy, and neglected to involve the university community, external actors, and students. In addition, the model carried a risk of corruption as decisions could be made unilaterally.
2. In 2004-2005, change in the governance model of HEIs was considered imperative to ensure the successful reform of the higher education system as a whole. In the course of this reform, the establishment of the first modern legal framework of this kind in the Georgian context as well as the elimination of corruption were the two main focuses.
3. In the European higher education system, there is no unified approach on how to regulate the governance model of public HEIs. Instead, states independently determine the governance model. However, generally speaking, it is possible to distinguish between two main types of governance model: (1) unitary and (2) dual. In the unitary governance model, the authority to make decisions in an HEI is mainly assigned to one body. Meanwhile, in the dual model, functions are separated and distributed among different management bodies.
4. A model established by state legislation gives the controlling body broad discretion over the control of HEIs. The purpose and scope of such stated control are less predictable however. In some cases, such control may hinder the adoption of independent and effective decisions, and limit accountability to the university community.
5. In Georgia, the governance model of private HEIs is not regulated by legislation. The Law of Georgia on Higher Education determines that university governance model and the structure applies only to legal entities under public law. Meanwhile, legal entities under private law are free to define their own governance model and structure. However, external mechanisms to ensure the quality of education concerning legal entities under private law have established principles on which the governance model of an HEI should be based. In particular, an HEI should create a governance model and form an organizational structure detailing the implementation of the goals and activities of the given institution determined by its strategic development plan.

6. External mechanisms of education quality assurance and enhancement (known as “authorization”) consider the standards and criteria for evaluating the governance model and structure of the given HEI. However, these standards and criteria need to be more specific and detailed. The existing statutory regulations encourage non-uniform practice, and authorization experts need a clear and unambiguous normative framework to operate under.
7. Practices related to authorization are mixed. This uneven approach creates mistrust in the external evaluation mechanisms and, subsequently, prevents the implementation of the authorization standards for a predetermined purpose. Moreover, non-uniform practice creates the risk of standards being met only at a formal level, rather than to a meaningful degree.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **For the Parliament of Georgia and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia**
 - 1.1 In the event that the governance model of HEIs is reformed, the negative experiences of the 1990s, harmful practices, and the risks of corruption should all be taken into account.
 - 1.2 The governance model and structure of state HEIs should become more flexible, and adapt to the specific needs of the given institution.
 - 1.3 In HEIs established by the state, powers should be distributed among management bodies in such a way as to create a legal framework that facilitates effective and quick decision-making.
 - 1.4 There is a need to reform the existing model of control of state HEIs to enable the identification of gaps and promote development. The relevant framework here should be defined clearly and in detail.
 - 1.5 Private HEIs should retain the authority to determine their own governance model, and regulations limiting such autonomy should not be established by legislation, including external evaluation mechanisms.

2. For the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

There is a need for critical analysis to be undertaken on the authorization standards concerning the governance model and structure of HEIs and to update the normative formulations of the relevant standards and assessment criteria.

3. Recommendations for the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

It is crucial that the gaps in the authorization process and non-uniform practice in authorization decision-making be eliminated.



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