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The Impact of Education Reforms on Higher Education Student's Autonomy (Georgia as a Case Study)

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Abstract

Recently there has been a trend towards making higher education students' learning autonomous in most parts of the world, but the advantages of autonomy itself have not been harnessed to full capacity, which is limiting the abilities and capabilities of higher education students (Saba, 2012; Moore, 1983; Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2011). This article examines the concept of students' autonomy, in higher education systems. The study focuses on the case of Georgian higher education students who experienced a sharp change from the soviet system of learning to reforms which encourage students' autonomy. The aim of the research is to discover the Georgian higher education students' readiness for student autonomy. The conclusion is that students are only partially ready for more student autonomy, especially such its form as distance learning.

Keywords: Student's Autonomy, Higher Education, Education Reforms, Reflective Learning, Responsibility For One's Learning, Student Centered Approach, Teacher Centered Approach, Cognitive Abilities, Self-Assessment, E-Learning Management, Web Based Learning Tools

Evaluation strategies in curriculum design

Reforms in higher education have taken a new direction towards making higher education students autonomous. Gone are the days when curricula were written for teachers to take charge of the classroom. Now, there is a paradigm shift as the cursor points directly at the students with a total or partial involvement of teachers with examples of some countries like the US, UK, Macedonia, and China (Chamot, et al., n.d). According to Nunan (1988), the major contrast between student-centered and conventional curriculum development is that, in a student-centered curriculum, it is a collaborative effort between teachers and students, since students are intimately involved in the process of making decisions regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught. Such higher education students who are given the opportunity and take this stance are termed autonomous. However, some educationalists have not really come to terms with this innovative way of learning and so maintain the old style whereby teachers have to teach by pouring knowledge into the minds of the students; which has traditionally been the case. Many examples are found in Africa and Asia. Those who partake in this concept do it from different levels or perspectives but with the active involvement of world education bodies educational systems are waking up to their responsibilities in making students' autonomy a reality in their higher education institutions.

According to United Nations (n.d), education is a basic essential of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace, and shall however become obtainable for life-long learning and so adherence to details is required to ensure collocation and co-operation across and between the various sectors, particularly between general universities, colleges and technical institutions. Part of these measures is in empowering higher education students to be autonomous in the sense of taking charge of their learning.

And in this context, the solution of the problems faced in the twenty-first century will be determined by the vision of the future society and by the role that is assigned to education in general and to higher education in particular. Hence, this research has taken up the brunt of exploring the possibilities of higher education students' autonomy and how it can be actively practiced for their benefit and the world in general

What is student autonomy?

The term student autonomy is somewhat similar to another term which is learner autonomy. Autonomy, according to Benson (2001), is the ability to take control of one's learning by making productive decisions, while Student / Learner Autonomy refers to the capability of a student to take charge of his or her own learning and nothing more; and the situation in which the student is totally answerable for all of the decisions taken as regards to his or her learning and the implementation of those decisions. According to Holec (1985) and Dickinson (1987), identify autonomous education as requiring the teachers' restraining involvement with the learner as on a planned basis. Rather a learner lives and learns together, pursuing questions and interests, as they arise and using conventional schooling on an "on demand" basis, if necessary in terms of assessment and conventionalization.

Several schools of thought think that autonomy can be absolute while others believe otherwise and prefer that the principles of autonomy could be used in the classroom arguing that the world is a social order and no one person should decide to stand alone, but rather collaborate with others. Little, Ridley & Ushioda (2003) believe that all truly effective learning entails the growth of autonomy in the learner as

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regards both the process and the content of learning; they also acknowledge the fact that for most learners the growth of autonomy requires the stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher. Here, Little et al's premise is based on the guidance of a good teacher; an understanding that a good teacher is an instructor who opens a door to a large house and that helps the student to have access after which the learner becomes free to make critical and reflective choices about which other doors to enter and for what purpose. In this kind of autonomy, both the teacher and the learner have a role to play.

Autonomy and student's role

Student autonomy includes the learner's reflective involvement in all aspects of the learning processes. Learners become autonomous by assuming responsibility for their learning (Little et al, 2003). This includes being involved in all aspects of the learning process: planning, implementation and assessment. Their autonomy grows as they become conscious of the process of learning (Rogers, 1994). With this levity, the student develops interest and enthusiasm, and the task of the teacher simply is to aid this realization.

• Creation of goals

Students before any season of learning in whatever programme type should create a mental vision of what they want out of their learning. There must be creation of goals. Achievements begin as a mental image, then it is pursued and the result is what is seen as grades. The caliber of grades is determined by what a student puts into the whole process of study and then assessment. However, though the present day learner understands the competition involved in the labor market and that grades count a great deal, learners should not only have good grades, but also really understand the content studied and how it applies to a segment of their lives or the society and the international community.

• Process rather than product

Compared with the traditional style of learning which is based on teacher centeredness, students' autonomy preaches student centeredness. The role of the student rather than the role of the teacher focus on the procedures rather than the results and encourage students to develop their own vision for learning and to see learning as a lifelong process (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001).

The teacher following the teacher-centered views would lecture students and expect the latter to give feedback most likely verbatim and laurels would be awarded to such students who can quote word for word scholarly works in a fashion that is acceptable to him or her and use terminology in the language or style in such a rigid form and at the end of the time of learning such students become a product of the teacher. According to Hoidn & Karkkainen (2014), the teacher with student-centered views creates room for students to unlock their innate potentials and even if the teacher is there then learning (not teaching) becomes a process; a process of resolving mysteries and unlocking potentials. Students should be able to bring their prior knowledge to the learning setting and actively construct knowledge based on what they already know and believe, including misconceptions which would be corrected in the whole process. This will arm them with the ability to continue learning in this dimension as a lifelong term.

Development of cognitive abilities

To actualize in-depth knowledge, mental processing of information must take place and a change in the student's knowledge is essential as one vital part of cognition. According to Bransford, Brown & Cocking (2000), long-term memory is key in order to engage in a cognitive activity. For example, compared to beginners, experienced students draw on extensive judgments stored in their long-term memory to solve problems, while beginners lack proper strategies to assimilate new information. Therefore, learning takes place when this cognition is altered. Next is the working memory which is in charge of conscious information processing. It is limited in duration and capacity when important information is processed. For example, information that is processed, but not rehearsed, can be lost within seconds.

Only part of information that students get can be used or stored. According to Paas, Van Gog & Sweller, (2010), cognitive load theory, on the one hand, gives the idea that exploration learning within a cumbersome learning environment generates a heavy and sluggish working memory load that has negative impacts. On the other hand, the disadvantages do not apply when recognizable information that has already been stored in long-term memory is re-used in working memory. Hence; learners should be able to bring their experiences into their learning and then relate them together for efficiency.

• Self-assessment

A factor that is vital to learner autonomy is self-assessment. According to Turloiu & Stefansdottir (2011), learners need to build up their own personal criteria for the quality of their work and develop independence from the teacher who is the sole judge of their weaknesses and strengths. Counseling and assessment in this scenario are periodic events. Also, according to Saba (2008), the institutions of learning are enforced to follow up the student, who is obligated to show his or her progress in accomplishing the set goals and objectives of the study contract in a specific time frame. That a learner or student has autonomy does not mean he or she should lack discipline in terms of what to assimilate and when. The learning contract, therefore, can be revised periodically to reflect the intellectual growth and personal maturity of the learner as well as his or her improvement in acquiring various skills and knowledge domains. Learners must prove themselves what they have acquired theoretically and practically by being able to do what they were not able to do and achievement results in terms of improved grades.

Students' autonomy and the teachers' role

At first, it is an internal and psychological battle for the traditional teacher to suddenly lose control of his classroom and teaching and then be a spectator-like participant in the learning process. The conventional perspective is that teachers should be in control of the classroom and direct teaching. To some, students' autonomy may sound more like bringing disaster in the classroom. Nevertheless teachers can successfully make the choice of releasing control and sharing it with the students (Lacey, 2007).

According to Torloui & Stefansdottir (2011), fostering autonomy in the classroom is done by providing students with opportunities to make significant choices and decisions about their learning in an informed way. Being informed as a teacher is to be aware and understand students' abilities and to be open to their options to learning from the content

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learnt to the strategies used in helping them learn. Such wide ranging options come from examples of problem-based learning, case studying, computer based learning or online learning to the aids such as films, documentaries, scaffolding with group or peer tasking or work, and content materials designed to aid autonomy (Nunan, 1999).

• Motivation

Only internally motivated students are actively engaged in autonomous learning. Unmotivated and externally motivated students learn only under teacher's and/or parents' control. Motivation is a common factor to reduce attrition in students to the barest minimum, especially within the context of online learning. According to Chen & Jang (2010), a test was conducted on a model of self-determination theory developed by Deci and Ryan (1995) on two online certificate programs that leads to special education certification for a university in the southeast region of the United States. The self-determination theory states that humans have three basic needs: autonomy, competency, and relatedness. The theory also views human motivation as containing three categories: intrinsic motivation (motivation that is engaged in for the pleasure and satisfaction derived in it, e.g., reading a book for the sheer pleasure of learning something), extrinsic motivation (motivation towards a behavior that is a means to an end, e.g., studying to get high grades), and amotivation (i.e., absence of motivation). Individuals are not motivated when it is found that there is less relationship between their behavior and outcome. E.g., when there is no direct relationship with what is studied in class and what the labor market demands). The study found that self-determination should be promoted in order to motivate students in an online environment.

The researchers suggested that relevance of the course or program should be emphasized and that the interpersonal relationships should provide choice. Without relevance of a program the students will not be able to concentrate because of lack of motivation. Therefore in the process of building curricula or implementing them, the relevance of the program to the student who will be joining the labor force sooner than he thinks and facing life challenges as it is should be stated out. The realization of how beneficial a program is would motivate his or her maximum input towards his or her learning. In addition to this, since the work load of the teacher is reduced in terms of personal contact with students (online learning) or direct classical style of teaching, what they are meant to do is to help the students who have not reached the autonomous level to get there. This is still part of motivation. Helping students find the key to unlock their hidden innate abilities in them is essential (Assinder, 1991).

For the Classroom students' external factors like troubles from their homes or living conditions can be a strong mechanism for attrition and here the teacher can play the role of a counselor and motivate the students in such a way that those issues will not become a setback for their learning. This motivation gets students engaged.

• Improvement through aids

It is teacher's role to encourage the students' use of aids such as Portfolios, the World Wide Web, Log books; to follow them up and help them see their level of development.

Portfolios are collections of students' work done by the students with guidance from their teachers to represent their learning experiences. A portfolio should include information about the activities that produced the portfolio, the process of development, possibly including drafts and revisions, and a narrative in which the student reflectively describes the learning that took place. The collection of student work is not for exhibition rather (Ng, 2010) puts portfolios in proper perspective as showing student's effort, progress, achievement, and self-reflection in one or more areas. They provide a type of personal assessment that is directly related to classroom activities. This is why they are considered particularly appropriate by language teachers for assessing language learning processes and promoting learner autonomy (Mc Mullan et al, 2003).

According to Zhenhui (2010), as a means of reflection, portfolios focus on the student learning process, as reported by students. The teacher's role is to enhance the students' metacognitive and affective awareness in learning. The centerpiece of this portfolio type is the students' perceptions, interpretations, and strategies utilized in acquiring knowledge. How students learn and what their attitudes and reactions might be are as valuable as what they learn and affective awareness in learning. In a higher education environment teachers can benefit from portfolios even if students have moved to a higher level, the new teacher in that level can still retrieve this material and could serve as an aid to continue to help such students knowing their potentials and if possible disabilities.

• Technology

Technology can deliver the pedagogical support students need. We live in a rapidly changing world. These changes affect us all. According to Bell (2011), the scope of the change exceeds personal and interpersonal learning activities to include larger scale organizational and societal change, additional theories are needed to explain change, to plan interventions and to develop policies. The World Wide Web has created a new generation and made almost all things to be mobile including learning. In order to be able to flow with this generation then teachers' whole module from planning to implementation and feedback should also be in a culture to which this generation has adapted themselves to. In Bell's words, it is to teach these students in their own language- technology. However, not all students have adapted to this fashion others should be encouraged to flow with the tide so as be abreast of changes in the society.

• Leadership roles

In the long run, students would become teachers. There is nothing like the forthcoming prospect of having to teach something to motivated students. According to Nunan (1999), the goal of teaching each other is a factor of paramount importance. When students are asked to present something to another group it gives a clear reason for the learning, calls for greater responsibility to one's own group, and leads to increased motivation and greatly improved accuracy. In my opinion, learners should be given the chance to show what they know and prove how they know it.

• Learners becoming researchers

Lastly, another very important thing a teacher supporting autonomy of the students' needs to consider is to teach them how to become better learners and leaders by triggering their inquisitive minds. Most motivated students would want to satisfy their curiosity only if they are taught how to and the journey begins by giving them several task and or problem-based questions. The teacher should not give students the answer rather stimulate them to find it. Of course this is a skill that every teacher needs to build. He or she should then guide them into academic or scholarly writing inquiring to find out the validity and reliability of a claim or

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statement.

Student autonomy and higher education management's role

The success of autonomous learners is not achievable without some guidance of the teachers on the one hand and their ability to relinquish the control of the students' learning, on the other hand gone are the days when teachers were told to just teach with strict rules and curriculums, presently, the higher educational management must wake up to responsibility created by the market forces and by the ICT. There must be a paradigm shift that will move administrators and managers from documentation and assessment of staff and students to planning programs for achieving the goals of student autonomy. Programmes to train; and re-train administrative staff members and teachers are needed to change their viewpoints.

Higher education management should endeavor to participate in existing or create their own online Continuing Professional Training (CPT) for faculty which includes courses and workshops administered partly via ICT. The goal of CPT, according to Caltone (2010), is the acquisition of skills of problem-based learning faculty training as well as plunging in to the areas of distance faculty development training delivered through a mixture of electronic media with instances of video tapes, interactive television, emails, internet, etc. Several higher education institutions have begun to research into these areas, establishing policies to give technological support and guide hybrid-training programs alongside face-to-face course format for teachers and put them into practice but the population of these institutions is still considerably very low. Caltone encourages those in administrative circle to realize that CPT units help university teachers to build knowledge on their previous experience, while supporting learning by action, aiding social participation, promoting cooperative strategies to curriculum research and innovation, emphasizing a respectful learning environment, teachers to value colleague reinforcing and empowering comments from all online CPT participants.

• Organization of faculty e-development programs

To organize faculty e-development programs, Caltone (2010) suggests up-to-date facilities and infrastructure, e.g. web platform facilities, and wireless communications system; structural organization to support departments and activities of learning and teaching coordinators; goals, e.g., empowerment in e-learning as the final purpose or aim in teaching; and concepts e.g., knowledge society as a central policy objective.

• Influencing pain pedagogy with e-development systems

According to Caltone (2010), online CPT courses dynamics change the reading and writing pedagogical knowledge and consequently new communication skills are demanded. The instructor's narratives examine ideas, intentions and other paralinguistic modes of communication in the learners' faculty and CPT helps to bring that to bear more effectively. Tallent-Runnels et al (2006) mention that professional e-development permits to decrease the issues of time pressure, as it can be done individually when teachers have free time as a result creates a unique set of options for staff assessors and faculty members so as to address better curriculum and teaching conceptions and misconceptions It is note-worthy that using e-development has to change some of the ways faculty perform their duties; blending e-development and traditional workshops. Instructors see the need to harmonize e-development programs and to be part of the merged teaching populace because it unifies university teachers with their peers.

• Web- based learning organization

Managers want an e-development environment where planning, organizing, structuring, tracking, reporting, communicating arrangements and expectations and many other learning activities though these take time and require orderliness on the part of the manager-academics and a computing team, not just a CPT management container, a dumping ground for data management. Caltone (2010) states that universities need tools for selecting the right system for managing faculty e-development programs, because some web-based course management systems provided within CPT are not in general utilized to their fullest capacity. It is imperative that faculty members are given the chance to evaluate e-development programs of software packages, e.g., a module on job training and counseling workshop that can be integrated into a main program or hardware, like usage of an interactive whiteboard, before such modern facilities be approved for use for learning in classrooms or on the innovative study package.

To begin to use such new technologies, as podcasting or vodcasting virtual labs, mobile learning, broadcasting and video conferencing, comprehension of their possibilities is required. According to Masoodian (2001), nowadays faculty are using different types of information delivery devices such as mobile telephones, palmtops, PDAs and Standard Desktops, Personal Computers, but unfortunately their maximum potential and limitations in the learning process are unknown.

• The Internet as a resource tool

Having made reference to technology as a major tool, teachers can use for delivering online pedagogy and learning, it is imperative to mention a few sources that could be useful. Caltone (2010) gives such examples of open source platforms like Moodle (www.moodle.org), Ilias (http:www.ilias.de/), Atutor (http:www.atutor.ca) and Claroline (http:www.claroline.net). These virtual learning environments typically provide tools such as those for assessment, communication, uploading of content, return of students' work, administration of student groups, questionnaires, tracking tools, wikis, blogs, chats, forums, etc., over the internet (Martin-Blas & Seranno, 2009).

Thus, the problem of achieving student autonomy can be resolved with the mentioned-above tools.

Research Design

Owing to the case study, which involves Georgia, it was decided that the concentration should be on higher education students in Tbilisi, being the capital of Georgia and having the highest number of higher education institutions with indigenes and international students inclusive.

Two types of questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative) were made based on the analysis above. The questions involved sum up and ask for details for the viewpoints presented:

• Teacher's role in development/stimulation of student autonomy

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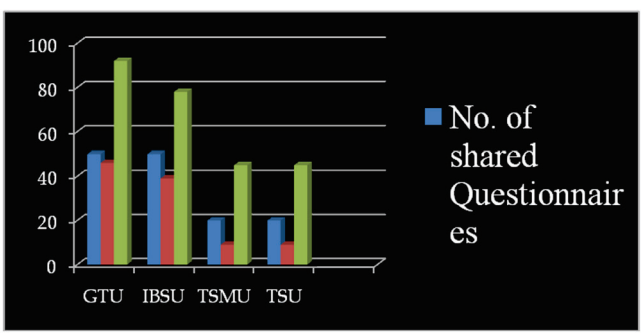
• The role of Internet and distance learning in student autonomy

• Students' views on student-centered education (motives to follow or resist it)

• Availability of experience of autonomous learning

The questionnaires were distributed to higher education students across four prominent universities in the state with respondents sharing the views of teacher-centered education and those of student centered education. Respondents ranged from students studying for their bachelor degrees to those studying or about to complete their doctoral programs. The quantitative questionnaire, aimed at clarifying the understanding and practice of higher education students' autonomy in each university (103 respondents of this quantitative questionnaire across the four universities). Next, a qualitative questionnaire was administered to obtain a further understanding and the belief system as it is practiced in each university for a rich discovery, striking a balance between both instruments and to be able to reduce errors in the process of analysis. For this qualitative questionnaire 20 students participated and response retrieved from them. The focus of the research was to find out the overall practice and understanding of students' autonomy in Georgia. Respondents were from these Four Universities:

GTU- Georgian Technical University	92%
IBSU- International Black Sea University	78%
TSMU- Tbilisi State Medical University	45%
TSU- Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University	45%



Responses to the issues in the quantitative questionnaire are based on a 5 point Likert scale (1 – totally disagree → 5 – totally agree).

Table 1. Results of the quantitative questionnaire

Question	mean	% of students whose answer was 4 0r 5
1. Higher education students can achieve educational goals completely without the help of a teacher.	3.2	31%
2. Distant and online learning is a higher quality of learning as compared to a traditional classroom/homework only setting.	2.3	26%
3. Contacts with teachers and students are of higher importance than the content learned.	4.7	56%
4. I prefer using a personal study for future studies/occupation.	4.7	53%
5. I study just what is required from me by the syllabus/teacher/book.	2.4	42%
6. There is no syllabus/teacher/book that can completely satisfy a student.	4.5	59%
7. I benefit from teacher and pair/group work via sharing knowledge and strategies.	4.0	45%
8. As a higher education student I often study online and otherwise without supervision of any kind.	4.6	47%

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The results are rather contradictory. On the one hand, the majority of students prefer learning in class (questions 3 and ; the mean is 4.7 and 4.0, 45-56% choose answers "4" – I rather agree and "5" – I totally agree) to totally independent study, on the other hand, they answer that they prefer using a personal study for educational and professional purposes (mean 4.7, 53% chose answers "4" and "5") and they realize that no syllabus/teacher/book can completely satisfy their needs (mean 4.5, 59% chose answers "4" and "5"). 47% of them (mean point – 4.6) also answer that they often study online and otherwise without teacher's supervision.

Open-ended questions:

Qualitative questions for higher education students furthering their education

In an attempt to generate the notion of what is practiced within each university open questionnaires was designed. The overall response of students and lecturers from each university which is presented below depicts participants' understanding of autonomous learning. Totally 20 participants answered this questionnaire. The responses, of course, do not succinctly indicate the situation, but provide additional perspectives concerning the topic.

1. How will you describe your experience as a distant or an online student in comparison with the conventional way of learning in the classroom or vice versa?

This question and the second question were aimed to determine if there is a total or partial autonomy practiced by any university in Georgia, but unfortunately none of the respondents is involved in a distant or online learning, rather the classroom learning with student centeredness is the only adopted method of student autonomy. As to the structure of learning, all the students agreed to the idea of mixing a structured curriculum and also having a free choice to learn what suits their purpose of learning. Those who had an online course took it outside the university walls and unfortunately could not finish it for they lacked the discipline embedded with timing and personal motivation.

2. Do you think it is worth learning several additional subjects that are outside your field of study or it is best to stick with what you know; which approach will eventually help you to earn a living?

This question aimed at comparing students' knowledge to the demands of the labor market which has been in strong support of student autonomy. Most students across all the universities, IBSU inclusive, preferred to learn several additional subjects outside their field because they think they may somehow need it someday, only a small amount of respondents who interestingly are students in the IT and language field of study are aware of the demands of the labor market and would, if given the chance, take programs related only to their professionalism.

3. If given an opportunity with information technology, how can you achieve maximum learning in your chosen field of learning?

There are no online or distant learning programs in the universities, so students are unaware of their possibilities. No clear answers were obtained.

4. So far with your experience in autonomous learning, do you think students can achieve educational goals alone or with the aid of a teacher or an instructor and why?

With this question all the respondents from all universities disagree, as they do not believe a student can take charge of his or her learning, rather they believe a student must have a contact with a teacher, not just for the sake of understanding, but also for motivation towards the study. A few of respondents prefer to take classes for formality, but gain understanding only in independent study.

5. In your opinion, will you prefer that higher education should be flexible allowing autonomous learners and professional examinations provided for qualifying purposes or there should be a mix in it?

Most of the respondents from all the universities believe a mix should be provided, so that the student will have a deeper understanding for both the subject and examinations at all levels, so as to prepare themselves ahead for professional life.

6. Do you do much independent study? Why?

This question was intended to know how much internal motivation higher education students have towards their study. Many respondents answered that they do some independent study, because it is demanded to acquire credits and gain recognition of their teachers and for future referrals for scholarships and employment. Only few respondents really make out time to study outside the demands of their class requirements.

7. When in the class, can a teacher, group or pair work teach you; what you cannot learn or study independently? How?

This question was to see how much autonomy higher education students have. The responses were rather vague. They share each other's learning strategies and especially background knowledge. Respondents claim they learn from group or pair work, only a very few seem to be able to learn independently.

8. Name advantages of autonomous learning and conventional classroom learning

This question aimed at an assuring understanding of the whole student autonomy concept. The response showed a low knowledge and practice of student autonomy; many respondents did not clearly know what it meant, as they did not give answers, but those who knew, answered that autonomous learning enables higher education students to study from distance and do other work at the same time, in order to gain experience of what they study or professional life.

Findings

The results of quantitative questionnaire are controversial. Students are not fully aware of the importance of the concept of student autonomy and its advantages. Two of the questions supporting the role of learner autonomy got a low mean (question 1 - 31% of respondents give a positive assessment, the mean equals 3.2; question 2- 26% give a positive assessment, mean equals 2.3). On the other hand, 3 questions dealing with the role of student autonomy got high results (question 4 – 53% of respondents answer positively, the mean equals 4.7; question 6 – 59% of respondents an-

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swer positively, the mean equals 4.5; question 8 – 47% of respondents answer positively, the mean equals 4.6).

Students more often support teacher-centered viewpoint, relying more on teacher than on themselves (question 3 – 53% of respondents answer positively, the mean equals 4.7; question 5 – 45% of respondents answer positively, the mean equals 4.0). On the other hand, there is no unanimity to the answers to items focusing on teacher's role. Question 5 did not get high results (42% of respondents answer positively, but the mean equals only 2.4).

Analogously, the results of the qualitative questionnaire show that students are not unanimous, however, in general, they rely more on teacher centered approach. One of the reasons is they almost do not have experience of distance learning (totally no experience within the program they are taking and very little – beyond it).

Conclusions

From the findings, it is clear that Georgia's educational experience is different from many other countries. As a country still in transition from quite authoritarian soviet ruling to a democratic one, which is naturally reflected in students' mentality, it has achieved much on the road to a more student-centered approach. However, many students confess that they do not know about /have not experienced much student autonomy in the process of their education. Some students are enthusiastic about it, but some are still reluctant to take the responsibility for their study. It is obvious that student autonomy cannot be achieved in a decade or two, rather there has to be a melting pot in the process of learning and also it is understandable that many teachers and students still struggle with the concept of student autonomy.

It is easier to apply the notion of student autonomy with the new generation of higher education teachers and students because they have initially been taught with the idea of student autonomy in mind. Using the internet as an effective tool of student autonomy is becoming more and more popular, but it is also a time-consuming process. It is imperative that students are taught to have autonomy progressively right from cradle to follow the life-long learning path.

Reforms leading to students' autonomy cannot and should not be too swift, rather it should be a gradual process; teachers should be trained and retrained on student-centered teaching styles and particularly the secrets of how to unlock this innate ability in the minds and souls of their students. And for higher education institutions already practicing this teaching ideology, engagement in autonomous classrooms should be continually encouraged. Administration of higher education institutions should inspect this by getting feedback from both teachers and students in order to ensure that the principles formulated in the curricula and syllabi are followed while teachers encourage students' usage of logbooks and personal and peer group assessments.

Recommendations

Student learning autonomy cannot be achieved just by enacting a new law or introducing a new type of curricula and syllabi, it cannot be gained by the efforts of students only. A network of measures, involving the ministry of education, the administration of the university / faculty, the lecturers and the students' needs to be created:

• Ministry of Science and Education of Georgia, as well as university administrations and lecturers should see students' autonomy as a real need

• Plans and programs should be set up in order to meet these standards

• There should be more enhancement of autonomous learning strategies in classes using virtual learning platforms like moodles and ILIAS to help students learn early to follow the life-long learning path

• Teachers should help students develop strategies of autonomous learning, encourage students' usage of logbooks and personal and peer group assessments

• University administrators should ensure the practice (students' autonomy) by monitoring and getting feedback from both teachers and students in order to ensure that the laid down principles are followed up

• The Educational System and Universities should also partner with education professional bodies under the EU or work together with the EU to facilitate programs geared towards student centered learning or students' autonomy

• The students learning autonomously should be supported via competitions, grading system, etc.

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