

BUILDING COOPERATION CULTURE WITH INDUSTRY IN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS: CASE OF GEORGIA

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SHORTLY ABOUT ME

- **Master of Administrative Sciences – Tampere University / University for Continuing Education Krems**
- **6+ years of experience at the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) (2018-2024)**
- **Former Research group lead of NCEQE's thematic analyses**
- **Member of ENQA WG on QA of Research**
- **Head of Evaluations at Alte University since September 2024**

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- **New QA mechanisms for Higher Education Institutions and Programmes implemented in Georgia in 2018**
- **Harmonization of QA system with the ESG 2015 in accordance to EU-Georgia Association Agreement 2014**
- **Industry Representatives (Employers), Students and International Experts involved in the expert panels**
- **The first institutional review (Authorization) cycle over in 2023**
- **No specific research so far on the dynamics of employers' involvement in the Authorization process as experts**

2. HIGHER EDUCATION QA SYSTEM IN GEORGIA

- **Institutional Authorization – Once in 6 years**
- **Programme Accreditation – Once in 7 years (Mandatory since 2023)**
- **The institutions/programmes assessed against the authorization/accreditation standards**
- **Authorization/Accreditation council – the main decision-making body**
- **Expert panels chaired by the International evaluators, serving as chairs**

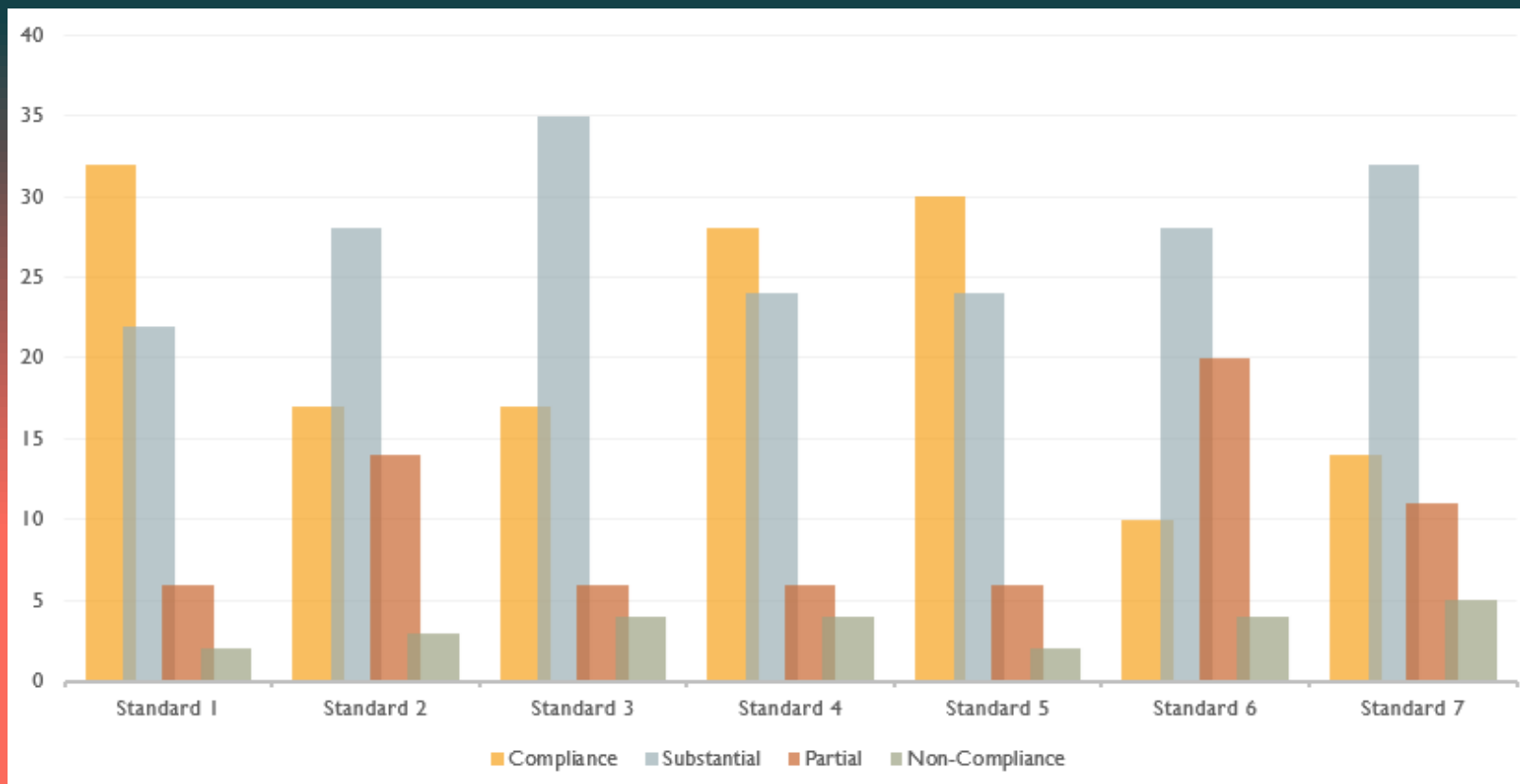
3. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION CYCLE 2018-2023

- **All the Georgian HEIs underwent the new model of Authorization in 2018-2023**
- **61 Institutions (19 Public and 42 Private) evaluated overall**
- **HEIs mostly struggling to comply with 6th and 7th standards**

Authorization Standards:

1. Mission and Strategic Development of the HEI;
2. Organizational Structure and Management of the HEI;
3. Educational Programmes;
4. Staff of the HEI;
5. Students and their Support Services;
6. Research, Development or/and Other Creative Activities;
7. Material, Information and Financial Resources;

COMPLIANCE LEVELS OF THE HEIS WITH AUTHORIZATION STANDARDS 2018-2023



4. METHODOLOGY

- **Qualitative Methodology**
- **10 Interviews with the key stakeholders**
 - **4 Employer Experts**
 - **3 NCEQE Representatives (Having Key roles over the execution of the cycle)**
 - **3 HEI representatives (Public & Private)**

RESEARCH QUESTION

- How has the QA agency's cooperation culture with the industry in institutional reviews evolved in Georgia over the last authorization cycle?
- How impactful is the involvement of employer experts in the authorization processes, from the perspectives of the different stakeholders, involved in the process?

5. MAIN FINDINGS

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVEMENT IN AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

- **Weak University - Industry cooperation in Georgia (EU Comission 2018; Tabatadze 2023).**
- **Employer involvement in the panels normatively introduced in 2017**
- **Currently over 50 Experts in the pool from various fields**
- **Participation not mandatory in every evaluation**
- **Employer present in vast majority of Authorization evaluation panels throughout the cycle**

GOAL OF THE INITIATIVE

- **Stakeholders' Opinions match upon the goal of the initiative**

Main Goals Named:

- **The strengthening of the University-Industry Relations**
- **Involvement of more market-oriented perspective into the evaluation**
- **Harmonization with the ESG 2015 (External Legitimacy)**

DYNAMICS OF COOPERATION

- Initiative publicized at the initial stage
- Informally utilizing HEIs' already existent ties with the industry
- Snowballing remains the most potent way to recruit new employer experts
- Need for more cooperation with associations/professional organizations etc. for better visibility.

INITIATION OF THE EXPERTS

- **Trainings/Workshops offered for the newly recruited employers on the standards/procedures of the Authorization**
- **Efforts of general orientation, no employer-specific endeavors noted by any of the stakeholders**
- **Employers desired tailored trainings, possibly given by the fellow industry representative**

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES' MOTIVATION FOR COOPERATION

- **Two Main motivations identified within the employers:**
 - **Personal Interest in Contributing to Higher Education (Societal Good)**
 - **Expert Status – Seen as an asset**
- **Personal interest also seen as the most important factor for recruiting the employers by the NCEQE representatives**
- **Personal interest in societal good seen as an asset amidst the lack of systemic synergies between university and industry**

FRESH BLOODED INBREEDING

- **Some of the Employers also work at the HEIs**
- **Employers mostly serve as the invited teachers but sometimes even as professors**
- **HEI representatives seeing the presence of University-related industry representatives as inbreeding**
- **These connections contributing to the associations with other, often competing HEIs**
- **This phenomenon fitting with the bigger picture**

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE INITIATIVE

Positive Impact as seen by the stakeholders:

- Influence on more cooperation with the industry
- Employers increasingly seen as the key stakeholders within the QA mechanisms and the Higher Education at large

Negative Impact:

- Formalization of the relations, leading to superficial cooperation for the needs of evaluations

LESSONS LEARNED & AREAS TO IMPROVE

LESSONS LEARNED

- **More and Better Materials** for training and initiation of new employers into the evaluations
- **Better Connections and Quantitative increase** in the Employers' numbers within the pool
- **Experienced employers**, give high value to the opportunity of participation in the evaluations

AREAS TO BE IMPROVED

- **More employer-oriented approaches** need to be adopted by the NCEQE, for better training
- **Employers often unavailable** for evaluation, causing the certain people to participate in evaluations more frequently
- **Employers Desire** the opportunities to communicate with the fellow industry representatives, which could foster the peer-learning

6. CONCLUSION

- **Despite the apparent increase in Cooperation, no systemic mechanisms existent for fostering the cooperation, largely depending on informal relations**
- **No trace of cooperation culture visible between the NCEQE and the Industry**
- **The QA Agency-Industry Cooperation reflects the state of the art of the university-industry relations in the country**
- **Employer involvement beneficial from coercive perspective, leading to Universities having more connections with the industry**

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!

Discussion