

“Fairness and Equity in Access to Higher Education”?

A Study of the Introduction of GAT at university entrance exams in Georgia

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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
LIST OF TABLES	VII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	IX
ABSTRACT	X
AKNOWLEDGEMENT	XII
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 INFORMATION ABOUT GEORGIA AND SHORT HISTORY OF HE OF THE COUNTRY	4
1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	6
1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	9
1.4 STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	10
2. PERSPECTIVES ON THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND AVAILABILITY OF HE	11
2.1 THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF HE	11
2.2 THE CONCEPTS OF EQUITY AND EQUALITY	13
2.3 CHALLENGES OF FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN ACCESS TO HE	14
2.4 HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF ACCESS	22
3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDING ADMISSION POLICIES IN HE	27
3.1 A MODEL OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.....	27
3.2. ADMISSION POLICIES AND NOTIONS OF ASSESMENT.....	30

3.2.1.	<i>Admission tools</i>	31
3.2.2.	<i>GAT/SAT I as the tool for regulating admission</i>	34
3.2.3.	<i>High Stake Exams and School Achievement as an Admission Tool</i>	38
3.3.	FINANCIAL AID POLICIES AND STUDY LOANS.....	40
3.4.	PERPECTIVES ON EDUCATION REFORMS AND THEIR DRIVING FORCES	43
3.4.1.	<i>Finance, competiveness and equity driven reformes</i>	44
3.5.	CHAPTER SUMMARY	49
4.	METHODOLOGY	51
4.1.	RESEARCH APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN	51
4.2.	METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION.....	52
4.2.1.	<i>Selection of informants for interviews</i>	53
4.2.2.	<i>Development of interview guides and interviews</i>	54
4.2.3.	<i>Sampling of informants for questionnaires and collection of data</i>	56
4.3.	DATA ANALYSE STRATEGIES	56
4.4.	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	57
4.5.	CHALLENGES.....	58
5.	PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS	60
5.1.	POLICY DOCUMENTS	60
5.1.1.	<i>Access to HE according to the Low on HE of Georgia</i>	60
5.2.1.1.	What is GAT and why scholarships are linked with GAT?	63
5.1.2.	<i>Situation in public schools</i>	64
	Cost -sharing in HE in Georgia	67
5.2.	THE STATE REPRESENTATIVES VOICES.....	68
5.2.1.	<i>Fairness and equity at unified national examinations for university admission</i>	69

5.2.2.	<i>Situation in public schools and private tutoring</i>	73
5.2.3.	<i>Experience of GAT as a tool for equity?</i>	76
5.2.4.	<i>Consequencies of GAT based grant distribution policy</i>	79
5.3.	STUDENTS`EXPERIENCE	81
5.3.1.	<i>Main determinant of success at UNE</i>	81
5.3.2.	<i>How entrants characterise Unified national Examination</i>	83
5.3.3.	<i>Faculty of choice</i>	84
5.3.4.	<i>Students`experience of GAT</i>	84
5.3.5.	<i>What is decisive in success in GAT</i>	86
5.3.6.	<i>To what extent does GAT promote Equity in access to HE</i>	87
5.3.7.	<i>Students`attitudes about GAT as the only measure for getting scholarships</i>	88
5.3.8.	<i>Educational background of entrants</i>	89
6.	SUMMING UP OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	91
6.1.	SUMMING UP OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	91
6.2.	PITFULLS AND PROMISES WITH GATIN ADMISSION POLICY.....	101
6.3.	CHALLENGES FOR EQUITY AND FAIRNESS IN ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION WITHIN COMPETITION DRIVEN EDUCATION POLICY	105
7.	CONCLUSION	108
7.1.	CONCLUDING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	108
7.1.	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	110
7.2.	AFTERWORD	110
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	112
	APPENDIX 1	121

APPENDIX 2 125

List of Tables

<i>Table 1. Forms of financial aid policies by Johnstone.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Table 1 Results on the question about entrants consideration what is main determinant of success at UNE</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Table 2 Results on the question how entrants characterize UNE</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Table 3 results of faculty of choice</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Table 4 results of students' experience of GAT</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Table 5 results of student's opinion about what is decisive in success in GAT.</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Table 6 results of entrants `opinion in what extend does GAT promote equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia.....</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Table 7 results of students` education background.....</i>	<i>89</i>

List of Figures

Figure 1 Research Conducted by GORBI Gallup International65

List of Abbreviations

HE – Higher Education

HEIs - Higher Education Institutions

HSR - High School Ranking

HSGPA - High School Grade Point Average

BA - Bachelor`s Degree

GAT- The General Ability Test

MES – Ministry of education and Science

NAEC – National Assessment and Evaluation Center

OECD - Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development

PT - Private tutoring

SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test

SES - Socio- Economic Status

UNE – Unified National Examinations

Abstract

While access to HE is considered to have major impact on countries further development, outline fair and equity friendly access policy to Higher Education is important issue for any country. This master thesis analyses the challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia. Main focus of this study is directed to the introduction of General Ability Test at university entrance examinations and its influence on accessibility of HE for entire population of Georgia. The study aims to answer on following research questions: *what are the ideas behind introduction of GAT as admission tool; what is the experience of different stake holders of General Ability Test (GAT) and its impact (role) on state study grant distribution policy; and what are general challenges of fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia and to what extent had introduction of GAT influenced these challenges?*

Access implies assessment and admission tools and financial aid policy. General Ability test was introduced in Georgia as admission tool with thinking on social equilibrium and fight against private tutoring. The study highlights some problematic issues: implications for equity on merit based grant distribution policy, quality of secondary schools and impact of private tutoring on fairness and equity in access to HE. A model of equal opportunities by Jacobs is applied to bring to light notion of fairness in Georgian admission anxiety. Education reforms driven by globalisation are used to highlight challenges of equity in access to HE within competition driven education reforms.

Qualitative research methods were applied to find the answer on research questions. Policy documents, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the data. Data analyses showed that major obstacle for equity in access to HE is low quality of public secondary schools in Georgia and flourish of private tutoring in all subjects included GAT. High correlation of GAT to other subject based test indicates that GAT is as SES biased as curriculum based subjects. Measurements made by policy makers to improve quality of public schools by introduction of voucher based financing of public schools did not result in substantial changes. Empirical findings show that majority of high scorers in GAT are students who passed mathematic as their fourth choice exam. GAT results show that it has some qualities for equity and fairness in access to HE, for instance for minorities, but can

produce other type of inequalities. Based on empirical results it is possible to assume that introduction of GAT produced new wave of private tutoring directly in GAT or in mathematic.

KEY WORDS: access to Higher Education; fairness and equity; admission tools; General Ability Test, education reforms

Aknowledgement

The problem of equity and fairness of access to HE is familiar for me as I have experienced unfair system of admission exams in 1990s in my country. Admission examinations at university administered by universities themselves were corrupt and the places on popular programmes and universities were simply sold out. The only possibility to receive higher education for poor but talented students was to apply on less prestigious faculties and programmes. The consequence of such limited choice one has to wear rest of her/his life, as the demand (and the popularity) of the faculties is often labour market biased and it implies simply that many have to choose programmes which have low employability possibilities or have less aspiration to study at those programmes. The reforms of university admission examinations carried out in 2004 in Georgia ensures more fair access to HE. The access policy became more equity friendly and it gave me aspiration to carry out this research.

I want to devote this research to everybody who suffered from the previous corrupt system of university admission. But, at the same time I want to mention that not all university professors were corrupt. We (students) were offered excellent lectures by many devoted professors who were getting starvation wages in 90s at Tbilisi State University. Many top ranking universities would be proud of having such professors. I want to thank to those professors for their devoted work and for their enthusiasm, which gave me valuable knowledge.

I want to express my appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Monika Nerland for her insightful feedbacks and her depth knowledge of equity issues in HE participation.

Many thanks to my respondents who found time to answer on my questions in summer 2008 and were willing to share their point of views on equity issues and problems related to access to HE in Georgia. Information I have got from them gave me broader perspective of the problem and partly gave me initiative to broaden the scope of my paper.

I want to thank as well to all students who have filled my questionnaires and wrote their comments voluntary. I appreciate those valuable comments as they highlighted many problems related in GAT`s role in access policy.

1. Introduction and background

“The twenty- five years following and after WW II was an epoch of great and widespread optimism regarding questions of educational and socioeconomic equality. It was assumed generally that the evident gaps in wealth and power among the nations could be rather quickly illuminated. ...it was assumed also that more general acquisition of education (understood mainly as provision of former schooling) was essential in lessening inequalities within and among nations. Increasing provision of education was seen as a major engine that would drive the world to a more equal provision of access to wealth, power and opportunities” (Farell 2003, p.147).

Equality in access to higher education is important in lessening inequalities and for mobility within the society. Possibility of more equal access to HE became crucial in the age of information technologies. Nevertheless, meritocracy based admission to universities excludes often students from low SES families and students from disadvantage background and leaves those who deserves but lacks resources with less opportunities to be succeeded in the future. On the other side, country lost desired human resources as the result of such policy that is important for countries development. This problem is equally challenging for developed and developing countries, as well as countries with transition economies, as Georgia. Regarding to current education reform, I want to examine fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia. The reform of university entrance examination in Georgia was launched in 2004 with the slogan fairness and equity in access to HE, as new government regarded HE as an engine of countries further development. The reform is carried out in *a jour* with trends of globalisation and new financing policy of HE was implemented. The new financing system, *money follows student* takes care that countries valuable human resource will not be lost. The new admission criteria General Ability Test was introduced and this test was claimed to be more fair and equity friendly. Throughout my main concern is Georgia, it is clear that in contemporary world any country is under the influence of international and global education trends and policies. Introduction of GAT (General Ability Test) with thinking for more fair and equal access to HE is a policy widely discussed in many countries, especially in USA.

Education and especially HE is perceived to have decisive impact on countries further development. The emerging of human capital theory in 50s and 60s increased optimism for elimination of poverty by investing in education. Investment in education was no more regarded as private good that will give individuals chance for better life, but investment in education became priority of state. This thinking led to enormous expenditure in education in the world. These expenditures were targeted to increase access to education for the entire populations, but the starting point for various nations was different. Rich nations had already well established compulsory and universal primary and secondary education for all, they put more energy, and resources to increase participation of entire population in post secondary education; while in developing countries many children had no access to basic education and a large part of population were illiterate. The focus in those countries was universal primary education and elimination of illiteracy. According to Farell between 1960 and 1975 *“the number of school children in developing countries increased with 122 percent; the proportion of age eligible children in primary schooling increased from 57 to 75 percent during the same fifteen –year period, with corresponding increases at the secondary level (14 to 26 percent) and postsecondary level (1.5 to 4.4 percent)”* (2003,p.148). However, from the early 70s the optimism began to disappear. In spite of growth of number of children in educational institutions, there were more outside the schooling because of growth of population. The same pattern is held for adult illiteracy. Moreover, it became clear that although developing countries had economical growth, already rich nations had grow even faster and it lead to the grater gap between rich and poor nations. In addition, there were increased inequalities within nations; as the gap between classes increased. In some societies, urban children benefited most from better educational provisions; in other places, it was particular ethnic, tribal or religious groups, which benefited most from it (Farell 2000, p.149). In 80s and 90s became clear that educational reforms toward equity in access to education did not appeared to have expected results. Sometimes it was not enough well planned and even when it was implemented reasonably well, “seldom had it real effect on the comparative life chances of the children from various different groups within and among nations” (Farell 2003, p.149).

From the mid of 70s a very different view about nature of problem emerged. Many scholars, especially those arguing from neo Marxist or dependency theory, considered that normal schooling could only produce structural inequalities in existing societies. They considered it

as inevitable reality of capitalist societies and developing countries. This point of view became popular but it never became very predominant (Farell 2003, p.149).

Gradually became it clear that it is more difficult to fight against structural inequalities that are the product of traditional schooling. The fight against structural inequalities was almost lost in former Soviet Union as well despite ideology. The normal schooling was compulsory and free for everybody but it was still dominance of students from high SES families in HEIs. Those structural inequalities are still on face in the 21 century. The quarter of century with globalisation grounded on neo liberal thinking have not contributed to the less education inequality despite of trend of mass HE.

Georgia, after falling of iron frame became part of the free world and international trends and international actors have influenced its policy. The country became the natural part of processes, which are shaping education reality of the world. Equal participation in HE is very crucial for this small country in order to catch global trends and create knowledge economy. Purpose of this thesis is to find out what is ideas behind introduction of General Ability test as an admission criteria, how and to what extend provides GAT more fair and equal access to HE and what are general challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia.

Reforming of examination structure for university admission is only one part of huge complex education reform that started in 2004 and is not finished yet: all stages of education system have been transformed or is under transformation process. Nevertheless, education is being known to be one of the most conservative fields and it is not easy to transform such a system. There are factors that are common obstacles in managing equity in HE participation worldwide, but some trends are often local and related to a concrete problem in that country. So is in the case of Georgia; SES factor and merit based financial aids are often famous factors that produce inequalities in access to HE and its outcomes, but the unique scale of private tutoring in Georgia is another issue in solving equity problems in education. In order to understand current problems, it is necessary to look at countries short education history.

1.1 Information about Georgia and short history of HE of the country

Georgia's history and culture is one of the most ancient in the world with its unique alphabet, literary and education traditions going back to the 3rd century B.C. (Upson, 2009). Due of its important geopolitical location, Georgians had to fight for independence and for their religion surrounded by huge empires throughout the history. Country had been part of many empires and enjoyed relatively short periods of independence. The last occupant was Russian empire followed by Soviets. From 1921 to 1990 Georgia was one of the fifteen republics of Soviet Union and country shared all features of USSR education system. Traditionally, HE was public good in USSR. Competition for admission to HE institutions was extremely high and seemed that majority of population was aware about high pay-off of higher education. According to statistics, Georgia had one of the highest levels of population with Higher Education within USSR.

Through much centralised educational system in Soviet Union, the university entrance exams were extreme decentralised. Georgia, as a part of USSR shared all aspects of the system. University entrance exams were administered by HEIs departments, giving university professors and administration huge power that was often abused (Tempus of Georgia, 2005). Despite of it, the law about entrance exams was little flexible: each student had right to apply only one certain faculty in year. If student failed, she/he had to try next year. To fail for two-three times that meant the loss of two-three years, was a normal case; sometimes, in the case of faculties of medicine and law students failed for 5-6 years. It had far-reaching consequences: fresh graduate from secondary school could not compete with students who were trained for these exams during years. The system was further more complicated for boys, as they had to go to obligatory military service for two years in the case they could not manage to become a student at any HEIs by age 18. Upper secondary school graduates were commonly in age 17-18 and it meant consequently that boys had chance only once before military service. In order to avoid military service for boys¹ (which was cruel and dangerous; as USSR was often engaged in military activities abroad or intern), parents began to put children in the schools in age five. Consequently, children who started schooling in so early

¹ This law was under constant changes. The law looked like this in 80s, before USSR collapsed.

childhood were graduated in age 16 and had opportunities to be succeeded at entrance examinations for two years until they reached age 18.²

Soviet Union had enormous emphasis on equity and on building of no class society. The ideology had a clear vision on building the egalitarian society where equality of opportunities had a major place. The fight against class society began with a strong alphabetising policy in 1920s in the Soviet Union. Persons with low SES and especially persons with working class background were encouraged to continue to HEIs. The intention was to create more skilled workforce for country's booming industry. The special accent was on expansion on technical HE. The HE was free of charges and was actually available for every skilled or "suitably prepared" person. Departing from Throw's point of view on three dimensions of access, the access policy in USSR must be considered as mass access to HE already in 40-50s. The state had managed considerable progress in relatively short period on this direction but the outcomes were not as high as it was expected. This example is striking, as country which had ideology based on equity and non class society could not managed more equal participation in HE for all parts of society. The fierce competition for HEIs places gave incitement to people to invest more in private tutoring. Private tutoring had emerged as the consequence of high demand for HE and of very limited places in higher education institutions. The trend became particularly strong in 80s.

After independence in 1991, Georgian government began to restructure the old system gradually. In 1997 the law about new degree structure and length of HE was launched. Five years long higher education had changed and two degrees in higher education was introduced: bachelor's degree and Master's degree. The former five years long HE was considered as equivalent with Bachelor's degree and two more years were added. The number of courses that was covered before during five years after reform was expected to be covered in four years. It resulted with overloaded curriculum and number of courses. To have 5-6 hours of lectures daily was common practice in first years of reform.

² They who have been in military service for two years had opportunities to go through entrance examinations after military service. But the option was that they, who managed to get place at HEIS, were free from military service and that's why almost all parent were willing to do everything in order not to send their children in Soviet army.

This reform did not change a lot: it seemed to be more formal restructuring. The content: teaching methods, syllabus and admission examination to universities remained the same. In order to cover reduced funding for HE in Georgia, state Universities began to introduce tuition fees for those students who scored relatively low at university entrance exams. The part of students who could not gain sufficient scores in university entrance exams had to pay tuition fees that were often higher than in other private universities. However, such students could enjoy with the prestigious to be enrolled of state universities that were more prestigious and provided the best quality of education offered in Georgia.

At the same time establishment of private HEIs became easy to manage. The state had very loose accreditation criteria for establishment of private universities and of course, any kind of subsidise from government in private HEI did not exist. The existence of such HEIs was primarily depended on student's tuition fees. The prime goal of private HEIs became to attract as many students as possible without any criteria for admission and maintain them by all kind of means. The quality of teaching became very low because of the situation. It became the reason of devaluation of prestigious of private HEIs in Georgia. Only those who were not possible to enrol at public high education institutions went to private institutions. “With the high level of corruption inside the public sector and simultaneously the prestigious nature of education for Georgians, these private universities with lower tuition fees almost universalised HE in terms of access...the quality and academic excellence was never controlled by any bodies, and private institutions acted like diploma mills” (Samniashvili 2007, p.34). This trend calmed down at the start of new century because of low employability of students graduating from private HEIs³. But situation did not changed significantly.

1.2 Statement of problem

Fairness and equity in access to HE was a slogan of the education reform introduced in Georgia in 2004. Prevention of the widespread corruption at the entrance university examinations was important project of new government and was regarded as a starting point

³ I mean majority of private HEIs. Throughout few of them such ESM for instance, offered better quality of teaching than public HEIs and better possibilities for employability as well.

in creation of knowledge society. After slow down of development of the country in 1992-2003, the era of drastic reforms started in almost every aspects of social life. The reform of educational system in Georgia is a most drastic and visible one. The targets of reform were primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education simultaneously. Georgian governmental bodies and policy makers have outlined their reform strategies according instructions given by experts of World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Their “advices” is known to be less friendly toward of public funding in Higher Education. The major and more visible impact of this policy is the introduction of tuition fees in public HEIs, which was a new phenomenon for former communist country. The introduction of state study grants according to scores at unified national examination became a kind of emancipator regulation for charging with tuition fees at public HEIs. This part of reform, introduction of unified national examination as the only way to disseminate corruption at university entrance exams is perceived as a positive change by the majority of population. Positive attitude toward the introduction of Unified National Examination for University Admissions is not a primarily result of the very negative experience from old Soviet system of entrance examination, but a result of maintaining of very fair procedural principles which was missed in old system. However, questionable is, if it is enough to maintain procedural fairness in order to reach fair and equal access to HE for entire population.

Georgia is a country that is very interesting to explore from point of view of cultural studies, as it is located on crossroad of Europe and Asia and, in addition shares the political and social mentality of post Soviet “commonwealth”. According to Farell (2003), the cultural factors are always the most important thing to take into consideration before launching any reform. Cultural characteristic of the country is that Georgians are willing to obtain higher education with any means. 24% of population has degrees of HE and it is regarded as very high percent (Rostiashvili 2004;). It is striking that often families with low income are willing to contribute almost third part of their income for their children`s education expenses. Almost universal spread of private tutoring among all class of population indicates on this cultural phenomenon; as well as it is an indicator of poor quality of public schools. So, because of these three reasons (culture which values education, merit based admission to HEIs and low quality of public schools), Ministry of Education and Science launched following policy about students financial aid. All entrants had to pass through three compulsory exams: General Ability Test (GAT), Georgian language and literature and

foreign languages, but state study grants are distributed based on scores only in GAT. The reasoning of such policy sounds so: GAT is not SES biased and those entrants who cannot afford to pay for private tutors have opportunities to gain state grant. Supporters of this policy claim that GAT is not coachable and influence of SES and private tutors is very low on GAT scores. However, because of high importance of GAT, private tutors in this “not coachable” test have had emerged rapidly. Paying for private tutoring in GAT became as universal among entrants as it is a case in other subjects. The second perceived significant dimension of this policy is that success in GAT is mathematic biased. The pattern of grant distribution among the faculties indicates this fact as well: the most of high scorers in GAT are concentrated in the faculty of BA and economy. Entrants who have intentions to apply on those faculties are always investing heavy in mathematic during upper secondary school. It is significant as well that there are few grant receivers among students at the faculties of art and humanity, social sciences and natural sciences. How fair and equity friendly is this issue is worth to explore.

Georgian General Ability test is a kind of sibling of the American SAT I. The GAT as SAT I both consist of two parts: verbal reasoning and mathematic. The successors in the test are claimed to have logical thinking and good analytical ability. The College Board⁴ in USA states that the SAT measures literacy and writing skills that are needed for academic success in college (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT>). The test is used in US and in many countries as well, as one co-criterion for admission at HEIs. However, nowhere is this kind of test as decisive as in Georgia. Borrowing of diverse policies in education is a part of internalisation and globalisation processes in education. Implementing of GAT in admission policies in HE is influence of international trends and globalisation (or Americanisation, as it is often called), but in what degree helps it to manage fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia?

My research questions are as follows:

1. *What are the ideas behind introduction of GAT as admission tool?*

⁴ College Board is a nonprofit organization in the United States, and was once developed, published, and scored by the Educational Testing Service. SAT is owned, developed and published by College board (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT>)

2. *What is the experience of different stake holders of General Ability Test (GAT) and its impact (role) on state study grant distribution policy?*

3. *What are general challenges of fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia and to what extent had introduction of GAT influenced these challenges?*

This thesis deals with fairness and equity in HE participation and role of GAT in promoting fairness and equity at admission exams in Georgia. The research is based on stake holders' experience of GAT and generally their perception of equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia. The focus on GAT results from its importance in state study grant distribution policies.

1.3 Research design

I designed my master thesis as a case study, due to the complexity of the research topic. The case study approach gives opportunity to the researcher to make a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman 2004, p. 48). The thesis is based on qualitative data collected through interviews with stake holders and a questionnaire to students in Georgia. Policy documents and statistic provided by Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia were also included to strengthen the validity of research. The research design and data collection strategies were developed in tight relation to the research questions. Policy documents together with interview with policy makers illuminates ideas behind introduction of GAT as admission tool. Data from interviews and questionnaires are used to answer on the second research question: *What is the experience of different stake holders of General Ability Test (GAT) and its impact (role) on state study grant distribution policy?* Interviews are perceived as valuable tool in researching of perspectives of different stake holders Patton states that: *"...the purpose of qualitative interviews is to capture complexities of the interviewed individual perceptions and experiences* (2004, p. 348). The methodological approach will be presented in a more thorough manner in chapter 4.

1.4 Strength and limitations of the study

This research is primary based on some people's personal experience and their perception of the challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia. There is no intention to generalise findings from Georgia and perceive that the problems related to fair access or mechanisms presented in Georgia to ensure equity and fairness in access to HE is common for all of the countries, or in the particular part of the world, for instance for all countries in transition. The number of students who filled questionnaires is 46. The number is quite limited but strength of such technique of data collection is that many students wrote remarkable comments at the end of each questions and it gave me valuable information about their experience of entrance examination and GAT. The strength of the data collected by questionnaires is purposive sampling as well. The sample was divided into four categories. In such a way, we have collected experience of satisfied and disappointed students. Strength of Interviews I have conducted is that all policy makers I have interviewed had key positions and different point of view on equity issues in access to HE and impact of GAT on access.

I had intentions to do observation on the process on Unified National Examination as well, but I could not manage it due of my lack of time. The observation would give me possibility to observe the atmosphere on examination process: if cheating took a place or if there was a suspicious involvement in examination process of exterminators and administrative staff. But I had to drop it. I constructed analyse and discussion on transparency and procedural fairness on the information collected via questionnaires and interviews. It can be considered as limitation of the study.

2. Perspectives on the Social Functions and Availability of HE

This chapter presents a short view of previous researches on access to HE. The chapter consists of four subchapters: the social function of HE, the concepts of equity and equality, challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE and Historical accounts of access to HE.

2.1 The social function of HE

The topic of fairness and equity in access to HE has different context in developed and developing countries, but function of higher education seems to be same everywhere. Brennen & Naidoo assert that classical sociology names two principal functions of education: selection and socialisation:

“Selection concerned the filling of the position within economic, political and social elites. Socialisation concerned with equipping the selected with the necessary attributes to occupy these positions and persuading the rest of the society that the selection was fair and ensuring that those not selected were also equipped with the different set of attributes necessary to play their own part in society” (2008, p.188).

Researchers promote, that selection can have many forms, but all of them have one key function: justifying inequality on principles of meritocracy. But it is not only dominating theory: researchers who are working on these issues are divided into the *liberal* or *re-allocative* and the *elite reproduction* theorists. Moore has summarised the main concepts of both kind of theorists; *liberal theorist* maintain that, education have functions to ensure progressive change by:

- producing the human capital required by an increasingly, high skill, science- based economy;
- promoting the civil values;
- Developing a meritocratic selection system whereby people can achieve a social status, virtue of their actual abilities and contribution rather than have it ascribed by the birth;

- Creation of Open society, characterized of high social mobility, reflecting the relationship between ability and opportunity.

Moore shortly summarise as well the main concepts of *elite reproduction theorists*; According to them main values of education are:

- Reproduce the privileges and dominance of the ruling class;
- Secure the legitimacy of capitalist social relations;
- Block the development of hegemonic working class consciousness that should effectively challenge capitalism;
- Systematically prepare pupils for their differentiated future positions within the capitalist economy and social structure (Moore 2004, p. 38).

Moore refers, generally, to education, but his distinction seems to fit better in higher education context. The researcher argues that these two theoretical assumptions are not contradictory: reproduction of elites may occur but does not have to be perfect. *Elite reproduction* theorists (Bourdeu 1996; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Brown and Scase 1994) have tended to focus only on what is going in the elite with regard of education and social status and neglected what is going on the perhaps 90% of mass system of HE (Brennen & Naidoo 2008, p. 189).

Despite of some inequalities, that there are some of the achievements arising from the expanded higher education systems as “increased opportunities for social mobility”,... “Increased income level associated with HE” ...”academe opened for women and socially disadvantaged groups worldwide“ it means that “inequalities remain, but progress has been impressive”(Altbach 2000, p.2).

According to above-mentioned concepts, one of the main political functions of education and, particularly, HE, is social mobility. This issue is equally important for developing and developed countries. Unequal distribution of places in HE leads to lost human resources that are crucial for any countries development and success.

Liberal or re-allocative and the *elite reproduction* theorist are dominating the debates on higher education’s role in sociological context. In last decades, the dominance of *liberal*

thinking became prominent; it is connected to the mass access to HE, which does not, automatically includes more equal access.

There are certain concerns about the use of word “equity” and “equality” in sociology and forthcoming sub chapter deals with usage of these terms in the thesis.

2.2 The concepts of equity and equality

Reading the literature about equity in access to education, it is striking that the using of “equity” and “equality” are not defined very clearly. They often refer to the same thing without clear distinction between them and different authors use different concepts for same thing.

The notion of educational opportunity is linked with the development of taxation system and emergence of welfare state. The job of state was to ensure that all children had access to schools that was free of direct cost. It was child’s responsibility to use the opportunities thus provided and if he/she failed it was her/his own responsibility and not state’s (Farell 2005, p. 152). As Farell claims:

...Equity refers to social justice or fairness. It involves a subjective moral or ethical judgement. Equality deals with the actual patterns in which something (income, years of schooling) is distributed among members of a practical group. ...Individual or group judgement of equity or fairness of any given observed degree of inequality can and do differ; equity involves value judgement and differing understandings of what is normal and inevitable. Since societies, groups within the societies, and individuals within the group differ in their value system, a given degree of observed educational of social inequality may be regarded as quite fair and reasonable. Many of the most complex public political debates about educational equality, and what may be done for it in terms of public policy, revolve around differing equity based interpretations of differing equality driven statistical indices (2003, p.155).

Concepts, equity and equality will be employed in this thesis in order to describe the same issues. The equality of opportunities employs in its definition the notion of equity.

In the paper, equity is the world for equal and fair distribution of some goods, as an absolute equality in most aspects of social life is unreachable. Natural as well as prescribed

inequalities of human being give them unequal opportunities in social life and particularly in education. Differences in ability of learn is natural inequality, but social status, parent occupation and education considered as a prescribed inequality. The natural inequalities require professional care and legislation that will defence rights of such persons; but prescribed inequalities can be improved by implementation of governmental support policies and reforms.

2.3 Challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE

Challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE is discussed worldwide. Relevant literature on this theme distinguishes problems in developing and developed world. Difference in resource allocated to HE creates diverse outcomes of the same policy. In this sub chapter I present challenges related to equity in HE participation in developing and developed countries.

Discussion on the challenges in access to HE in developing and countries is based on the article of Darell & Dundar, “*Equity effects of Higher Education in Developing Countries: Access, Choice and Persistence*”, which explores equality of educational opportunity in Higher Education and assumes that it can be measured across several dimensions: *access*, institutional and program *choice*, and *persistence* to graduation. These dimensions of access and student`s institutional and program *choice* are often interrelated, but in most cases they are measurable and have separate recognizable identities (2002, p. 177). There are different problems in different developing countries related with equity in access to HE but some concepts are more or less common for all developing countries. The first problem is related to the increased participation in HE: across the almost all developed world the number of students has being raised three times in past 20 years and at the same time public resources allocated to HE have increased from 15 to 20 percent (Darell and Dundar 2002, p. 169). It means that real expenditure pr student has been declined almost 50 percent (Alberch & Ziderman, 1992; Winkler, 1990; in Chapman 2002, p. 169). The equity problem is closely connected with “demand” and “supply” side for HE:

“In countries where the demand for higher education exceeds the supplies, seats in higher education are often distributed by competitive examinations without any consideration to its equity effects. Even if admission

examination is used, the probability of applicant from lower socio-economic group passing the competitive exams has been estimated to be three times lower than applicants from high income groups in some countries. Moreover the possibilities for private tutoring and possibilities for attending higher quality private or public secondary schools have reinforced the fact that students from higher income groups are much more likely to pass admission exams” (Darell & Dunder 2002,p.171).

Researchers argue that policy makers in the developing countries have ignored factors that affect the demand and assumed that low cost –recovery with low or no tuition fees and low financial aid will provide greater opportunity for disadvantage groups (Darell & Dunder 2002 p.171). As some of the studies in the economics of education shows, heavy subsidization of students in HE means often that poorer families who lack access to HE support to the privileged (Brunner, 1996; Carlson 1992; Psacharopoulos 1980; World Bank 2005). The *access* implies the possibilities to apply for HE and been succeeded in admission examinations. There are some determinants of institutional access according to Darell & Dunder (in Chapman 2002, p.170): student’s socio-economic status, educational attributes of the students, ascribed categories as ability and gender, community context (such as rural or urban setting), labour - market and wage – rate effects.

Absolute equity in access to HE is difficult to achieve if we take into consideration all above-mentioned effects. The socio- economic status is a well-known phenomenon as a main determinant in student’s access to education in both developed and developing countries. The problem of achieving proportional representation in higher education was not achieved even in the former Soviet Union (Darell & Dunder 2002, p.178).

The researchers argue that overwhelmingly public subsidy and “low or no tuition fees” policies accrue primarily students from middle and high-income families as the most of the private costs of HE do not result from tuition fees, but from transportation, food, housing (Darell & Dunder 2002, p.178).

Another major problem related to equal access to HE is having a criteria which is equally achievable for student with divers socio-economic background, for example certificate from high secondary school (if high secondary school is free of charge in the country) as access to HE depends on the access to the upper secondary education and access to academic curriculum. One of the main reasons of the inequality in access to HE in the developing countries is marginal access to upper secondary education and the low quality of public

upper secondary schools. The problem has its origin in insufficient public findings in higher secondary education and, generally the countries scarce resources for education. The primary and lower secondary education have relatively better conditions due the funding from WB and IMF. These organizations are less willing to allocate funds for higher secondary education than for primary education.

One of the strategies to obtain access to HE in many developing countries is private tutoring. This kind of practice, called as “shadow education “is commonly used in many countries (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Honk Kong, Turkey, Greece and in former Soviet Union). The tradition of “shadow Education” emerged in those countries where places in HE were usually very limited and the places in HEIs were distributed through very competitive, centrally administered examinations (Darell &Dundar 2002, p. 182).

In some developing Countries, private tutoring is often main determinant of student’s success at admission examination for HE. A report in Turkey (ISYM 1992; cited in Darell & Dunder 2002, p. 182) shows that students who took such tutoring indeed were more successful in university examination than students who did not take such tutoring. The existence of shadow education is the result not only of the very competitive admission examinations, but hence it follows that public upper secondary schools do not have sufficient quality. The low quality public upper secondary schools are the primary source of existence of “shadow education” in those countries which practice it.

Labour –market and wage rate effect plays also an important role to the demand side of access to HE. It has been shown clearly that during the high unemployment the demand for HE is increasing; students are more likely to attend the post-secondary education than to be unemployed. The trend is similar in developing as well as in the developed countries. Another factor which has effect on the demand for HE, is wage-rate. In most developing countries, wage rate between university graduates and high school graduates is huge. As researcher agues, it is particularly true in the countries with transition economics and “today thousands of students are attempting to access business schools and other applied social science fields because their rising industry wage rates (Darell &Dundar 2002, p. 183).

In many developing countries, there are considerable differences in access to upper secondary and higher education in the developed urban areas and rural areas. The community context is very sensitive topic in question of equal access to HE. Individuals from urban area

and developed regions of countries have better access to higher educational institutions, than from the poor and rural areas (Darrell & Dunder 2002, p.180). There are two main reasons: 1. the most of high quality secondary schools are located in urban areas and students from those schools score higher at university entrance exams. 2. The absence of nearby HEIs discourages students and restricts access to HE (Darrell & Dunder 2002, p.180). The problem is particularly keen in those countries, which have not developed efficient student loans.

Student's choice within HE has a little attention in the research literature. There is a question of choice to which institution one attends and in which courses one actually participates (Darrell & Dunder, 2002). There are two significant determinant of the choice within the HE. First of them is a reliable information about HEIs: in the developing countries there is poor information about programs and institutions, academic reputation, dropout rates and labour market prospects (Darrell & Dunder, 2002). The second, the most prestigious HEIs and particularly some programmes within such institutions are inaccessible for student from lower SES families, because of the high tuition fees at the best HEIs in the developing countries and the second reason for inaccessibility can be also widespread corruption at the entrance exams for public universities for the most prestigious programmes as medicine and law in some countries with "transition economy" (Bukur and Eklof 2003, p. 404).

The well known way out in order to ensure the equal access to the top universities is financial aid offered to students either by reduced tuition fees or by special grants. Such alternatives are used by universities also for recruiting students with priorities under affirmative action policies (Darrell & Dunder, 2002). According to Lay & Maguire (1980, cited in Darrell & Dunder), among low-income students both costs, levels of tuition and other private expenditures and availability of financial aid, were the most important reasons for selecting the particular university. It is a widespread practice in developed countries that the most prestigious private universities with high tuition fees have also high-aid for low-income students. Such regulation, in order to reach more equal participation of low income students and give them greater choice in programme choice is approved practice in the developed countries and researchers (e.g. Darrell & Dunder) see no reason to believe that similar arrangements in developing countries would necessary result in different outcomes.

The problems affecting equity in access to HE in the developing countries can occur in the developed countries as well. The equity problems differ from country to country in the

developed countries, but in the most cases, they share the common principles of egalitarian justice and thinking about access to free HE as a part of human rights. But it is worth to name that not all developed countries share ideals of egalitarian principle; prime example of it is USA, which is world's powerful and highly developed industrial country, but it is driven by market-based liberal economy. For this reason I shall present challenges of fairness and equity in Scandinavian and US perspectives.

Scandinavian model of education is the best examples of system based on egalitarian justice and socialist thinking. Challenges of equity and fairness are on place in this part of the world as well, but main issue which encourages equal access to HE is maintained: cost - sharing problem of attendance to HE between state and family is abolished as state educational loan fund assures all students of accredited HEIs with minimal education loan and stipend. The article by Aamodt and Kyviks "*Access to HE in Nordic countries*" provides us with Nordic perspective how the access policy is regulated by government as well as by market demands for a highly trained workforce.

In Scandinavia, as in the most industrial countries, the first wave of Higher education expansion started after WWII and, particularly from 1960s, based on the idea of investing in human capital.⁵ The expansion of HE system was seen in the line of welfare state policy which enhanced equity and social justice and simultaneously encouraged the idea of "utilising all the reserves of talent", for those results HE education had to be more accessible for all young people regardless of geography, gender and ethnicity. At the same time all Nordic countries had established economic support system for grants and loans for students before 1950s and, in addition, the major reason for keeping more equity in access to HE was absent of tuition fees (Aamodt & Kyvik 2005, p. 128). The free HE is regarded as a part of Human rights.

The expansion in higher education was related to the increased access to the lower education levels after WWII. State run schools in Nordic countries have sufficient resource to maintain quite high quality and the all school-aged children are not only allowed to attend school free of charge, but it is compulsory and the state takes care that every child attend lower

⁵ Human Capital theory articulated by Becker became very influential in the late 60s.

secondary school. Private schools are as well common, but they are also strongly subsidized from the state and the costs of sending child to such a school are affordable for every citizen. In reality, private schools are creating the choice, diversity, and not something like elite schools, where only children of rich parents can attend. The access to HE is based on the scores maintained by students in the higher secondary schools and the scores are determining in which faculties student can apply. At the same time higher school scores cannot determine whether person is allowed to take HE or not forever. Those who are dissatisfied with their scores and cannot apply to the desired faculties can attend classes once again against payment and improve their scores.

Nordic countries have well developed system of universities and university colleges spread throughout the country and when it comes to community context situation is much better than in developing countries. Throughout the situation in Nordic countries is better when it comes to community context, inequalities in student's social economic status still seems to exist. In Sweden, a move toward more equitable access took place between 1940 and 1970, but thereafter the trend had levelled out (Erikson and Johnson: 1993-85, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik. 2005, p. 133). In Norway there was reported decreasing social differences in access to HE between 1960 and 1975 according to Aamodt (1982, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005, p.133), while Knudsen (stated in stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005, p.133) found only a weak tendency toward decreasing social inequality of access to HE between 1980 and 1990, but also this weak tendency have been levelled out in the 1990s (Hansen, 1999, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005, p. 133). According to Hansen (1996, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005) and Kivinen (2001, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005), there is still large inequalities in access to HE in terms of social origin in Denmark and Finland as well. Despite of the expansion in access to HE over the decades in the Nordic countries, the enrolment pattern by socio-economic background did not change dramatically. As Aalmodt & Kyvik assert, the persisting inequality is more striking feature, than the tendencies toward equity. Norwegian and Swedish data show that enrolment to universities has been far more socially based than enrolment to the short-term college programmes, and the enrolment to the most prestigious study programmes, like medicine, law and architecture is more socially biased than to other university programmes (Aamodt, 1982; Hansen, 1992; Statistics Swedan, 2002; Høgskoleverket, 2003, stated in Aamodt & Kyvik 2005 p. 133).

The problem of institutional and programme choice is not as significant in the developed countries as in the developing ones. The more flexible credit transfer system, high tuition together with high financial aids for low income students in the top universities, state subsidized student loans in many European countries and well developed regional HEIs systems have very positive effects on institutional and programme choice within HE in most of developed countries.

The USA is the country that is maybe the most distinguished one from Nordic countries. Despite of the fact that public education has strong roots in American history, there are some conditions that must be taken into consideration before “American Dream” be fulfilled. The major characteristic for US higher education model is competitiveness. This fact determines the nature of HE access policy and, the challenges of equity in access to HE is related to this overwhelming nature of competitiveness among American universities. Despite of these challenges (which will be discussed more carefully below), Americans view broad access to higher education as a necessary component of the nation’s ideal as a “land of opportunity”. Guided by these beliefs, U.S. higher education, beside of competitiveness, reflects essential elements of the American character: independence, suspicion of government, ambition and inclusiveness (Eckel P. & King J. 2004, p.iii).

Individual states—rather than the federal government—have primary authority over public education in the United States. Eventually, every state developed a department of education and enacted laws regulating finance, the hiring of school personnel, student attendance, and curriculum. In general, however, local districts oversee the administration of schools. American Public schools are financed through property taxes in the community and that’s why it is tended to reflect the educational values and financial capabilities of the communities in which they are located. However, it creates unequal distribution of wealth among the communities and consequently among schools. This unequal distribution reflects the quality and learning environment within the schools (<http://www.servintfree.net/~aidmn-ejournal/publications/2001-11/PublicEducationInTheUnitedStates.html>).

The access to HE is based on selection. One of the criteria for selection is scoring in SAT I, ACT tests. The tests are accused to be social economically biased, but it is still used for

selection⁶. The federal and institutional student financial aid can be merit based as well as need based. The amount of need (means) based grants is determined by needs assessment analysis for each student made by HEIs. The need assessment analysis calculates student's expense for taking HE and expected family contribution toward these costs (Archibald, 2002). Merit based aid is available for students on academic performance or meritorious asserts. Scholarships are awarded to students for any type of attributes student demonstrate: academics, athletics, arts, religious affiliation, leadership etc. But if we take into consideration historical development of documented history of student financial aid, the rapid growth of merit based aid relative to need based aid at all level has been the case (Darakhvelidze 2008, Winston and Zimmerman, 2000).

The problem of the access to HE for disadvantage groups is the well known problem for American education policy makers. The selection system based ranking system in class and in school compensates only partly the chances for participating in HE for disadvantage groups. US department of education took some initiatives for more equal access to HE by creating *The Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005*. The act implied two new grant programs for undergraduates: the *Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) program* and the *National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (National SMART) Grant program*. The ACG program intends to encourage students to take challenging courses in high school and thus increase their chances to success in college. *The National SMART Grant program* intends to encourage students to spent their time and energy on the subjects which are considered in high demand in the global economy (mathematics, science, engineering, technology, and languages deemed critical to the national interest) (Academic Competitiveness and National SMART Grant Programs 2009, p. XV).

All types of financial aid have been shown to have a positive influence on college enrollment, regardless of the student's race or ethnicity (St. John & Noell, 1989) included student loans. US have well developed and flexible federal student loans as well, which provides low-income students with financial support. Student loans, specifically, play an enormous role in student decision regarding college choice (Baum & Saunders, 1998). It has been estimated that more than 50 percent of students earning degrees have had their

⁶ See more on this case in chapter 2.4 Admission tools

education at least partially financed through Federal student loans (American Council on Education, 1997).

The existence of need (means) based financial aid (despite of declines of such financial aids), in ideal case promote good promises for student`s institutional and program choice. But admission to prestigious HEIS is very selective and they are trying to attract as much as possible brightest students with merit based scholarships. So, in practice need based scholarships are available in less prestigious universities. Despite of all, need based financial aid are eligible in many not very prestigious HEIs and it gives us possibility to say that student`s institutional and program choice is partially realized.

Despite of all accusations for high tuition and recently wide spread merit based financial aids in USA, some researchers consider that majority of Americans have access to collage.

2.4 Historical accounts of access

The history of access to HE includes three phase of development from elite to universal one asserts Martin Trow. At the same time it is three types of thinking about access which has relevance to my research question. Trows`s concepts will help us to describe how stake holders in Georgia think about access in different models.

Historical account of access is important factor to take into consideration. Expansion in access to higher education took place immediately after WWII in Europe⁷ as well as in USA and in the former Eastern Bloc. After WWII, this large expansion in Europe was on the expense of the already existed tiny number of elite universities (Trow 2000, p. 1). The creation of non-university sectors and institutions of post secondary education was the first response from the state for the increasing demand for higher education. The demand for HE was reflection of increased demand for more qualified employs for occupations. Recently, the demand for constantly updated knowledge and more demand for qualified workforce have influenced the traditional student representations in HEIs: it is more common with

⁷Only Spain from West Europe had limited/ elite access under Franco`s ruling; e.g., in 1960-70s.

mature, employed, studying part-time students and those who are aiming employment in the rapidly growing semi-professionals and knowledge-based service industries. *“These students, defining by their origins and aspirations the emerging the system of mass higher education, have been oriented chiefly towards gaining useful skills and knowledge rather than toward membership in a cultural elite”* (Trow 2000, p.1). The rapid growths in information technologies in the last decade have resulted in the emergence of online-based courses and universities. According to Trow (2000, p.1), the innovation of internet-based higher education can fully solve the problem of mass access in European system of HE. Internet based HE can be used to reach universal access to HE in developed countries. Discussion about universal access will be more relevant in the context of advanced societies, as the access to internet in the developing countries for the entire population is still limited.

The first country, which can serve as an example when we are talking about elite access in HE, is, of course, England. Historically, the access to higher education was reserved for students from aristocratic and bourgeois families. According to Trow, Access to HE reinforced division between working class and aristocratic class; university represented such institutions that maintained such distinction. *“Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge preserved their exclusive status by requiring Greek and Latin for admissions, courses only offered by a small set of secondary schools catering to the wealthy”* (2006, p.147). The right purpose of university education was to provide right candidates for their rightful leadership positions in the society. The private contacts, wealth and origin were determinants of admission in Oxbridge. The graduates were enough to provide supply for countries leading positions until industrial revolution. Similar situation were in many other European countries; all of them had their “Oxbridge”. In France, “grandes ecoles” are good examples of elite HE; the access to “grandes ecoles” was very limited and the main purpose of those institutions were and still are training of the nation’s leading administrative and political cadre.

In developing countries, elite universities were established with very close linkage with colonial powers⁸. Those universities had historically very high local status and served as supplier of national intelligentsia; as well as very important research centres. The access to

⁸ In the most cases they were established by colonial powers.

those universities was limited, and throughout they did not was typical “elite” in context of Oxbridge and “grandes ecoles”. However, they were quite selective and the selection was in most cases prior to students from middles and upper class families. The selectivity was based on meritocracy; Baber & Lindsay’s assert that *“If academically achievement is largely a reflection of family connections and wealth, then meritocracy remains a theory and the argument of selectivity against widening participation becomes about maintaining aristocratic class structure.* When we are talking about meritocracy in the developing countries, we must always keep in our mind that students (entrants) from different social economic background have very distinguish educational background and there is almost impossible to have same status equality what Jacobs is talking about. The selective entrants with solid academic knowledge became students of Elite HEIs in developing countries⁹ and in order; they are graduates of private, high quality secondary schools or were assisted by numbers of private tutors. This is very significant when we are talking about elite access in developing countries. Simultaneously the new type of elite Universities have emerged in developing countries with off- see campuses and prestigious business schools with high tuition fees.

The new trend in access policies of elite universities is need-oriented scholarships and merit based aids for brightest student from low SES families. This policy is toward collecting of human capital that is so important for further growth and development of any kind of organisation as well as HEIs. Oxbridge, US elite universities and self, France “grandes ecoles” have moved toward such equity friendly access policies in recent decades.

Global economic forces explain the nature of the rise of mass access to HE, but simultaneously, the process was very different in different national traditions; for example French traditionally consider access to HE as a citizenship right, British tradition is for individual mobility and Americans emphasize on diversity and choice (Tapper and Palfreyman 2005, p. 2). The political discourse of this agenda will vary from country to country according their national traditions and financial capabilities. Mass access means that 30%-50% of entire population has access to HE according to Trow. Completely developed

⁹ When we are talking about Elite universities in developing countries, we don’t mean exactly the same type private institutions as Oxbridge, Harvard or something like this. In the most cases, particularly in the countries in transition the oldest “state” universities are bearing elite status and were considered as elite before the last two decade.

world and some of the developing nations have managed mass access to HE. Mass access are often based on merit based and are regulated with admission exams or secondary school achievement based access to HE. Georgian access policy can be defined as mass access policy, due its merit based access policy and number of places in accredited HEIs. The vacant places have increased from 16507 places in 2005 to 28000 places in 2009. There are round 60 000 graduates of upper secondary schools in Georgia and it means that round 50% of school graduates have possibility to participate in HE. The huge growth from 16 507 places to 28000 is the reason of accreditation process, as there were not enough accredited HEIs in Georgia by 2005¹⁰.

Mass access is crucial for countries further development in 21 century. There are two reasons for mass access: request for working force with high qualifications and demand for HE. However, mass access does not automatically mean increased participation in HE of diverse social groups of society as merit based access is SES biased.

The demand for lifelong learning in the advanced societies became crucial for further development of economies. According to Trow the demand for lifelong learning grew independent from the development of IT technologies, which only accelerated it (2000, p. 3). Simultaneously, higher education is influenced by external forces and they have to respond the demand; as, forces outside of higher education pushed expansion from elite access to higher education into mass access, so current developments are pushing all national systems toward broader and broader access (Trow 2000, p.3). The rapid grow of IT makes possible lifelong access to education for all¹¹ in those areas one have most demand for. However, IT changes also the nature of higher education and, according to Trow, soon will have revolutionary consequences for existing institutions and systems of HE.

¹⁰ There were a huge number of private HEIs until 2004, but after launching reform the accreditation procedures became strict and more than half part of private and some public HEIs were not given accreditation; some of them were granted 2 years temporary license for functioning without accreditation in order to manage and fix things for accreditation. Automatically they were not allowed to participate in Unified National Examination for University Admission.

¹¹ "all" has conditional understanding; unfortunately all have not access to IT today. The development of this trend is percept by some scholars as more marginalization of marginalized groups. Those who have access to IT seem to get most profit from "lifelong learning". IT is almost absolute accessible in developed countries, but in developing countries IT is mostly accessible for the representatives of middle class and educated working force.

Transition from mass to universal access to higher education is not a simple act: American system of HE seems to adopt universal access easier and earlier than European one. The problems related to universal access to HE is emerged from the uncompleted restructuring of European higher education institutions from elite to mass HEIs, asserts Trow (2000, p.3).

3. Analytical Framework for Studying Admission Policies in HE

In this chapter, different concepts of equality, equity and fairness related to access to higher education would be shortly presented and discussed. The purpose is to identify and develop a conceptual framework for analysing and discussing this topic in Georgia.

As one point of departure, I will present three-dimensional model of equality of opportunities by Lesley A. Jacobs. He discusses equality of opportunities as a part of human rights that is relevant for my research question. The realisation of Jacob's theory on equality of opportunities in access to HE is closely related with two policy issues: admission tools in HE and Financial aid policies in HE.

Georgian government uses General Ability Test for financial aid for students in order to maintain equity and fairness in getting state financial support for HE. For better understanding the impact of such policy toward fairness and equity in HE participation diverse theories about SAT I/ GAT as admission tool will be examined and comprehended. Financial aid policies for students in HE and the impact of each policy on equity issues will be examined.

My first research question asks about the ideas of introduction of General Ability Test at university entrance exams in Georgia. The theory of Martin Canroy (1999) about education reforms provoked by globalization will be presented in this chapter in order to highlight what were ideas of introduction of this test.

Jacobs's theory on equality of opportunities and theory of Canroy on education reforms driven by globalization are perceived as normative tools, but theories on admission tools to HE, and financial aid policies are thought as analytical tools.

3.1 A model of equal opportunities

Researcher Lesley Jacobs argues, that the concept of equal opportunities is the most important concept for democratic societies, but despite this, it was marginalised and rejected

in the social policy for the last thirty years¹²(Jacobs 2004, p. 11). The researcher presents a three-dimensional model of equal opportunities “as a regulative ideal focuses on the fair use of competitive procedures as a means of achieving an egalitarian distribution of some scarce resources or goods” (2004, p. 13). The competition means that there are winners and losers. But at the same time, Jacobs argues that some of “goods”, as health care, primary and secondary education must be reachable for all, without any competition and admits that in these cases competitive dimension of equalities of opportunities is downplayed. Jacobs distinguishes between “equality of opportunity” and “equal opportunity” and suggests, that “while a non-competitive model of equality of opportunity is not entirely unimaginable, equal-opportunity models of fair competitions present it in its strongest and most plausible light, at least as a form of egalitarian justice” (2004, p.13).

Jacobs distinguishes between three dimensions of fairness: *procedural fairness*, *background fairness* and *stakes fairness*. According researcher, *procedural fairness* reflects a concern with the basic rules of procedure that guides the competition, included the determination of the winners. *Background fairness* reflects a concern that there is a level playing field of all competitors. *Stake fairness* focuses on the prizes or what is at the stake in the competition (2004, p. 4). Jacobs drafts on the domination of two dimensional view of equality of opportunities in the current debates and asserts that his own three dimensional model of equal opportunities, as a regulative ideal, is innovative because its inclusion of the third dimension, *stakes fairness*.

Jacobs proves that traditional view of equality of opportunity was one-dimensional and it had only focus on procedural fairness. He argues that that only procedural fairness creates unfair conditions for competition, but it creates fair procedures for competition. Author illustrates it on the example of a boxing match: the matches are regulated by certain rules, that ensure procedural fairness such as, for instance, not punching one`s opponent on the certain parts of the body, not butting and so on. The winner is determined by rules (2004, p. 15).

In the correspondence with the type of fairness, background fairness is met, when there is a level playing field for all competitors. If we return to the boxing match, we have named in

¹² Jacobs discusses the topics often in US context.

above, background fairness reflects the concern that boxers enter a match on roughly equal terms with respect of body weight (Jacobs 2004, p. 15). Throughout, the rules of procedural fairness are fulfilled, if competitors have very different background, the result will be very unfair. The author asserts, *“From the perspective of competitive equality of opportunity, because pre-existing inequalities infect the fairness of competitive process, there is a need to regulate these processes with sensitivity to remedies for these inequalities.”*

The principle of background fairness means that the initial starting positions of individuals in any competition are fair when all enjoy status equality. It does not inquire that by all means, all participants of a competition must have the same amount of wealth or other economic resources; It does not mean either that all individuals have the same power to affect the outcome or have the same level of human functioning: *“status equality, as a principle of background fairness, requires, therefore, that all persons enjoy the same standing in the competition”* (Jacobs 2004, p. 29). Jacobs draws distinction between “social” and “moral” status. Social status is reflection of what position an individual holds in society with respect to occupation, income, ownership and education. (2004, p. 31). The researcher argues that social status is in the contrast with the moral status: as moral status of an individual is his or her standing in the moral universe. Throughout that, there are two parallel aspects in the relationship between moral status and social status, the structure of status in the moral universe can provide a blueprint for the structure of the status in society. The requirement of the principle of status equality is best thought of concretely in terms of social stratification and it is attending unfairness. The demands of background fairness are thought out and raised by the ascription of social status (Jacobs 2004, p. 33).

The third dimension of fairness determines the rules of sharing the prize; it means that if the prize is 1 000 000, the winner takes 75% and the loser 25%. The justification is that it is fairer than winner takes all (Jacobs 2004, p. 15). Stake fairness regulates the outcome, not the process and this distinguishes it from procedural and background fairness (Jacobs 2004, p. 37). Jacobs present this three dimensional model of equal opportunities in the context of human right and social justice and claims that stake fairness shares certain features with other theories of social justice that should be acknowledged. As the access to HE education is considered in many countries as a part of human rights, we consider it relevant to discuss widely this three dimensional model of equal opportunities with stake fairness included. Researcher argues that the most familiar principles of welfare economics are based in this

rule (2004, p. 39). As far as competition creates winners and losers, stake fairness takes care that the resources have to be shared fair and not as “winner takes all”. The admission tools in HEIs and the grant distribution schemes are often created according to the concept of stake fairness: despite of competitions there must be available places at HEIs, as well as grant and financial assistance for them who do not score high at entrance examinations. The Theory creates conceptual framework to understand the importance of equal distribution of some good, in this case, education resources among entrants with diverse background.

3.2. Admission policies and notions of assesment

Education assessment has developed rapidly to become an unquestioned arbitrator of value, whether of pupils achievements, institutional quality or national educational competitiveness. Equally remarkable has been the lack of any serious challenge to this hegemony. (Broadfoot, 2000, p.ix)

Assessment, alongside of meritocracy has served to legitimate the unequal distribution of resources in the society. As Filer argues assessment has been used to “bring rewards to some whilst at the same time reducing or removing both educational and occupational opportunities for others “(Filer 2000, p.43). Assessment tools have to be seen as neutral and objective in order to justify its outcomes. That is why it is so important to develop valid and reliable testing instruments. According to Leathwood, discourse of “merit” need to be problematized as it is easily conjoined with notions of “ability”. Government took initiative and launched “gifted and “talented” programmes as a part of widening participation strategy. Bourdeiu argues that this “ideology of giftedness” is another attempt to justify inequality and help “to enclose underprivileged classes to in the roles which society has given them by making them see as natural inability things which are only inferior social status, and by persuade them that they owe their social fate” (Bourdeiu 1974, p.42). Few stories of individuals who managed to escape from the collective fate and were succeeded gives evidence to the myth that schools is liberating force, argues researcher (Bourdeiu, 1974).

Mass HE system has raised the issues of the standards in HE. The increased numbers of students in the universities were associated with lowering of standards, as many students were considered as “unsuitable” for university. Leathwood in his article “*Assessment policies*

and practice in higher education: purpose, standards and equality” (2005), discusses problems related to unquestionable dominance of assessment culture in education sector in Britain. Traditionally in Britain admission to the universities were based on A-level point scores. Top universities considerably admitted only top scorers, but as more and more were achieving high scores, it became difficult to distinguish top candidates from the rest. Alternative solution is introduction of SAT kind of ability testing in Britain. However it was widely discussed. Governmental thinking was to evaluate student’s objective academic potential which would ensure better prediction of student’s academic success in HEIs. On the other side universities desire as well addition criteria to select brightest students. Who would gain from such policy is not difficult to predict as it is known that white students are achieving higher scores than black students in SAT I in US. The same pattern is for wealthy and poor students and men and women (Lewis, 2000; Marcus, 2003). The same outcomes are expected in any country if such testing occurs. Students’ assessment is in order based on tests and examinations. Countries are practicing diverse admission policies: in some countries, assessment is carried out in upper secondary schools and scores gained there during examinations are decisive in access to HE; some countries have entrance examinations defined by universities themselves or carried through centralized examinations for university admissions as it is in Georgia. But common for all of those practices is that they are based on testing and the results of those test determines access to HE. In addition test/ examination scores often determine financial aid assistance for higher education.

3.2.1. Admission tools

Theoretical and practical issues on admission tools to HEIs are presented in the book edited by Camara, Wayne, - *Choosing students: Higher Education Admission Tools in 21st Century*. The book explores the diverse forms of university admission tools and, particularly, the using of SAT I as the only merit for admission in United States. The book is primarily based on experience from the US, but its relevance in Georgian university admission policy is very high, due to the close collaboration of Georgian policy makers with their American colleagues. Right interpreting of conceptual framework of admission tools in access policy is crucial to maintain equity and simultaneously make sure that human capital will not be lost.

Admission tools to HE have huge impact on equity and fairness on access. We are witness of enormous expansion of enrolment simultaneously with rising of costs for higher education per student. Primary goal of all kind of admission tools is selectivity. The most common tool for selection students for HEIs is high stake examinations; High Stake examination can be defined as exam that has *major consequence or is the basis of a major decision* (www.en.wikipedia.org). Such exams can take place in upper secondary schools or they can be entrance examinations for university admission.

Under a more precise definition, a high-stakes test is any test that:

- is a single, defined assessment,
- has clear line drawn between those who pass and those who fail, and
Have direct consequences for passing or failing (something "at stake").

High- stake exams are not the same as high –pressure testing in USA: student might feel much pressure to perform well on the SAT I college aptitude exam. However, SAT scores do not directly determine admission to any U.S. college or university and there is no clear line drawn between those who pass and those who fail, so it is not formally considered a high-stakes test. On the other hand, because the SAT-I scores are given significant weight in the admissions process at some schools, many people believe that it has consequences for doing well or poorly and is therefore a high-stakes test under the simpler, common definition (www.en.wikipedia.org). In Georgia GAT is one of the obligatory exams in entrance examination and it is actually more decisive then other exams in terms of financing of HE. Students are exposed for high pressure without any doubt; especially those students who cannot afford pay user fees and are completely dependent on GAT scores to gain access to HE. If we take into consideration this term, it means that we can call Georgian GAT high stake exam.

According to Baber & Lindsay, *“Access trough meritocratic achievement measurements enforces the nature of higher education as a private investment for social mobility opportunities, suggesting that those who simply work the hardest are rewarded the most”* (2006, p.151). Social mobility enforces country`s future development and state have to invest in education in order to ensure countries future development. The logic of meritocracy is simple: who is the best will be admitted and in the most cases will get financial assistance for

education. However, research shows that students from middle and high income families score highest at exams as well as have top achievement from high school and high SES students are most eligible to get financial assistance for HE. *“If academically achievement is largely a reflection of family connections and wealth, then meritocracy remains a theory and the argument of selectivity against widening participation becomes about maintaining aristocratic class structure. To move beyond this dilemma there must be recognition that socio- economic status is a significant contributor of academic outcomes”* (Baber & Lindsay 2006, p.151). In order to continue discussion about fairness of admission tools in access policy, we have to acknowledge that some inequalities according student`s social economic background do exist and educational outcomes correspondently is related to SES.

Admission tools for university admission are linked closely with equity issues in access to HE. That`s why we are going to use some of the theories about admission tools and their impact on equity issues on access to HE. The most of the theories are based on American experience but it has high relevance for Georgian admission policy: Georgian GAT is one of the three compulsory exams (and in case of HE diploma programmes the only admission exam) and a kind of “sibling” of American SAT I. The controversy on using results of GAT/SAT I for admission is equally actual issue for American and Georgian education policy makers. Neil Stringer in his article discusses appropriateness of using such assessment tools for admission to HE in US. Book of Camara, Wayne “Choosing students, Higher Education Admission Tools in 21th century “ provides with important information on the problems related admission tools for HE and their implication for equity issues in access to HE. These two sources are my main source for discussion on SAT I/GAT as an admission tool and both of them is a kind of reply on Atkinson`s statement on SAT in 2001 and both of them refer to it, as recent debates about SAT I in American society is linked with former president of California University Richard Atkinson`s critique against using of SAT I for university admission. The authors based their arguments in the US admission test reality, but their theoretical thinking is valid for analysing admission issues in all the countries using SAT/GAT as an admission tool.

3.2.2.GAT/SAT I as the tool for regulating admission

Standardized tests, like SAT I in USA and GAT in Georgia are approved admission tools in many developed (like USA) and many developing countries. The ambiguity of such tests is well-known phenomena and there are various meanings about the test. The test has two main functions: the first ensure fair admission to HE and be less sensitive toward entrants social economic background; the second function is to ensure less loses in countries human resources and give admission to them who will be most able to utilize public spending on free higher education. Therefore, in short, SAT I must maintain fairness and equity in admission exams and must be able to predict student's future educational outcomes. The letter is particular important if financial aid for higher education is closely linked with SAT I scores.

Before we discuss equalising function of SAT I in university admission, we must know SAT's history. According to Sedlacek (2004), SAT was created in 1926 by The College Board and was considered as more equitable than using school grades for admission. But simultaneously, The College Board felt that the SAT was limited in what they measured and should not be relied upon as the only tool to judge applicants The College Board gives advices as it developed the first SAT and it is as relevant today as it was then (Sedlacek 2005):

“The present state of all efforts of men to measure or in any way estimates the worth of other men, or to evaluate results of their nature, or to reckon their potential possibilities do not warrant any certainty of prediction. This additional test now made available through the instrumentality of College Entrance Examination Board may resolve a few perplex problems, but it should regard merely as a supplementary record. To place too great emphasises on test scores is as dangerous as the failure properly to evaluate any score or rank in conjunctions with other measures and estimates which it supplement” (Brigham, 1926. In Sedlacek 2004, pp.44-45).

Despite of various changes and versions during the years, the SAT actually measures the same what it measured in 1926: verbal and math ability. As Sedlacek concludes, it is still general intelligence test. In recent definition of SAT I College board gives following definition: “*The SAT measures verbal and mathematical skills that you develop over the time through the work you do in school or on your own*” College Board, 2000).

Georgian GAT is quite similar with American SAT 1; as I have already mentioned both of them measures verbal reasoning and math. Following the introduction of GAT as admission tool in Georgia, impressive number of courses and private tutors who offers preparation in GAT has emerged.

Advocates for US- style SAT for university selection claim that it is fairer to applicants from disadvantage background than achievement tests, because it assesses potential, not achievement as achievement tests are closed linked with SES factor. In the USA the SAT reasoning test, a test which from 1930s carries out, has come under criticism for being susceptible to the factors related to socioeconomic status. Atkinson asserts that factors as quality of schooling and coaching for SAT are determinants of high scores in SAT (2001). However, Atkinson is not alone in this case. A number of researchers (Lohman 2002, Whetton, McDonald, and Newton 2001,) are sharing the same thinking in regard with SAT and aptitude tests generally.

Stringer tries to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of using of SAT like aptitude tests for admission and asserts that:

“The ground on which aptitude tests is justified is that they measure something that is school-proof; something fundamental about the ability of the individual that is not affected by their level and the quality of education. The idea of using such test is based on the noble aim of levelling the playing field at school leaving age so that access to higher education is not limited to those who have had access to greater educational resources during childhood”(2008, p.55).

Researcher argues that maybe aptitude tests have the same validity to predict student's academic success at HE as it does school achievement based access to HE¹³, but the questionable is if it can ensure more equal and fair access to HE for disadvantage groups that school achievement based admission does.

In order to proof or neglect SAT role for social equalisation, we have to take into consideration what SAT like tests measure, if they have more social equalisation factors then

¹³ Stringer compares A –level exam and SAT as he discusses introduction SAT based admission to HE in British HE access policies. In this context he discusses advantages and disadvantages of both kinds of admission practices. In current British access policies it is A-level examination form upper secondary school what determines access to HE.

common examinations or school achievement and if they are able to predict student's further academic achievement. Stringer argues that,

“There is reliable heuristic in the study of human behaviour, which is the best predictor of whether or how well someone will do something is whether or how well he or she has done it before. It is why insurers ask for our driving history and it is why evidence of academic achievement is required for entry to higher levels of education. It makes sense that the close predictive behaviour is to the predicted behavior, the more reliable the prediction is likely to be” (Stringer 2008, p.55).

If aptitude tests are grounded in particular discipline or in body of knowledge then they are highly predictive of student further academic achievement and then they will become like A-level, or other examinations, which are curriculum based and social, economically biased. But if aptitude tests like SAT are not grounded in academic knowledge and experience then they are less predictive of students' future academic achievement. It is considered that non-verbal part is less subject to the effects of education than verbal ability tests. (Stringer 2008, p.56) At the same time, non-verbal ability is a far poorer predictor of academic achievement than verbal reasoning (Lohman 2002, b).

Whetton, McDonald and Newton (2001) did research on aptitude testing as well and found no evidence for the claims that the SAT is able to assess ability for university study independently of student's background. In their study they found that in both SAT and A-level, grades of the students from independent schools were highest and lowest in low-achieving schools. As students from independent schools in Britain are presumably students with high SES background and vice versa then logic conclusion from the study is that students from high SES families score higher than from low SES students in both SAT and A-level. In addition, in his speech to the 83rd Annual Meeting of the American Council on Education, Richard Atkinson, the former president of University of California said that:

...”I have visited an upscale private school and observed a class of 12-year-old students studying verbal analogies in anticipation of the SAT. I learned that they spend hours each month – directly and indirectly – preparing for the SAT, studying long lists of verbal analogies.... The time involved was not aimed at developing student's reading and writing abilities but rather their test taking skills. What I saw was disturbing, and prompted me to spend time taking sample of SAT and reviewing the literature. I concluded what many others have concluded – that America's overemphasis on the SAT is compromising our educational system.” (Atkinson 2001).

Atkinson in his speech cited from an Article in *Los Angeles Times* reporting that a growing number of affluent parents enrol their children in SAT preparation courses and in 2000 alone, “an estimated 150 000 students paid over 100 million USD for coaching” (Atkinson 2001). At the end of his speech Atkinson assumes that that`s why is it no wonder that Black and Hispanics are scoring low in SAT. In addition we have to conclude that in other countries beside of USA the most low scorers are presumably students from disadvantage background e.g. from low SES families.

There are different point of views about SAT and other standardized aptitude tests as well. In order to maintain balance in our discussion and maintain balance in forthcoming analyse of data from Georgia, we must present arguments of those researchers who does not share arguments of Atkinson (2001), Whetton, McDonald and Newton (2001) and Lohman (2005a, b). In the book “*Admission tools in 21th Century*” Bollinger asserts that standardized test are clear, crisp, and numerical and not subjective, it is neutral and that` why SAT scores must became the principal lightning rod for admission anxiety (2005, p.8). He argues against Atkinson and his supporters accusations that SAT is coachable and asserts, that maybe it (SAT) is coachable but not nearly as coachable as some of the commercial “coaches” claim that it is. The College Board asserts also, that SAT is not too coachable, but highly teachable. “*The best way to ones ‘best on the SAT is to be a good student – not to try to cram, but to be a good student for a long term. Be an adept, careful, subtle, insightful reader, to develop quantitative skills to solve real world problems. Read as much as you can, write a lot, learn to use language effectively, take hard courses, and solve problems in and out of school; think critically*” (The College Board; cited in Bollinger 2005, p.6). Bollinger does not argue against Atkinson that many schools “teach the test”, which means to work on improving vocabulary alone and practicing on sample tests. Nevertheless, in reality in means that schools educators, teachers and students seems not to have a sense of the pedagogical rationale for the test, and the verbal and the mathematical skills that the test seeks to measure. He asserts that it would help if students understand that the skills that “*the SAT seeks to test (intellectual capacities themselves, not merely vocabulary) can be learned over an extended period of time. That might serve to mitigate the sense of hopelessness and despair a sense in inherent unfairness.*” Bollinger replies to the widespread critic on the section of analogies and says that maybe in particular cases analogies questions sound odd and strained, but such cases is rare. However, he asserts that what SAT measures is less

social economically biased then curriculum based admission exams or school achievement. In order to ensure fair and equal access to HE, and simultaneously, ensure enrolment of the students who deserves more to study at HEIs, the test must measure “ *knowledge, skills and developed abilities that are judged to be educationally important*”(Linn2004, p.145). The Collage Board argues that the SAT verbal part measures “ critical reading” skills that have importance in success in high school and the SAT mathematical part is said to measure problem solving. Further, The College Board justifies the focus on critical reading and problem solving so: “The reason that both standard and SAT focus on critical reading and problem solving is that these are the very skills required for full access to academic life in college” (2000, p.4).

In addition to the two opposite theories (views) about SAT as an admission tools, I would like to present shortly results of research of Kobrin, Camara and Milewski (2002). They examined validity of SAT for college mission decisions in California among the sample of students in 1995. After statistical analyse they found a substantial relationship between the SAT I and performance in the college. However, they also found that SAT II and I, both showed moderate correlation with family income (in the range of .25 to .55 for SAT I). Correlation with parental education ranged from .28 to .58. These findings indicate that SAT scores are weakly but still biased in a social class. Predictive effectiveness of SAT I was similar for several ethnic groups (Stenberg 2005, p.160).

3.2.3. High Stake Exams and School Achievement as an Admission Tool

High stakes exams are commonly used as admission tools in many developed and developing countries. Current Georgian system of university admission is based on High Stake Examinations¹⁴. The entrants at Georgian HEIs must pass three compulsory and the forth-free choice high stake exam¹⁵ and GAT in order to get place in accredited HEIs in Georgia.

¹⁴ There are university entrance exams in Georgia we have mentioned above as high stake exams; as exit examinations called as “state exams” before were abolished in 2004.

¹⁵ The fourth free choice exam is not compulsory for everybody; only few HEIs demand fourth exam for admission. More about this issue comes in chapter of Data Analyze

There is clear evidence that high stake examinations are closely linked with SES factor. The students, whose parents have more resources to invest in the education in form of high quality private schools or are able to pay considerable amounts for private tutoring besides the schooling, have greater chances to access HE than students from low SES families¹⁶.

High stake exams in some American states as well as in many European countries are an exit exam for high school seniors, especially for those who intend to continue in HEIs. Examples include British A-levels, the French Baccalaureate, and the New York State Regents examinations. Since the 2001 No Child Left behind Act, many US states have also adopted proficiency exams as a requirement for most high school graduates (Thomas S. Dee, and Brian A. Jacobs, 2006). While American exit exams are not as closely linked to higher education as the European exams, public university systems in the US are increasingly likely to offer full tuition scholarships to high scorers (Angrist, J. 2008, and p.3). Opposite of American and European practices, results of Georgian high stake exams excluded GAT have no influence on grant distribution.

School achievement beside the high stake examinations or ranking in the school is also acknowledged criteria in American HEIs. There are two kind rankings and both of them are used as admission criteria: HSR ranks student in class and HSRGPA ranks student in high school according to class ranking. That the HSR or HSGPA are good predictors is remarkable in the light of wide variation in grading standards that exists from school to school and from course to course within the school (Linn 2004, p142). According to Linn, *“In a society that values hard work and individual achievement, it is to be expected that past accomplishments as reflected in student`s high- school record play a prominent role in admissions”* (2004, p.142). Generally, utility of high school records for admission is approved admission criteria and there is no doubt on their predictive ability. On the other hand, there is much controversy about using of personal characteristics or standardized tests for admission. Inclusion of class ranking and ranking in high school in admission criteria in US is valuable because of its universal nature; there is no difference of which school is one graduated from, but the system values individual afford in any school. Policy which values individual afford in any kind of school is worthy, but to implement such practice is on the

¹⁶ This statement is more equivalent in the developing countries, as the developed countries have more or less solved the problem related SES factors by maintaining sufficient quality of the public schools.

other hand speculative if there are no sufficient teacher salaries and guarantees that ranking will not become subject of corruption in schools.

3.3. Financial Aid Policies and Study Loans

The financing and cost sharing in HE is discussed worldwide. In all countries, the governments fully or partially are responsible for financing the HE. However, during the last decades the costs of delivering quality, HE has increased and governments cannot alone wear such a heavy burden. The article of D. Bruce Johnstone (2006) discusses various policies and possibilities of cost sharing in financing of HE. The constant of cost-sharing in HE implies all of the costs of HE, included in it grants and loan subsidises policies to HE. According to author, expenses of studying are borne by four principal parties:

1. *Governments or taxpayers*: via direct or indirect taxation.
2. *Parents*: via saving, current income or borrowing.
3. *Students*: via savings (generally limited), current earnings (generally part time) or borrowing.
4. *Philanthropists*: via endowments or current contribution.

The two other parties: *business* and *universities* are often viewed as contributors (Johnstone 2006, p. 55).

In much of European countries, as well as in developing and so-called transitional (post-Communist) worlds, the direct institutional costs are still paid by governments. So, parents and students are bearing living expenses of the studying. But the introductions of tuition fees are becoming more and more common in many countries, which had long tradition of free HE before. The most common policy to compensate charging with tuition fees is governmental grants and subsidised study loans. The grants are limited and only for selective ones. The most common “grant policies” are: merit based and means based grants, as well as institutional scholarships. D. Bruce Johnstone discusses the role of public policy in the expansion of HE opportunities and presents a table of forms of grants by target and their effectiveness in order to ensure access that is more equal to HE:

Table 1. Forms of financial aid policies by Johnstone

<i>Forms of grant</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Public or institutional purpose to be served</i>	<i>Conjectures regarding effectiveness</i>
1. Direct grants based on low income or assets the family (<i>means- tested</i>)	Financially dependent children of low-income parents	(public) Reduce financial barriers and enhance targeted students participation; (institutional) enhance diversity and thus value of education and degrees	Especially applicable in cases where parents are officially expected to contribute to HE expenses of children. Requires cost-effective and verifiable system of means- testing.
2. Direct grants based student's own low income and / or <i>assets</i>	Adult or independent students with low-income or assets	Reduce financial barriers, and enhance targeted student participation	Conceptually complex as almost all independent students have <i>need</i> , and the case of grants as opposed to loans may be less compelling
3. Direct grants based on other attributes (then parent's income) associated with under representation (such as ethnicity, gender or regional location)	Under represented ethnic minorities (in some countries, families).	Reduce financial barriers and enhance targeted student participation	Likely effective in combination with low parental income, but increasingly politically controversial
4. Direct grants based on academic promise, or <i>prior</i> high school achievement (<i>merit</i>)	High achieving secondary school students	(Public) enhance academic effort of many secondary school students, (institutional) enhance institutional prestige	Attractive mainly to political conservatives; questionable use of public funds as grants have minimal effect on student enrolment behaviour
5. Direct grants based on academic achievement while in college or university	Students who achieve academically in college or universities	(public) enhance academic effort in postsecondary institution; may enhance timely progress to degree	Similar to N 4: unclear how much influence such rewards have on grades

6. Direct grants based on special talent deemed beneficial to the institution	Students with special talent; for example, athletic prowess or musical talent.	No public purpose, but may enhance prestige of <i>institution</i> or <i>programme</i>	Little or no use of public funds, increasingly controversial with athletes in USA
7. Up-front subsidy (<i>effective grants</i>) to borrowers in form of low interest rates based on low income of families or other attributes associated with underrepresentation.	Targeted students who nonetheless must borrow for some or all of the private costs	May reduce debt aversion and “awkwardness of defaults; may increase willingness to borrow	Expensive and “trade off” with direct grants; not clear that interest rates factor into any debt aversion or willingness to borrow
8. “Debt reduction” (<i>effective grants</i>) based on academic performance while in college (<i>merit</i>)	Good academic performance while in college	(public) enhance academic effort in postsecondary institution; may enhance timely progress to degree	Unclear whether academic performance responds to “the prize” of debt reduction; may reward those who do not need rewarding
9. Debt reduction (<i>effective grants</i>) based on borrowers postgraduate choice of professional practice or venue	Students who practises targeted professions or in targeted venues	Enhance numbers of the targeted professions or those who will serve in less desirable venues	Unclear as yet how cost effective

The table provides us with important issues which must be taken into consideration by education policy makers. It shows how difference policies of student financial aid may have different outcomes. The *form of grants* that are missing in Johnstone`s table is: direct grants based on academic achievement at entrance examination for university admission/ direct grants based on SAT I/ GAT scores. *The target group for such kind grants* is: high achieving entrants at examination/ top scores in SAT I / GAT tests. *The Public and institutional purpose served by this kind of grant distribution in this case is:* (public) enhance academic effort of future entrant at secondary schools and encourage students to find better quality secondary schools. It can have negative impact, as well: emergence and flourish of private tutoring, and devalue ring of some schools (generally public schools). *Conjecture regarding effectiveness in this very case will be:* questionable uses of public funds as such kind of grants have minimal effect on student enrolment behavior. As, in the case for grant from N4, the form of above mentioned grants are attractive for political conservatives.

According to Johnstone, the reason of introduction of certain kind grant forms are often pressure on elected officials to implement democratic values in society. This often means: *elimination of financial barriers of postsecondary education*. The mean based grant schemes are good examples of such democratic policies. The implementation of such policies will ensure to reduce socio-economic or other kind disparities in HE participation. Such policies are spread in many OECD countries, except Scandinavia.

The second important issue of increased participation in HE is disparities in participation in the types of all institutions and programmes. As Researcher claims “*This, even when disparities in overall higher educational (or postsecondary) participation are lessened, great disparities may persist between matriculation at short-cycle, non-elite access institutions versus classical universities and other selective, prestigious options, public as well as private*” (2006, p.72). The problem related to enrolment behaviour in favour of high SES students in elite universities is equally arguable in OECD countries as in developing world.

One of the most questionable financing of HE in many countries are study loans. The loan system works excellent in Scandinavia, but often do not functioning at all in many developing countries. To obtain the loans are difficult and in some cases almost impossible for student from low SES families. Regarding to this issue, Johnstone asks a rhetoric question to analysts and public officials if they really believe that the higher educational under-representation of such groups will not be rectified by loans, however attractively packaged, but will require *grants* because such groups are often culturally averse to borrowing (2006, p.74).

3.4. Perspectives on education reforms and their driving forces

Neo liberal thinking in education has had strong influence in the last quarter century in all over the world. The IMF and WB are the important actors in implementation of neo liberal friendly reforms in many countries, particularly, in developing countries where influence of these organisations is so strong that they can dictate policies in many spheres of political life. Cost of reforms in education need huge financial resources that are difficult to obtain in developing countries, simultaneously there is deep concern about need of the reforms. In such situations, WB and IMF are the only institutions who owes and are willing to loan

money for long term. The controversy is that they are willing to loan the money with special conditions. They self come with suggestions and loan the money under condition that their suggestions would be heard and followed up. There are spent considerable financial resources on Georgian reform of University admission examinations and in formation of Unified National Examinations. WB and IMF together with British council and American councils were donors of the reform, that's why it is interesting to discuss shortly the agendas those organisations were and are "preaching", simultaneously with the critic of these agendas. On the other hand, it will help us to analyze reforms carried out in Georgia in connection that is more global. The theory, we are going to use in order to analyse what kind of educational reforms is carried out in Georgia is a well-known theory of Martin Carnoy on globalisation and Educational reforms. It is important to figure out what are negative effects of this reforms pushed by globalisation Carnoy describes. The critic of this theory will be based on the summative article of Steven Klees: "*A quarter century of neoliberal thinking in education: misleading analyses and failed practice*" (2008).

3.4.1. Finance, competiveness and equity driven reformes

According to Martin Carnoy (1999, p.43), globalisation provokes three kinds of responses in educational and training sectors: Finance driven reforms, Competitiveness - driven reforms and Equity driven reforms. All three deserves our attention, as the reforms carried out in education sector during last two decades are, in order, complex and interconnected. There is of course possible to identify what kind of reform is carried out by certain government, but it does not mean that for example they have carried out finance driven reforms and did not tried to improve efficiency or equity issues in education.

The globalisations impact on HE is a widely acknowledged fact. As Castell agues (2000), the Universities are the new power stations of knowledge economy. But universities and generally, HE are getting less funding form state according to advices from IMF and WB. The International Monitory Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) have played an important role in setting the conditions for national state to develop economically in global context. The major suggestion from IMF and WB are toward reducing of public spending and shifting from governmental control to private sector (Carnoy 1999, p.42). Educational spending is an important part of public spending for the country's GDP and reducing public spending,

means reducing spending on education too. These advocates of finance driven reform in education suggest the shift of public funding from higher level to lower levels of education, because of relatively high cost of higher education and for expansion of demand for HE in many developing countries (Carnoy 1999, p. 43).¹⁷

Reform in admission examination in Georgia was launched with slogan fairness and equity in access to HE. But is it possible to define this reform as equity driven is difficult to assert. In order to discuss in discussion chapter what kind of reform is carried out by Georgian government in relation with access to HE I would examine Carnoy`s reforms in more details.

The ultimate objective of *finance driven* reform is the same as the competitiveness- driven reform, but finance driven reforms seek primarily to reduce public spending on education. In order to achieve this goal “advocates” of such policy have following receipts: *shifting public funding form higher to lower levels of education*, as higher education have higher costs and basic education needs less costs. The high costs of higher education are often related to student subsidizing, and as research shows, there are in order students from high SES families who benefits from it. At the same time such countries often suffer from low quality basic education and high dropout rates; *the privatization of secondary and higher education* is as well central advice of finance driven reform. The main argument for this policy is that it costs many resources to respond expansion for HE. As there are private persons who benefits from HE, they must be eager as well to pay for it. It can be done by permitting the establishment more private HEIs and secondary schools; *the reduction of cost per student at all schooling levels* is another effort of finance driven reform. WB economist concluded that there is no essentially effect of the pupil/ teacher ratio on pupil achievement in the range of 20 to 45 pupils per teacher. In most of the countries, this ratio is below 45. The suggestion of WB is that, countries that have teacher/ pupil ratio less that 45 pupils in the class have to increase class size and by this way there will be more available resources for books, other materials and teacher training which will enhance good teaching (Carnoy 1999, p.45).

Competitiveness driven reform`s aim is to improve economic productivity by improving the quality of the labour; this, shortly means to expand average level of educational attainment

¹⁷ The demand for HE in Georgia is not a recent trend; since 1960s the demand for HE exceeded to the available places at HEIs which resulted extreme high competition at university entrance examinations in soviet and post soviet Georgia.

and improve the quality of education at each level. Productivity is measured by student achievement. Carnoy states, “Competitiveness driven reforms are productivity centred. This means that their goal is to raise the productivity of labour and of educational institutions, even if this requires additional spending on education, included higher teacher salaries” (1999, p.38). These reforms have four dimensions: *decentralisation*, when greater autonomy is given to the municipalities and even to schools in their decision-making. It will ensure better control over curriculum and teaching methods which better fits to the clientele of the local community, together with increased accountability for educational results (1999, p.38). In this case Carnoy asserts that if the local educational authorities see themselves as responsible for educational delivery, reformers reason, educational quality will improve (1999, p.38).

The second dimension of competitiveness driven reform is *Standards*, which means to meet certain minimum standards education stage and requirement to raising average student achievement. For that reason, national test achievement can be used and published in order to inform schools and its clientele about results of schools in national tastings. This will encourage schools to work toward raising of educational outcomes in order to attract more clienteles; as well as it will raise parent`s demands and school performance. Despite of above named dimension of *decentralisation*, this part of reform needs established central educational policy of standards and central control of educational outcomes in form of frequent national testing and setting of minimum standard.

The third dimension of competitiveness driven reform is *improved management of educational resources*, which simply introducing new, “high- yield resources that can make an especially large differences in student achieving at relatively low-cost” (Carnoy 1999, p.39). It can mean for example, to increase teachers effort and innovation, and supply teachers with effective teaching alternatives. The aim is to produce high achievement with approximately the same set of physical assets and pupil populations as lower achieving schools. In the setting of developing countries, this dimension (*improved management of educational resources*) gives argument toward expanding of public funding in basic education, because of better pay-off “the social rate of return” of resources invested at that level that in secondary and higher education (WB, 1995, cited in Carnoy 1999, p.40).

The fourth dimension of competitiveness driven reform is *improved teacher recruitment and training*. The ILO and UNESCO have argued that this issue is just as relevant in developing countries as in OECD countries. It implies upraising teacher's social status as well as salaries and degree to which the educational bureaucracy treats them as professionals (OECD, 1992, pp.81-83).

Equity driven reform in the era of information technology education gains more importance for economical growth of the country. The lost of human resources as a consequence of reduced funding in HE would necessary lead to the huge damage for the future development of the country. That`s why it is also important to have a mechanism which ensure equal opportunity in access to post secondary education for the entire population. Carnoy asserts that the main goal of equity driven reforms in education is to increase equality of economic opportunity. Since educational attainment is crucial for social mobility, equalising access to higher quality education can play an important role in “levelling the playing field”. Economists argue that free public HE is a subsidy for high- income groups at the expense of the poor and simultaneously, investment in lower level of schooling have higher social return than in higher level of schooling. According to author the main equity driven reforms in developing and developed countries are:

- To reach the lowest income groups with high- quality basic education. Some of the reforms are financial, but many are oriented toward increased teaching quality, increased teacher time spent in schools, making school supplies available for the low-income children, and improving school curriculum.
- To teach certain group of groups, such as women and rural populations, that lags behind educationally.
- In OECD countries, equity driven reforms are much more targeted towards particular “at risk” (low-income) and special needs students throughout the education system, and focus for reforms that would increase their success rate in school. This includes special programmes aimed improved student achievement, included special multicultural and bilingual programmes aimed at language minorities. (1999, p.45).

We have shortly discussed Martin Carnoy`s theories about education reforms provoked by globalisation. The theories are interesting to understand challenges to reach equity and fairness in access to HE in globalised world. The neo-liberal thinking is a driven force of Martin Carnoy`s theories about educational reforms provoked by Globalisation. This

thinking has been very influential over two decades. The main advocate of this policy in education is World Bank. According to neo-Liberal thinking, the most powerful way to improve social equity is to invest more in primary education, introduce user fees in higher education, and privatise it as it is spelled out in Carnoy's reforms. This policy is justified with the thinking that the benefiteres of primary schooling are in the most cases the poorest families, while HE caters to the better off, most of who can and should be forced to pay for it themselves (Kless 2009, p.315). The Bank's miscalculated policy for two decades in developing countries left the opportunity of HE to the wealthy and cut the access to HE for low- middle class and low-income students. As the result of the former policies, even if more disadvantaged students complete primary and secondary education, fewer quality HEIs will be available for them. And even the Bank supports scholarship programmes for the qualified low-income students, in practice, fewer scholarships are available (Kless 2008, p.317).

Relevant issue to my research is access to HE and the WB's policy toward HE in developing countries, but as my study concerns access to HE, it is important to discuss WB's policies in secondary school funding as well. Georgia funded its reform in education via WB. One of the issues of access to HE is situation in public schools. Primary, secondary and upper secondary education is funded via voucher schemes in Georgia, encouraged by WB. Since the quality of secondary schools has direct impact on access to HE, I consider that we should discuss voucher schemes shortly.

Voucher schemes take money which is intended to be spent on the child's education in public schools by government and gives it to the parents for use it in any schools of their choice. This initiative encourages parents to send their children in private schools. The rationale for voucher system is based on the false assumption that students in private schools have better outcomes than in public schools. The advocates of the schemes argue that competition among schools, consequent market discipline should lead schools to be more innovative, and result oriented (Kless 2008, p.320). Author points out that voucher schemes have very negative influence upon equity issues: Giving voucher to middle-class and rich families would encourage them ever more to send their children in private schools. The voucher that covers only public expenses of schooling does not cover the expenses in private schools and families should cover the difference. The most part of low income families will find it difficult to pay that difference between vouchers cost and real cost of private schools. Therefore, they are most likely to utilize their vouchers in the public schools. At the same

time those public schools, which are best or popular by any means, have possibility to be selective. Those schools are taking the best student and have better outcomes as well. The voucher schemes can become the reason of spiral declining of some public schools and so on.

3.5. Chapter Summary

In this sub - chapter I want to sum up main concepts and perspectives of chapter 3 and their relation with Georgian case. Fairness and equity in access policy to HE is complex study and gives possibility to analyse access policy from different perspectives.

A model of equal opportunities by Jacobs will be used as normative tool. This theory should determine degrees of fairness and equality. The combination of procedural, background and stake fairness creates a ground for equal and fair access to HE as a part of human rights. Procedural fairness determines the rules of testing and admission. Georgian education policy makers are heavily based on standardized testing for admission; their scores provide a proxy of merit, are easily compared between the candidates and are procedurally fair (Jacobs: 2004-89). Standardized test scores rank individuals and providing an objective assessment of the most and least qualified. The most qualified deserve the places in HEIs. Background fairness is the second and maybe the most important concept in access to HE; it is necessary to provide fair distribution of scarce educational resources among the students. Concept of stake fairness is as well relied on standardized tests for admission. Author of the theory asserts that certain disadvantaged groups lack access to selective universities degree programmes¹⁸. The avenues for disadvantaged groups can be scholarship or something extra funding issued by government or self universities, which helps them to gain access to selective universities.

Theories on education reform by Martin Canroy and neo-liberal thinking in education are applied to highlight approach of education reforms launched in Georgia. Critique of neo liberal thinking underlines negative impacts of this approach in education.

¹⁸. Jacobs discuss the problem with regard of African Americans admission to HE, but we can presume that the picture is probably same when it comes to any other disadvantaged groups in any country

In order to understand impact of introduction of GAT at admission examinations and its decisive role in grant distribution policy in Georgia, point of view of researchers on SAT I in USA is important to understand Georgian GAT (as I already mentioned Georgian GAT is quite similar with SAT I). A group of researchers (Bollinger, Camara, Stenberg 2004) consider SAT as fair and not SES biased admission tool and the second group consider it as SES biased as common A- level examinations (Atkinson (2001), Whetton, McDonald and Newton (2001) and Lohman (2005a, b), Stringer (2008)). Correspondingly, both of theories have their supporters among Georgian educational policy makers and experts and data, collected in Georgia maintains both of points of views about Georgian GAT. That's why we have presented both of theories and examined several researches thinking around the SAT I phenomena. Beside GAT there are compulsory two (now three) examinations entrants must pass in order to ensure the place in academic degree programmes at Georgian HEIs. There are considerable differences between common high stake examinations and those ones in Georgia, as Georgian high stake exams in Georgian language and literature and foreign languages can guarantee neither place alone nor scholarships, but it must be passed not failed. There are different points of views among different stake holders within Georgian educationists about the importance of those exams on receiving the study grant, that's why we have presented a short information (hardly called as theory) above about the impact and practices of such exams in other countries.

Perspectives from article of D. Bruce Johnstone will help us to understand impacts of all kind grant/loan distribution schemes impact on enrolment behaviour. The Table will be used to understand impact of Georgian current system of grant distribution on access to HE for all groups of society. The accessibility of grants and loans are an important tool in order to ensure fairness and equity in access to HE in any country.

4. Methodology

Identifying the most useful design for researching the chosen topic for investigation is considered as most important challenge for a researcher by Patton (2002). The case study approach opens for the detailed and intensive analyse of a single case (Bryman, 2004). As Case study research is concerned with the complexity of the case in question, it is considered as the most applicable design for my case. The use of the term is associated with a location, community or organisation (Bryman, 2004) with the focus on intensive examination of the setting. This study investigates fairness and equity in access to Higher Education in Georgia and to choose case study design is considered as most appropriate solution for my research design. The case is the reform through which GAT was introduced in Georgia, which is examined at the level of policy makers, state representatives and students.

Case study design often favours qualitative methods (Bryman, 2004). This study is based on policy documents, semi structured interviews and questionnaires with open ended questions. These methods are viewed as helpful in the generation of a case (Bryman, 2004, Patton 2002).

4.1. Research Approach and research design

The first step is to choose appropriate research approach for research topic. I consider that qualitative research approach is most appropriate for my research questions. The nature of equity and fairness does not match to positivistic approach due to its difficulty to measure by variables. The main characteristic for qualitative approach is that it has an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, whereby the former is generated out of the latter (Bryman 2004, p. 266). This implies that a researcher has identified some problem, or interest area which he/she wants to have a closer look at (Befring, 2004). Unlike deductive approach, inductive approach is more flexible and it has no intention to test any theory, but to study a special issue and produce categories, patterns and in some cases theories, based on data gained during the research process (Janesick, 1994).

The main feature of my study is to explore impact of the introduction of GAT on equity and fairness in access to HE for all citizens in Georgia. However, the notion of equity varies from

researcher to researcher, as well as it varies from governmental policy maker to expert in the field and to a common entrant and their parents; so, the notion of equity and fairness can vary not only within researchers their selves, but from stakeholder to stakeholder. To understand the nature of equity it is necessary to be aware about this diversity. The qualitative approach would give me possibility to employ various research methods for better and in depth understanding of problem.

As it is mentioned above (introduction of chapter 4), the most appropriate design for my thesis is case study due of the complexity of the research topic. Case study gives opportunity to a researcher to make the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. My sphere of interest is actually only equity and fairness in access to higher education and not equity problems in the whole system of education but access policy itself is complex and implies many categories. I consider that case study design matches best to get answers for my research questions. As research question is so complex, tight research design is applied. As Flick suggests:

“The tight research design is helpful, when the research is based on clearly defined constructs. Tighter designs make it easier to decide which data or extracts are relevant for the investigation and what is not relevant. They also make it easier, for example to compare and summarize data from different interviews or observations. They will be based on clearly defined plan for sampling” (2007, p. 26).

4.2. Methods for data collection

Case Study design gives me opportunity to use multiple methods for data collection. The methods I am going to apply for my research are: document analyse, interviews and questionnaires. These methods are suitable for case study design.

For deep understanding of processes related to equity in access to Higher Education I analysed documents as governmental white papers, legislation and realises of Ministry of Education of Georgia. According to Hodder, state is the source of a great deal of information of potential significance for social researchers” (1994, p.293). The statistical data published on the official website of Ministry of Education will be an important source for supporting my research as well.

The importance of understanding the Law on Higher Education is crucial for discussing issues like the fair and equal distribution of financial support among students. The law on Higher Education illuminates how responsibilities are shared among parliament of Georgia, Ministry of Education and National Examination Centre. I spent time for exploring of this law. Press releases published on official website of NAEC (National Examination Centre) gave me important information and analytical tool for analyzing the findings as well.

Interviews are considered as one of the most applied research method in qualitative research approach. However, it is flexibility what makes interview so attractive. Interviewing with its transcription making and analyse of transcripts are all very time consuming, but they can be readily accommodated with researcher's personal life (Bryman 2004, p. 321). The interviews were conducted with education policy makers in Georgia and with expert of the field.

Questionnaire is very convenient, not time consuming tool in order to collect information by large group of people. Questionnaire can be with closed questions and with open questions. As I have chosen qualitative research methods I have administered questionnaire with open questions and this method gave me possibility to collect significant information in a short time: at the end of per question respondents had possibilities to express their meaning about this concrete question. It gave me important information and wider perspective on that concrete question. Questionnaires were applied to collect information from another stake holders in access policy in Georgia, namely from entrants to HEIs. This group is affected by all decisions made on top level in Georgian education policy and their point of view shed light to many issues in admission policy.

4.2.1. Selection of informants for interviews

I chose to select informants for interviews purposefully. Suitable persons were selected before my departure for field work. It is important as my research is significantly based on experience of reform of different stake holders. Policy makers, expert and students were selected for interviews and questionnaire. In order to highlight some interesting themes related to equity issues in access to higher education I conducted three interviews with key persons from Ministry of Education. The respondents were policy makers on different key positions: Minister of Education and science of Georgia, chief of National Examination

Centre and leader of General Ability Test group as I have special focus on this test. Information from the expert of the field is as well very significant as she/he is a neutral person and has professional knowledge of education.

4.2.2. Development of interview guides and interviews

The type of interviews I used was semi-structured with well prepared “interview guide”. I had a list of questions I had to cover during interview/ conversation. Some of questions were same for the all three respondents from the Ministry of Education, but I had some specific questions for each of them too, according to their occupation. For example, the chief of department for General Ability Test (GAT), was asked more about the GAT test and its measurement of entrants’ real competence and ability. I had some questions which were about the special nature of GAT. The questions about GAT were asked to two other respondents too, but those questions were more general.

The first interview I had conducted was with the chief of GAT (General Ability Test) department. As it was the first one I used more time to prepare for it than for two other interviews. The day before I went to the National Library and tried to find interviews with her published in major Georgian newspapers during last three years and find articles published about GAT in Georgian press (I knew that it was a lot of them). Georgian society and academics were strongly against GAT as the only measure for getting state study grant. That’s why I thought it was important to have overview about debates, which took place in Georgian Society during my absent in Georgia. What I find in newspapers was quite interesting. As I expected GAT was strongly condemned by majority of academics as the tool of selection of HEIs students. Some of them considered them as it was like the test of mental health and it had nothing to do with the intelligence of an entrant. But the Ministry of Education was firm on their position that entrants’ high result at GAT illustrates his/her intellectual ability which can be reached without private tutor and that’s why it ensures equal possibility for every entrant to get state study grant.

The interview started better that I ever expected. The respondent was very nice person and very easy to communicate; was eager to talk much about various aspects of education reform, Unified National Examination and GAT. It was more conversation than interview. She moved from one topic to another without my intervention, so everything I need was to make

sometimes some comments. The length of interview was planned as one hour according to our agreement, but lasted for two and half hour. I was very satisfied with the first interview.

The second interview was planned with chief of the National Examination Centre (NAEC) and was appointed as Minister of Education of Georgia in March. After two months she was replaced by another person (current Minister) on this position and she was returned to her previous position. Two days before my interview with her, she gave interview to Georgian TV and criticized GAT as the only measure for getting study grant. The day after self Minister was invited in a TV program and he confirmed that GAT became the reason of disagreement between him and the chief of NAEC. He protected current system of GAT based distribution of study grants in order to maintain equity in access to HE. So, I knew that it was a disagreement in the Ministry of Education and was prepared for it.

The third interview turned out to be more difficult than expected and it was I thought the most important one, interview with the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. It took time to arrange the interview and at last I have got only 15 minutes. I thought it was not enough time, but I could not do anything else. The appointment was for 5.00 pm. I came in time and I got message from the secretary that maybe I have to wait a little and after two and half hour I was admitted in the room of Minister. I did not expected that somebody else will be attend interview and the attendance of secretor who was writing down everything I asked and he answered, surprised and confused me. This interviewee provided very short answers to my questions, and I was not sufficiently prepared for the difficulties I faced in creating an explorative and open discussion. The interview ended up as a short meeting on 10-15 minutes only, and as I was disturbed by waiting so long and by the secretary's unexpected attendance, it did not become as productive as I had hoped. Nevertheless, I got some useful information, and the analysis of the Ministry's work is supplemented by policy documents.

I wanted to conduct the fourth interview to the expert on the field in summer as well, but due of war between Russia and Georgia which took place in august 2008 made it impossible to fulfill my plan. This planned interview was arranged via mail. The challenge with this issue was that interview by mail is not as flexible as interview face to face. There is less possibility to ask again if the answer is too short or the respondent tried to avoid direct answer. The answers on my questions I have got were written in a short but in an exhaustive way. In

response I have replayed with addition question which emerged after her answers and I have got response immediately in the same manner.

4.2.3. Sampling of informants for questionnaires and collection of data

Informants for questionnaire were accordingly purposefully chosen: the questionnaire was targeted to a limited number of entrants who passed examinations in summer 2008. The sampling was purposive and was chosen 48 entrants who filled those self completion questionnaires. The entrants fall into two major categories: 24 entrants who passed examinations, named as group 1, and became students and 24 did not manage became students named as group 2. In its way each group was divided into two mini groups: 1A for students who received state study grant and 1B for students who became students but without financial aid from state. Group 2 was as well divided into two mini groups: 2A students who failed at exams¹⁹ and 2B who gained sufficient scores to study at one of those programmes they have chosen, but without state study grant. The reason of choice not to attend HE is pure financial.

As I have already mentioned the number of sample is limited and I have no intention to generalise it, approximately 48 entrants will be asked. The questions cover following themes: entrants' perception of unified national examination, their opinion on GAT, fairness of usage of GAT for grant distribution and entrants/students concern on success in GAT. The last question is open and gives space to informants to express their point of view on usage of GAT for grant distribution. In addition at the end of each question the respondents had a space to add their personal comment.

4.3. Data analyse strategies

Qualitative data commonly derived from interviews usually contains enormous unstructured textual material (Bryman 2004) General strategy of qualitative data analyse is grounded

¹⁹ It is required to get minimum scores in each examination in order to have right to continue participation. In 2008 this minimum score was 26 from 100.

theory. Grounded theory refers to the theory that is derived inductively from a corpus of data (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

In analysing of qualitative data with grounded theory, coding is a key process. It means that data is broken down into component part and are given names to each part (Bryman 2004). The first stage in analysing my data was to broken down instructed text of interviews into named, “labelled” components. This type of coding is called as *open coding*. This process ensures to identify concepts which are late to be grouped and turned into categories. The concepts that were defined after *open coding* were: unified national examinations, GAT, subject based tests, state study grant.

The next step toward analysing of my data was to put back together data in a new way and make connections between categories. This type of coding is named after *axial coding* by researchers (Patton 2002; Bryman 2004; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Denzin and Lincoln 1998). The concepts were linked to the context and to case and were produced categories. Bryman states that “*category may subsume two or more concepts*” (2004, p.403). Following categories were produced from my concepts: “fairness and equity in access to HE”, “assessment tools”, “admission tools”, “financial aid policies” and “challenges in secondary education”.

The last step, definition of *core category* is a central issue. “*Core category* systematically relates with them other categories and validates those relationship” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 96). It is called as *selective coding*”. *Core category* for my research was defined “fairness and access to HE in Georgia and other categories as “assessment tools”, “admission tools”, “ financial aid policies” and “challenges in secondary education” were examined in relationship with core category.

4.4. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two most important criteria for assessing the quality of a research work. Reliability means whether the results of a study are repeatable (Bryman 2004). Klevén (1995) asserts that validity is more important than reliability and also reliability only has relevance because it is a necessary condition for attaining validity. This means that if a

researcher is able to prove the validity of his research work, then it also means that the research work is reliable.

Some researchers apply the concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research, others do not. Lincoln and Guba (1985) present alternative terms and ways of assessing qualitative research. Researchers suggest trustworthiness as a criterion of how good a qualitative study is. Trustworthiness consists of four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Each of these features has a parallel with quantitative research criteria. Credibility parallels with internal validity, transferability parallels with external validity, dependability parallels with reliability and conformability parallels with objectivity (in Bryman 2004).

Reliability in qualitative research is seen in relation with validity. The usage of policy documents and legislation as a data in my research ensures validity of the study. This statistical data gives us exact number and percentage of the student who gained state study grant and distribution of the study grants among faculties and universities. This statistical data and policy documents can ensure the internal validity of my research.

It is often suggested that the scope of finding in qualitative investigations is restricted. To generalise the findings of my research seems quite irrelevant. According to La Compte and Goetz (stated in Bryman 2003, p. 273) “unlike to internal validity, external validity represents a problem for qualitative researchers, because of their tendency to employ case studies and small samples”. The findings will be relevant in the context of Georgia and in relation with access to higher education. The example of Georgia will be taken to discuss if the governments are able to maintain the equity issues in access to HE when globalisations pushes governments to cut resources in HE.

4.5. Challenges

The major challenge for me as a researcher is bias. I have grown up in Georgia and I have got access to higher education through a very unequal and unfair University entrance Exams. In a system with high level of corruption I did not even dare to apply to the faculty of my choice and had to apply to the faculty which was more reachable for well prepared students, but was not very popular at the same time. And now, when I am investigating the new system of

university entrance exams, I am bearing my experience always in my mind. I consider that my familiarity with the Georgian system has a positive influence on my research and it helps me to be attentive toward equity in institutional and programme choice. But at the same time my bias can become an obstacle in understanding economical restrictions of a state in financing Higher Education as well. I have tried to be aware of these challenges in the analyses by being open to what the respondents have told me and by reading the data thoroughly on its own means.

5. Presentation of Empirical Data and Data Analysis

In this chapter, I want to present and analyse the data collected during the fieldwork. The data consists of the policy documents, interview and questionnaires. Considerably the chapter is divided into three parts.

Policy documents describe the intentions of with the reform and present mechanisms that ensure fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia. Interviews and questionnaires present experience and thinking about the fairness and equity in access to HE from different stakeholders, namely from policy makers and expert on one side and students (those who are affected by policy) on other side.

5.1. Policy documents

This chapter deals with the question how legislation of Georgian government ensures fairness and equity in access to HE. The equality of opportunities in access to HE discussed by Jacobs is one of the most important concept of democratic society. The legislation in this situation is the guarantee of fair and equal distributions of goods. Legislation is a powerful tool for implementing any changes and reforms in any aspect of social life and it has responsibility to take care if social justice is reached and is perceived as a guide, in particular in periods of transition (Veld & at.el. 1996 in Samniashvili 2007, p.33). Georgian government, like other governments in many post-soviet countries, out of four main policy- making instruments for change – Nodality (information); Treasure (money); Authority (legal official power) and organisation (Hood ,1983 in Gornitzka, 1999), heavily relied on legislation (Samniashvili: 2007-33).

5.1.1. Access to HE according to the Law on HE of Georgia

In order to reach fair distribution of some goods it is important to have fair competitive procedures. The state is obliged to create fair competition for distribution of any public resources. HE, and generally education is one of the top priorities in any country. The low on

HE in Georgia shows, how different stakeholders manage fairness and equity in access to HE. Access policy is complex phenomena itself and includes such categories as financing of HE (tuition fees and grant policies), access to HE for minorities and persons with disabilities, background fairness which implies situation in public schools and of course, entrance examinations for university admission.

Government of any country has responsibility in creation of legal framework for normal development of a country. Education and especially, higher education is primary priority of country, as it is a corn stone for any countries feature development. HE creates societies human resources and the quality of such resources are crucial for further development of that country in 21 century, in the era of globalisation. Law on higher education of Georgia provides a legal framework for realisation of fairness and equity in access to HE.

Distribution of Power According of Law on HE of Georgia

The Parliament of Georgia, The Government of Georgia and The Ministry of Education and Science represent the different stake- holders in the distribution of legal power in the sphere of HE (Law of Georgia on HE). In the case NAEC and unified National Examination, the power and obligations are distributed as follows: According of low of HE the Parliament of Georgia shall: 1. define the key directions of HE policy and management and pass appropriate legislative acts. The government of Georgia shall: 1. implement the state policy in the sphere of HE; 2. define the amount of the state study grant; 3. The Prime – Minister of Georgia, upon the proposal of Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, shall appoint the director of National Examination Centre NAEC. The Ministry of Education and Science shall: 1. propose for approval to the Government of Georgia the amount of the state study grant as well as amount and conditions of financing the students enrolled in the state priority fields at HEIs, and for those funded through social programmes. 2. Determine upper limit for tuition fees at public HEIs 3. Propose to the Prime – Minister of Georgia the candidacies of director of National Examination Centre; 4. Develop and approve statutes of legal entities of public law: National Examination Centre (Low on HE of Georgia, § 51, p.44).

The law creates legal framework for reform. Georgian low regarded to access to HE provides centralised access policy to HE. Central government takes responsibility to choose students for higher education institutions and nearly excludes HEIs from choosing students. This

strong centralisation in admission policy is the result of fighting against corruption at admission examinations that was widely spread before. The policy regulates admission to private HEIs as well, as all applicants to accredited HEIs private universities are obliged to be admitted via Unified National Examination. Simultaneously, private universities have to satisfy requirements of accreditation provided by state. On the other side, students at private universities have got possibilities to compete for state study grant. The policy aims as well to increase competitiveness among HEIs: Universities had to improve quality in order to compete to attract many students.

According to Johnstone (p. 41)²⁰, many countries which had long tradition of free HE began to introduce tuition fees at public universities. In order to compensate it governments often introduce state grants which are commonly merit based. Merit based grants are known to be less equity friendly as SES factor have positive effect on education outcome of the students/entrants. Many OECD countries (France, Spain, Italy and so on) have means based scholarships and state grants, but such scholarships and grants are absent in Georgia. It has negative impact on enrolment pattern of students from low SES families.

Responsibilities of National Examination Centre

National Examination Centre, NAEC was officially established in 2002, July 5, by The Ministry of Education of Georgia as a legal entity of public character (Ministry of Education and Science).

NAEC manages the system of national entrance examinations for admissions into HEIs. NAEC is responsible for preparing and holding Unified National Examinations. Only students who have passed this examination may enrol in a state accredited programme at an accredited HEI, based on ranking of scores he/she receives at the examinations. NAEC has to rank the entrants according to those coefficients that were published by departments at the beginning of academic year and send the lists to relevant departments (The Law of Georgia on HE, § 51- 3,4 p.44).

²⁰ In this paper

Standardized tests

As Jacobs asserts, standardized tests are the best possibility to assess students in fair conditions and rank them according their scores. NAEC takes care on preparation and pre testing of the test (www.naec.ge). Content of tests are based on school curriculum, but low probability of difference according to difficulty level is still expected. In order to avoid this fact and take care that all entrants had to pass tests with equal difficulty level, NAEC uses the system of scaling:

Using of this method is expedient because of the following two reasons:

1. Possible difference between the variants of one and the same examination test;
2. Possibility of comparing of scores gained in different examination subjects (*Report on 2006 University Entry Examinations*).

Scaling system ensures procedural fairness on high level throughout examinations process. The risk that some of students have some advantage in examination process is minimized.

The sum scores from examinations are important to be admitted to the desired faculty, but it is only scores in General Ability Test that counts to get state study grant/ scholarship.

What is GAT and why scholarships are linked with GAT?

General Ability Test was novelty for Georgian society when it was introduced as admission tool for higher education. It was importance to inform entire focus group (students, parents and teachers) what it is about. Information brochure named “GAT” placed on the webpage of NAEC (www.naec.ge/files/355_GAT-GEo.pdf) tells to Georgians what is GAT, why it is introduced as admission tool and why is it linked with scholarships. The document provides readers with some examples of various GAT tasks and explains necessity of possessing general ability for future academic achievement. The brochure reveals that GAT measures students’ ability of adequately perceiving and processing information, logical reasoning and understanding basic relations between events. The purpose of the test is defined to be predicting possible success of student in HEIs. The abilities measured by GAT are considered relevant for admission anxiety because it takes many parameters into

consideration in order to identify learning potentials of the entrants according to the document. The verbal part of the test measures necessary language skills for acquiring academic knowledge and quantitative part measure ability of operating with numbers and mathematical concepts (www.naec.ge/files/355_GAT-GEo.pdf).

According to National Assessment and Examination Center, there are three main reasons why scholarships are linked with GAT: 1. it gives equal conditions to every entrant, 2. gives opportunity to non Georgian school leavers to receive scholarships and 3. GAT results have high correlation with subject test results.

The brochure is useful tool to define thinking behind introduction of GAT and goal of the policy. It highlights some issues that to some extent contradicts with each other. For example the fact that GAT results have high correlation with subject test results undermines the fact that the test gives equal conditions to all entrants. Subject based tests are highly correlated with private tutoring in Georgia and if there is high correlation of GAT results with curriculum based exams, than GAT's role for social equilibrium is undermined.

5.1.2.Situation in public schools

The legislation and the law on secondary education regulate the standard of curriculum in public and in accredited private schools. It is obvious that the quality of teaching varies among the schools but all entrants despite of gender, race and ethnicity enjoys equal standing in examination process and they have status equality. The entrants who have graduated upper secondary schools outside of Georgia have the same possibilities to apply for HE, but without taking entrance examination. At the same time, such students cannot apply for state study grant, as grant is distributed according GAT results.

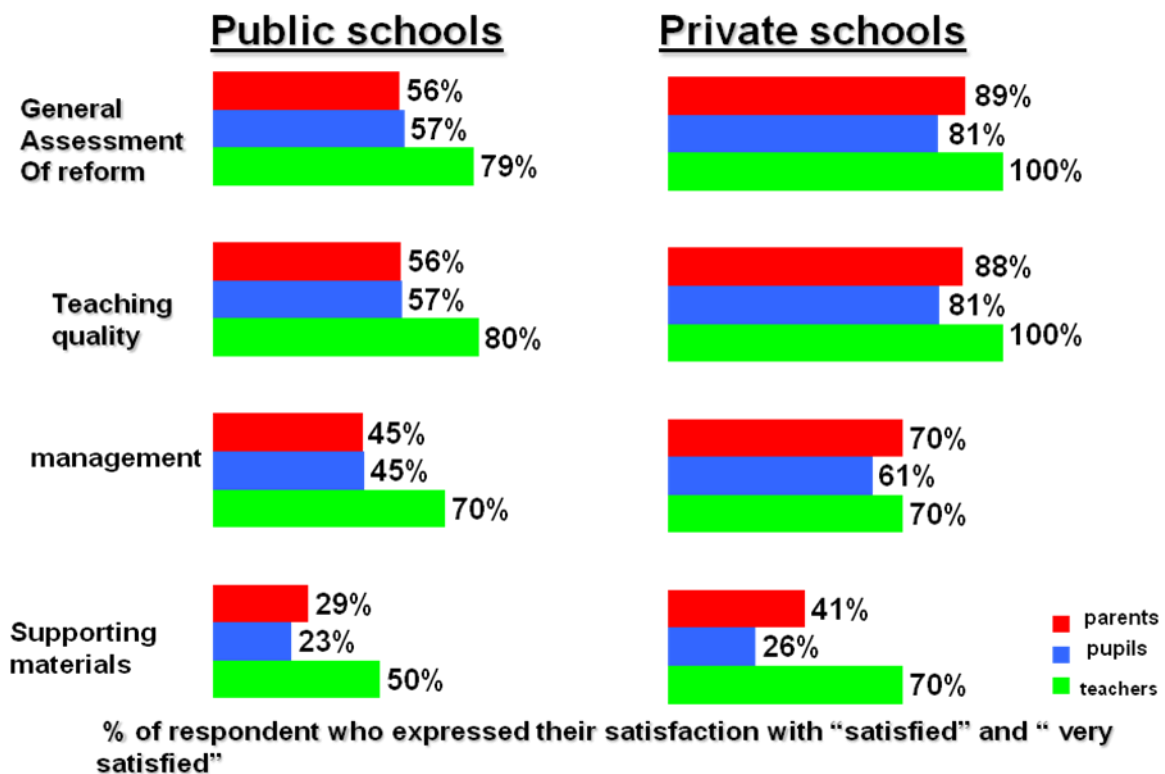
The only criteria is that schools, entrants are graduated from must be accredited by MES (Ministry of Education and Science). Entrance examinations are primary based on school curriculum notified by the MES (Low on HE in Georgia, p.9) The regulation of content taught in any school is primary obligation of Ministry of Education and Science (Low on secondary education in Georgia, p.9). The legislation and the law on secondary education regulate the standard of curriculum in public and in accredited private schools.

Secondary education in Georgia is financed through voucher schemes. The system is based on well known school voucher system articulated by Milton Friedman (<http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-023.html>). It means that all children in Georgia in age 6, receives a voucher, which she/he can redeem in any school, public or private. State voucher covers a limited amount; nowadays the amount of state voucher is 2250 GEL (Georgian currency). The voucher covers all expenses in public secondary schools, but the prices in private public schools are in order at list two times more. The policy encourages schools to be more competitive and create good environment and sufficient quality in order to attract as many pupils as possible. Public school budget is primary based on received vouchers from state and school administrators have to do their best to be attractive on education market. Nevertheless, on the other side, this policy gives more initiatives to parents to send their children in private schools, as they are free in their choice where they redeem their voucher. Research proves that it is in order families from middle-class who benefits most from such a policy (Parry, 1997). GORBY Gallup International market and opinion organisation have conducted research ordered by MES on the quality of education offered by public and private schools in Tbilisi.

Figure 1 Research Conducted by GORBI Gallup International²¹

²¹ Translation from Georgian into English is made by author

Assessment of quality



Research shows how satisfied are parents, pupils/students and teachers with the quality of schools in Tbilisi. The question sounds as follows²²: How satisfied are you with: reform in secondary education; quality of teaching; schools management; support materials. Research was conducted in 50 public schools and 10 private ones; 1000 pupils, 800 parents and 402 teachers were participated in research. The figure shows differences in satisfaction between private and public sector. The results are expected: differences between public and private level of satisfaction is significant. The users of private schools are in order pupils from high SES families, as user fees in private schools are approximately twice and much more than state voucher. But without any means voucher system encourages middle class parents to put their children in private schools.

²² The research question is reconstructed by author according to answers and end note made by GORBI.

Cost -sharing in HE in Georgia

Georgian model of financing of HE can be defined shortly as money follows students. The same is possible to be said about secondary education: the voucher follows pupil in school. In disparity with old system when public universities and public schools were granted a bulk of money they distributed according their need. In HE it meant that there were a number of “budget” places at public HEIs and the most successful students were awarded with free HE. The rest of students who scored not very high at admission exams administered by universities themselves had to play self. The new policy of state study grant gives possibility to applicants at private universities to compete for grants. It results in more competition among HEIs in order to attract students. On other side public HEIs are subsidized from the state and have tuition fees correspondingly to state study grant. Private universities are commonly more expensive then public as they are profit organisations and are not subsidized from the state. In short:

1. The reform gave initiatives to more competition among public and private HEIs.
2. State grants are more equally distributes among public and private sectors.
3. The reform gives initiative to middle class families to send their children to private schools and consequently in private HEIs.
4. Universalities lost their right to administer admission examinations and entrance examinations for all accredited HEIs are administered by NAEC. Following this system the corruption was dissimilated and admission tastings are more procedurally fair.
5. The grants are distributed to students according merit.
6. There are totally absent of need/ means based grants/ scholarships which has negative impact on enrolment pattern of low SES students.

5.2. The state representatives voices

The main intention of this small interview study is to describe how policy makers and expert of the field experience and reflect on problems regarding to fairness and equity in access to higher education, what is their opinion on General Ability Test and its based distribution of study grants. They generally reflect as well general challenges of access to higher education of Georgia. The main reason of presenting expert of the field together with state representatives/ policy makers is that I have used the same interview guide when I took interview with expert. At the same time the reforms launched by the state is often based on expert evaluations and advices. So, experts are important participants in reframing of education reforms and are actually active policy makers. But at the same time they are not participating in active political life of the country and can evaluate outcomes of education policies and reforms from more neutral point of view.

Interviews with policy makers and expert of the field where semi structured and there were some themes, which have emerged from the interviews. Accordingly, the analysis would be divided into sub- sections each of them covering a specific area.

Table 8 topics and sub topics of the interviews

Main topic for discussion	topics	The focus of sub topics
Fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia.	Fairness and equity at unified national examinations for university admission	Transparency Elimination of corruption at exams Broader choice possibilities for students Increased demand and increased supply for HE State study grant and tuition fees at some HEIs Minorities and students with disability
	Situation in public schools and private tutoring	Low quality of upper secondary schools Teacher quality and wages Massive spread of private tutoring
	GAT	GAT as tool for social equilibrium GAT is mathematic biased Emergence of private tutoring in GAT
	Consequences of GAT based distribution of grants	GAT is still SES biased Challenges of natural sciences and humanities Attitudes toward sum scores based grant distribution policy

5.2.1. Fairness and equity at unified national examinations for university admission

Fairness and equity in access at unified national examination is one of the components of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia. All interviewers were very positive about examination process. Eradication of corruption at admission examination is considered as main achievement of the UNE by all respondents. But the price for it is high according to the leader of GAT group at NAEC: they have to print tests in Britain in order to secure that leakage of test content will not happen. This fact increase expenses considerably.

The unique level of transparency was necessary for UNE in order to gain trust among population who have experienced mass corruption at admission exams for decades. As soon as examination is ended, UNE is publishing all tests they have used on their official web-site. According of leader of GAT group at NAEC, tests are commonly published once during five years in other countries and publishing of tests every year is not rational, but decision of NAEC is political: they want that people will have trust on UNE. However, only procedural fairness at UNE does not mean fair and equal access to HE. Chief of NAEC asserts that:

“We can assume that the system of University admission has radically changed four years ago. Our primary goal in launching of this reform was to ensure equity in access to HE as much as it is possible. But if somebody says that we have managed to create an ideal system to ensure equity and fairness it is a huge mistake. I consider that this problem (she means problem of equity and fairness) cannot be solved only through Unified National Examination. I am absolute sure that competition (exams) is the same for everybody, but we must prepare entrants for this competition.

All policy makers, included expert of the field assume that only UNE cannot provide equity in access to HE. The only thing they can manage is to have procedurally fair examinations based on school curriculum and General Ability Test. The expert of the field added that UNE offers better choice of faculties and HEIs for entrants ²³ and at the same time She UNE managed to increase the importance of school curriculum as well, as test include question only from school curriculum. But at the same time:

²³ Before 2004 it was not possible to apply for two or more faculties simultaneously, but just one.

“If we take into consideration financial accessibility of HE in Georgia I must admit that equality is not achieved. Despite of defeat of corruption at admission examinations, private tutoring is still exists and it cost about 1000 USD in a year per subject. Price is high for many and not all can afford to pay so much”.

Expert of the field raised the question about demand and supply side of HE in Georgia. In 2004 when UNE was newly launched there were only 17000 places at accredited HEIs; in 2008 number of places increased to 27 664. The increased number places at accredited HEIs are the result of high demand for HE in market. She is concerned about this development claims that it has its positive and negative sides: the fact that Georgia have about 60 000 upper secondary school graduates every year and there are enough places for 50% of them at HEIs, it is positive. But she is concern that accreditation of new HEIs is based only on institution accreditation criteria²⁴ and it can lead to the worsening of teaching quality. At the same time she is deeply concern with the fact that places at HEIs are increased on the expense of business administration and economic faculties. Nowadays these are the most demanded programmes/ faculties. She doubts t that Georgia has so many qualified staff who can teach at these programmes with sufficient quality.

According to Darell &Dundar (cited on p. 16) high demand and limited places are often reason of emergence of, as called, shadow education. On the other side teaching quality is often sacrificed in order to satisfy demand as it is in the case of BA programmes in Georgia. Increased number of available places at HE was necessary as mass access to HE implies that 30-50 % of graduated of upper secondary schools have access to HE. In Georgian case there are available HE places for nearly 50% of school graduates.

The problem of fairness and equity in access to HE is closely connected with demand and supply side. Increased places at HEIs increases opportunities of access for more entrants and in the future increases their possibility of employability. Procedural fairness at UNE takes care that those who deserves are accepted and most excellent ones are getting state study grant to finance their education. Another problem connected with state grant is that it covers only tuition fees at public HEIs and it creates two problems:

²⁴ In order accreditation of HEIs implies stages: institutional and academic. In Georgia all HEIs got only institutional accreditation: academic accreditation will take place in 2010.

1. Recently emerged prestigious private higher education institutions have tuition fees much more than public universities. This means that students with limited financial resources cannot even apply to those HEIs. Chief of NAEC means that state cannot take responsibilities in this case:

“State cannot do anything with this situation. Only the private HEIs may be eager to have some excellent scholarships for the excellent students with limited material resources and cover the difference between state study grant and high tuition fees at private, more prestigious institutions; Such system is very popular abroad. It is natural that state cannot cover the expenses for studying at private HEIs....”

2. State study grant covers only tuition fees at public universities, but from student from rural areas expenses of urban living is also very high. According to research such expenses takes more from family budget than tuition fees. But policy makers do not mean that it is problem of state: *“If a person really wants to study, he/she can manage it. It is not a shame at all to work as a waitress part time and study at the university at the same time”* said chief of National Assessment Centre. Her answer refers to thinking about individual pay-off of HE according to neo-liberal thinking. Of course, country with limited financial resources cannot be obliged to cover living expenses for students from rural areas, but some programmes and initiatives have to be introduced. Georgia has very unequal distribution of wealth according to its regions and for this reasons students from poor rural areas are presumably excluded from HE. It is more relevant to speak about such possible exclusion of students from high mountainous regions in the north and south of the country. At the same time these regions are most fragile in teacher (as well as other qualified employees) recruitment. The way out can be to give conditional scholarships to such students against agreement that they will return back to their regions and work there for some years. It would help students from higher mountainous regions to cover expenses of urban living and at the same time state can partly resolve the problem of teacher requirement there.

The modern state has to ensure rights of persons with disabilities and minorities in any competition. The situation was quite difficult in this issue in Georgia before reform of admission examinations to HE was launched. Right of persons with disabilities to special needs education and inclusion was totally ignored. The accessibility to HE for this groups is significantly improved according to expert of the field:

“Introduction of UNE improved possibilities of students with disabilities to access to HE, what was practically impossible before”²⁵. Minorities have possibility to take GAT in their own languages and it increases their chances to compete for grants with their Georgian counterparts. GAT is available in four languages²⁶ (expert of the field).

Persons with disabilities can apply for time extension or for special arrangement at UNE against medical proofing. It increases opportunity for those groups to take higher education and be included in society.

According to leader of GAT, fairness and equality in access to HE minorities is much better at UNE than it was before: state study grant distribution is based only on GAT results and UNE offering GAT in four minority languages that increase their chances to get access to HE and compete for grant. She claims that one of the reasons why UNE introduced low on GAT based grant distribution is minorities:

In 2005, in the first year of launching the reform, state study grant was distributed according to sum scores. At the same time it was compulsory to take exam in Georgian language and literature and the minorities found themselves in disadvantage situation; that’s why we have moved toward grant distribution according to GAT scores. This year (2008) it is possible to take test in GAT in Georgian, Russian, Armenian and Azeri languages (leader of GAT).

On the other hand language of instruction is Georgian almost in all HEIs and without good knowledge of Georgian it is difficult to understand lectures and take exams, that’s why it is compulsory for minorities as well to take examination in Georgian language and literature means Georgian policy maker. The situation is better for minorities in urban areas, but it is extremely bad in those regions that are densely populated by minorities. As all minorities have right to take primary, secondary and upper secondary education in their native languages that’s why they have difficulties to take examination in Georgian language and literature. In order to improve quality of knowledge of Georgian language, local teachers were offered to give more lessons in Georgian to them who needed it against payment from

²⁵ Before reform, according to Low on HE all, included people with disabilities had possibilities to take part in admission examination, but in practice, it was impossible.

²⁶ GAT is available in Georgian, Russian, Armenian and Azeri languages since 2008.

the state. Some other initiatives were launched in order to encourage youth of minorities to learn Georgian:

Our education centers in the certain regions declared that they are offering stipends to those minority students of upper secondary school who were weak in Georgian. It would encourage them to take extra classes in Georgian. But the policy revealed to be misunderstood: Only those who were already good in Georgian received stipends... Now we have dropped this practice (leader of GAT).

The initiative was misunderstood by local authorities, but it is positive that policy makers began to think toward this issues. To offer primary, secondary and upper secondary education in four minority languages needs huge financial and human resources. Research proves that learning is more effective on mother tongue, but the fact that language of instruction in HE is Georgian and there is obligatory admission exam in Georgian language and literature undermines positive effect of learning on mother tongue. Otherwise it is totally impossible to offer HE in four languages. And the solution Georgian policy makers found recently (extra funding and encouragement in order to improve quality of teaching in Georgian language and literature in minority schools) is conformable solution of the problem at this stage of reform.

5.2.2. Situation in public schools and private tutoring

Merit based access policy to higher education is always closely connected to school quality and private tutoring. Challenges in public schools and private tutoring are perceived to have huge influence on equity in access to higher education. Poor teaching quality seems to fuel private tutoring, and private tutoring is fueling inequality at entrance examination. Minister of Education and Science of Georgia claims that,

The quality of schooling is not sufficient in all public school, but it is not only reason of spreading of private tutoring; private tutors have been existed and not only in Georgia. I repeat that quality of public schools are not often sufficient and entrants often have private tutors, but I must admit that it is possible to be succeeded at UNEs without private tutors” (Minister of Education and Science).

Another high ranked policy maker is partly agreed with Minister and means that now private tutors are really giving knowledge to entrants unlike previous system when it was more agreement between tutors and parents that entrant has to pass exams and get place at HEI

against “payment for tutoring”. But she agrees that such spread private tutoring is challenging equity in access to HE:

I think that this problem (the problem of equity) has to be solved through reform of secondary education. Secondary education must prepare students so that every student must have the same opportunities for competition. Only approved replacement of the private tutoring must be a strong secondary school. Let`s say, that we have to disseminate private tutoring and that`s why we must not have any examination for university admission, in the situation when we are not sure about the quality of the entrants secondary education. We cannot adopt such a system in nowadays situation (she means the low quality of education in secondary school and especially upper secondary school). The best way in fight to private tutoring, is to help secondary schools “to stand on their feet”, parents will not pay for private tutoring if they know that the school gives child the appropriate knowledge. It is very simple, just as ABC (chief of NAEC).

Private tutoring exists in many countries, but in Georgia it is almost universal. This trend is coming strongly from Soviet time, as a result of merit based admission examinations at universities and huge demand and limited supply for HE places. Today the reason of so massive spread of private tutoring is not UNE, but low quality of secondary education offered in public schools, means policy makers: not only graduates of upper secondary school have private tutors, but pupils of primary schools already from the second year have tutors. Those parents who afford to pay; they are willing to pay because they are not satisfied with quality of schooling already at primary level. Chief of NAEC means that it is unfair to blame UNE for private tutoring. The problem can be solved by reforming and reinforcement of secondary education and recruiting of better teachers. The UNE itself does not demand skills beyond school curriculum and if there were strong public schools in the country, the problem of private tutors would not exist at all, - claimed chief of NAEC.

The same meaning had on private tutoring another policy maker, the leader of GAT group in NAEC. She meant that public secondary schools are free but have very low quality and the private ones are too expensive and she suspected that neither private ones are much better.

The consideration is so within the population: schools do not give any knowledge and that`s why my child needs to go to private teacher. When child has private tutors in several subjects she/he has not time to attend classes. In some schools there is mass absence of pupils in upper secondary schools.

The quality of teaching of natural science is especially problematic, claimed leader of GAT. According to the reform there are three semesters academic year. Intention was integrating teaching but it has failed as Georgian teachers are not trained in such a way. Another and most important problem is low teacher salaries and consequently low engagement. In addition they have bad working conditions: no libraries and limited access to internet.

The expert of the field agrees with policy makers that massive spread of private tutoring is not problem of UNE, but indicates to low quality of secondary education. She means that this fact is challenging equity in access to HE in Georgia. The main reason is that many pupils are missing their classes because of private tutoring in upper secondary school. At the same time it is challenging to have good quality of teaching when classes are overloaded with 40 pupils. She asserts:

But still I know the facts that some entrants from provinces achieved high success at UNE without any private tutoring. I remember there was a study on the web-site of NAEC that proved that entrants from some schools were quite successful at UNE without private tutoring. The majority of those schools were from regions and only few ones from the capital. It means that if the schools can preserve normal learning process in upper secondary schools and there are not overloaded classes it is possible to achieve success at UNE without any tutoring (expert of the field).

Education reform launched in 2005 in Georgia was complex: the formula “money follows student”²⁷ was used in primary, secondary and upper secondary education as well. Chief of NAEC is quite critical to this reform and claims that it creates spiral declining for many schools:

The situation in the schools I must admit once more is terrible. The numbers of so called poor schools are increasing. When I am saying poor, I mean indeed poor. They cannot finance themselves via vouchers and are asking MES for money per month. Many schools cannot cover such basing things in the schools as chalk, heating, electricity. MES is filling the budget gap for minimum, but such schools have never money for little extra that is necessary to raise the quality. For example, in such high mountain regions as Oni, Kazbegi all kind of free time activities were shut down, as folklore song and dance after school lessons. In those regions such activities are very important as there are no cinemas, theatre and so on. All these facts are indicating that system (voucher system)

²⁷ State study grant system and voucher system is called “ money follow student” by “ Tempus of Georgia”

does not work. From 2200 public schools, 1600 are deficit schools: they are in need to ask MES for extra funding in order to cover minimum expenses every month. But about 300 schools became very rich, they have so much money that have difficulties to find the way to spend it rationally (those schools which have 6 parallel classes in upper secondary school and there are 45 pupils in per class.) It is very unequal distribution of resources and it brings schools to spiral upgrading and spiral declining. This fact indicates that system has to be changed (Chief of NAEC).

She told that she tried to change this system during her 2 months period as Minister of education and Science of Georgia, planned carefully what had to be done that those deficit schools had to stand on their feet but this plan is now put aside by current minister of education. The voucher system encourages schools to give place to as many applicants as possible because of their dependence on the vouchers. In “rich” schools” classes are overloaded and it decreases the quality of teaching despite the fact that they manage to attract the best teachers and send them to teacher training courses. In “poor schools” it goes to opposite way: They have not overloaded classrooms but neither have money to pay extra for teachers in order to attract better qualified teachers or pay for teacher training. In both cases we have negative consequences of voucher schemes based secondary education policy. Exactly this double (negative for both: poor and rich schools) negative effect²⁸ is a reason of mass spreading of private tutoring in Georgia.

5.2.3.Experience of GAT as a tool for equity?

General Ability Test is one of the compulsory examinations for university admission in Georgia. In difference two other compulsory exams (Georgian language and literature and foreign language), it was novelty for Georgian society and Georgian entrants in 2005. In the first year of reform, in 2005 state study grant was distributed based on summative scores from all three exams, but from the next year (in 2006,2007,2008,2009) only high scores in GAT was enough to receive grant. So, it became more decisive then it was before. Policy makers have different point of view about this case and argue in what degree it is equity friendly. Minister of education and science of Georgia means that GAT ensures social equilibrium:

²⁸ With double negative effect I mean that pupils of “rich schools” have private tutors because of overcrowded classrooms and pupils of “poor” schools needs tutors in order to compensate poor teaching quality and poor school materials.

...in case of GAT, private tutors have less work to do; some child may be need it, but in some cases it is maybe parent who wants it (ex-Minister of education and science).

Leader of General Ability Test group agrees with minister that Private tutors' role and influence on GAT results is very low. She explains that one of the main reasons of introduction of GAT was to have possibilities to evaluate entrants in complex way. One of the challenges in Georgian high mountain regions is heavy snowing and physically inaccessibility of schools for certain period of time. It leads to expected gap in curriculum and those entrants will find it challenging to fight for grants linked with sum scores or curriculum based examinations.

According to her leader of GAT, there are politicians and schools teachers who are more skeptical toward GAT, but according to the study conducted by BMG, students are skeptical to Unified national Examinations, but did not like that GAT is decisive in grant distribution. GAT consists of two parts: mathematical and verbal one. Leader of GAT group claims that students have more problems with verbal part than mathematical one:

... Mathematical part is more acceptable that verbal one (for entrants). But I must admit that mathematic is challenging students of humanities. It was spread opinion that humanist need not knowledge in mathematic. I do not agree with this. Mathematic we are using in mathematical part of the test is covering only lower secondary school curriculum and all have to afford so little math. Generally there are more complains toward verbal part: reason is that contemporary students have very poor vocabulary: they do not read much. The examination in Georgian is another example of this fact” (Leader of GAT group).

Despite of statement of leader GAT group that mathematical part of GAT is not challenging students (except of humanities) statistical data of grant recipients shows different picture: GAT is mathematic biased. Another policy maker, chief of NAEC states proves this fact as well and states: *“if we look at the result: majority of those who have got state study grant, were the students who passed mathematic as their fourth exam subject.”*

Most grant recipients are the students on faculty economics and BA. Those faculties require mathematic as their fourth choice examination. Leader of GAT group explains this fact as follows:

... On those faculties you have mentioned (she means faculties of economic and BI) have always very high competition and the most of the well prepared and skilled entrants are applying there. The applicants of these faculties have commonly high scores in all exams and among them in GAT. It is the reason of many grants on these faculties. On humanities competition is not very high and to be the best among co-competitors does not automatically means that you are the best and you deserve the grant (Leader of GAT group).

According to her, NAEC prepared structural changes in current grant policy, but it is not approved yet by the Minister and parliament of Georgia. Leader of GAT group in NAEC asserted that NAEC wants to have field financing policy:

We want that all of applicant have to pass four compulsory exams instead of three. The fourth exam would vary among the faculties; students applying for natural sciences have to take exam in natural sciences, humanities in literature and so on. In such case the student financial aid will be shared according to the faculties (top scores of each faculty will get the grant) and it will not be like current situation: all on faculty of BA and economies have grants and no one has it on humanities.

Expert of the field meant that GAT measures how well is student prepared to study at HEIs and did not agree that GAT is more equity friendly and added that she is strongly against current system of grant distribution as well and wishes that grant must be distributed based on sum scores.

GAT based financial aid policy was introduced in favor of social equilibrium according to Minister of Education and science and leader of GAT group. They meant that GAT ensures more equity and fairness in access policy, but the fact that the number of private tutors in GAT has emerged they cannot neglect:

Yes, unfortunately. But frankly, I do not know how they are teaching abilities. Only thing what is teachable is mathematic: it requires good skills in mathematic on secondary school level (not upper secondary). Teacher can help them only in this case. But they can learn enough mathematic in school as well. Preparation for second part rest of test needs to read it...For example, entrants from Kutaisi mathematics and physic school had excellent results in GAT and mathematics. None of them have ever had private tutors. School is good itself and they were taught well in school (Leader of GAT group).

The fact that entrants for mathematics and physics school had good results in both of them: mathematics and GAT, proves once more that this test is mathematics biased and it has direct influence on financial aid policy in Georgia.

All researchers I have presented above about GAT/SAT I (Stringer 2008, Lohman 2005, Sedacelek 2004, Whetton, Macdonald and Newton 2001) assert that GAT / SAT is maybe weakly than common A-level but still SES biased and the quality of schooling have direct impact on SAT/GAT scores.

5.2.4. Consequences of GAT based grant distribution policy

This topic is very important for equity in access policy as grant is the most important tool for fair and equal access to HE in Georgia. Experts and some of policy makers agree that implication of current system of financial aid policy can be decisive for country's future development. The expert of the field asserts that current grant covers only minimum of programme cost and at the same time public HEIs are not allowed to charge students with more tuition fees than maximum of state grant. The value of grant is based on cost of programmes in humanities and social sciences (these fields did not need laboratories or other technical equipments). But this amount is not enough to finance studying costs at natural and technical programmes:

It means that Universities (she means public ones) have to draw income in order to finance these fields. How is it possible? The answer is that they are increasing places in the faculties of economics, law and BI and shortening the places at less prestigious faculties. This policy influences the quality of teaching at those popular programmes as well, as we have not so many qualified staff in reality to teach to this number of students on above mentioned faculties (expert of the field).

One policy maker concludes as well that current system of grant distribution is more challenging for natural and fundamental sciences and the most striking thing which has happened in Georgia is that there is no competition on faculty of medicine. The problem is that most of the HEIs which offer medicine and particularly state ones have natural science exams as their fourth free choice exam.

The reason of such situation is two: bad teaching quality of natural sciences in schools and bad job market for graduates. In order to help the situation, the state has to take some

initiative and encourage students who want to study on those fields with grants and scholarships.

Chief of NAEC means as well that current policy of financial aid has already dramatic consequences and would have even worth in the future if state does not change this policy. The most striking is declining of faculties of natural and fundamental sciences:

The situation in natural sciences is dramatic: only 600 applicants (from 29 000) choose test in natural sciences. The problem is that some faculties try not to choose natural science exam as an admission criteria. They try to avoid it. The fact is that the state study grant flows to the faculties of economic, business administration and law. Yes we need professionals in business, economy, law, but without fundamental sciences (physics, biology, chemistry...) country cannot survive. If we will get this approval from the ministry about the fourth compulsory exam and grant distribution according of sum scores, however those faculties (faculties of fundamental sciences and humanities) can have applicants and the students who choose this subjects can have get grants too. We mean that it will be more equal distribution of grant, than it is in current system (Chief of NAEC).

Policy maker means that if grant will be distributed based on sum scores it give the possibility to finance fields: top scorers of each faculty could have grant. She means that because of fourth free choice exam, some universities want to have the fourth exam but the other university who offers the same education chooses not to have the fourth one. Automatically the entrants apply for those which have only three exams and the universities with four exams will lost the applicant. If there will be a regulation, that all have to pass the fourth exam, then universities feel it free to choose the fourth subject which is crucial for the field. Chief of NAEC meant that if government would accept this proposal it means that certain faculties will have more qualified students and the grant will be distributed more equally among the faculties. She asserted that this change is crucial for countries further development:

The most gifted and trained applicant goes to the faculty of economy and the other faculties are complaining about the low qualified entrants. Often, maybe a person has a special gift and interest in, for instance physics, but still applies for economics because of high pay off and feature employment possibilities. Of course we cannot avoid such a tendency among youth, but state has to take care about the fundamental sciences. No country has a feature without fundamental sciences (Chief of NAEC).

Minister of education and sciences in Georgia was against of such regulation and involvement from the state and meant that, “*it was and always will be more and less prestigious faculties and we cannot fight against it*”. *The market regulates it* (Minister of education and science). He stated that changes in grant distribution policy are not expected and the MES have no intention to distribute state study grant based on sum scores. However he confirmed that there were some theories toward such changes.

5.3. Students`experience

This chapter highlights points of views of the third stake holders, namely entrants. This group is affected by all this changes and reforms policy makers and experts have made in access policy in Georgia. The questionnaires were with open questions; entrants had possibility to express their point of view shortly, after she/he ticked/ marked the answer of their choice from 4-5 possible answers. I must admit that there were few of them who used this opportunity, but all those remarks were very important and they will be included in data analyse. The question asked in the questionnaire covers the same themes as interviews, but sub chapters will be presented according to the questions. Accordingly there are eight sub-chapters in chapter 4.2.

5.3.1. Main determinant of success at UNE

It is important what is perceived to have decisive importance in success in UNE according to entrants. In order to ensure equity in access to HE, it is important that “determinant” of success is available for all applicant free of charge. As all applicants have to go through examinations based on academic curriculum and GAT, it is important that this facility is equally achievable for all. The only way to have access to such free academic knowledge is public secondary schools in all over the world as in Georgia. The entrants` answers on this question are as follow:

Table 9 Results on the question about entrants consideration what is main determinant of success at UNE

What do you consider is a main determinant of success at Unified National Examination	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
Secondary sch.	2	2	2	1	7
Pt	2	2	--	2	6
Both of them	8	8	8	9	33

These answers indicate that majority of entrants: 33 from 46 means that both of them, school and tutor are important determinants of success at UNE. The number of entrants who means that school or tutor are most important is almost equally shared: 7 meant that school determines success at UNE and 6 of them meant that only good private tutors determine success at UNE. So high rating for “both of them” indicates that PT (private tutoring is supplementary and not the only way to achieve success at UNE. It means as well that if school quality increase, the fight with private tutoring will be easy. This fact indicates as well that in order to fight against PT and fight for fairness and equity in access to HE, must start from the secondary schools.

All applicants had possibility write shortly their point of view, but was voluntarily and 28 of them used this possibility. The notes contain information which can be classified in three different directions: 4 entrants wrote that both of them (schools and private tutoring) are equally important, but still school is more important; 9 entrants wrote that determinant of success at UNE is simply private tutoring; and 14 of entrants wrote note which sounds that both of them is important, but good tutor is important because education schools offer has very low quality. One note which is different from all of them is very important and sounds as follows: “*I have graduated from private school (includes primary, secondary and upper secondary) and did not need any extra tutoring*”. This information indicates that if school

had had sufficient quality there is no need for any private tutoring. It is important that this entrant is a student of prestigious private HEIs with very high tuition fee.

5.3.2. How entrants characterise Unified national Examination

Current system perceived as more fair and transparent not only by Georgian education policy makers, but by entrants as well. On the question: *How do you characterise Unified national Examination? A. Very unfair and corrupt; B. Very fair and equity friendly; C. Better than previous system.* 30 respondents from 46 mean that it is better than previous system (67%). The most significant is that despite of the fact that only 12 respondents had managed to receive grant for higher education, 30 of respondents answered on this question positively.

Table 10 Results on the question how entrants characterize UNE

<i>How do you characterise Unified national Examination?</i>	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>Very unfair and corrupt</i>		1	2	---	3
<i>Very fair and equity friendly</i>	4	5		4	13
<i>Better than previous system</i>	8	6	8	8	30

There were not many who used the chance to make a short comment, totally 23 persons wrote in comment space. The comments express accordingly the same point of views: 7 of entrant claimed that it is not very fair and equity friendly, but much better than previous system; 10 of entrants claimed that UNE is very fair and all applicants enjoy with procedural fairness and two of students stated that it is very equity friendly; only three of applicant meant that UNE is very corrupted and unfair. One entrant wrote quite large comment which sounds as follows: *“Yes, it is fair, all we were treated fair during UNE and I believe that it is not corrupted at all, but it is very, very unfair that grant is based on GAT scores”*.

5.3.3. Faculty of choice

The answers on these questions indicate on pattern of grant distribution among the faculties and sometimes it indicates as well that grant flows principally to the faculties of economic/BI and low. On these two faculties there are 7 students who have grant against 5 from all other faculties, explicitly from humanities, medicine, social sciences and natural and fundamental sciences together:

Table 11 results of faculty of choice

<i>What is a faculty of your choice?</i>	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>Economic/BA</i>	4	1	3	5	13
<i>Low</i>	3	1	3	1	8
<i>Humanities</i>	1	2	2	---	5
<i>Fundamental and natural sciences</i>	1	1	---	---	2
<i>medicine</i>	2	5	1	1	9
<i>Social sciences</i>	1	2	1	5	9

5.3.4. Students`experience of GAT

There are various meaning about GAT in Georgia, but mostly there is experts, policy makers, academics and politicians who are expressing their point of view publicly, but as far as I studied this problem, the point of view of students were not known. I could not find any

research about entrants`/ students` attitudes about GAT in Georgia, and leader of GAT group claimed the same in her interview (p.69). The majority of entrants 32persons from 46 consider that GAT is difficult to manage. All groups agree that GAT is difficult. There is not important difference in answers according to groups: successful and failed students seem to agree that GAT is difficult.

Table 12 results of students' experience of GAT

Do you consider that GAT is:	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>Easy to manage</i>	3	2	1	3	9
<i>difficult</i>	8	9	6	9	32
<i>very difficult</i>	1	1	3	---	5

Only 10 entrants used the possibility to express what they think about GAT: four of them meant that GAT is difficult, because time of test is too limited; three of students claimed that GAT is mathematic biased and it makes test difficult to manage for them who does not invest hard in mathematic (It is significant as well that none of those three entrants were applicant accordingly to humanities, social sciences and medicine). Two of informants meant that if students is good in school and consequently school is good itself, such students have no problem to pass with high scores in GAT. One of the entrants considered that “*GAT is not bad thing itself, but it is unfair that scores in GAT has so huge importance. GAT can measure neither academic knowledge, nor student` intellectual ability*”. The fact that GAT does not measure academic knowledge is *in ajour* with supporters of GAT, but questionable is what is GAT does measure if it does not measure not academic knowledge nor intellectual ability?!

5.3.5. What is decisive in success in GAT

The most significant fact in these answers is that more than half of informants meant that personal ability is the most decisive in grant distribution. The second largest group with ten members considers that success in GAT is closely connected with good knowledge of mathematic. Almost same number, nine persons meant that private tutors are most decisive in this test and only three of informant meant that school knowledge is decisive in success in GAT.

Table 13 results of student's opinion about what is decisive in success in GAT

What do you think is decisive in success in GAT?	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>Personal ability</i>	6	6	2	10	24
<i>Secondary school</i>	1	1	---	1	3
<i>Private tutoring</i>	2	1	5	1	9
<i>Good knowledge of mathematic</i>	3	4	3	---	10

The results ticked answers show clear dominance of view that personal ability is the most decisive in achieving success in GAT. 24 of 46 ticked the first choice: personal ability. Skills in mathematic (with 10 voice and private tutoring with 9 voice were assumed as well as important in this case. The comments on this question contained three types if information:

one group with 9 informants considered that private tutoring is most important in order to achieve success; As many as 9 students claimed also in their comments that good knowledge of mathematic is crucial in achieving success in GAT and one of them wrote very important comment regarding to this issue: “ *To be good in mathematic is very important and that’s why it is natural that majority of private tutors are teachers of mathematics*”. This claim is interesting as it contains information which draws the picture like this: knowledge in mathematic is one of the conditions to achieve success in GAT and it produces necessity of private tutoring in mathematics and GAT. It is significant that 3 persons from 24 who ticked that personal ability as the most decisive in General Ability Test (Table 6 on p.85), wrote in their comments that mathematic develops logical thinking and that’s why mathematic is most important to reach success in GAT. These comments indicate that those informants mean that mathematic develops personal ability. One student, who ticked the answer that personal ability is the most important in success in GAT, commented that verbal part in GAT needs personal ability, but for success in mathematical part one simply needs good knowledge in mathematics.

The second large group with 7 informants considers that personal ability is most important in success in GAT and the third group with 3 entrants claimed that good knowledge from schools is most decisive. Research shows as well that good quality schooling is significant in success in SAT I (Atkinson 2001). The same point of view is expressed by one student, “*If one gets good knowledge in school, there is no need for private tutoring in GAT at all, but unfortunately, it is very seldom. Generally, schools today lack capability to give suitable knowledge to the students due overcrowded classrooms or low qualified teachers*”. This quotation express shortly the same point of view on situation in public schools as it was expressed by chef of NAEC and leader of GAT group at NAEC.

5.3.6. To what extent does GAT promote Equity in access to HE

The results of this question show entrants` attitudes toward using GAT for social equilibrium. Less than half part meant that GAT helps little to achieve equity in access to HE. 14 persons considered that ability test does not help at all to have equity in access to HE and only 11 informants claimed that this test ensure equity in access to HE.

Table 14 results of entrants` opinion in what extend does GAT promote equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia

To what extent, in your opinion, does GAT promote Equity in access to HE"?	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>GAT promotes/ensures equity in access to HE</i>	4	2	2	3	11
<i>It helps little</i>	7	5	3	6	21
<i>It does not help to ensure equity in access to HE</i>	1	5	5	3	14

There were not many informants who made comments on this question. However 15 wrote short notes, where they expressed almost same meaning what question implied. One entrant, who meant that GAT ensures equity in access to HE (according to ticked question) wrote shortly: *“everybody who has intention to take HE, has to be good in mathematics and logic”*.

5.3.7. Students`attitudes about GAT as the only measure for getting scholarships

Three of the informants choose did not write any comment, but 43 used this possibility and gave us remarkable comments. Entrant`s assessment divided into two part: one who appreciated this system of grant distribution and others who were strongly against it. 6 informants from 43 considered that system ensures equity and it is fair to distribute grant according that system. However, 37 entrants argued against such HE financing policy from the state. All of them considered that it will be fairer if state study grant will be based on sum scores and not on GAT. One of entrants wrote: *“I must admit that I am very happy to have grant thanks to GAT, but still I feel that it is unfair; Measure for grant must be sum scores”*. This informant indicated that he has 70% state grant. The justification sounded so: *“I am very positive that GAT was introduced, but I consider very unfair that it is so decisive in grant*

distribution policy. This test give possibility to tick the answers by intuition correctly (she/ he means, random answer) and not throughout thinking or logical minding. The most acceptable grant policy is grant awardees according sum scores”.

5.3.8. Educational background of entrants

The results of this question are very convincing: 40 of 46 informants have used supplementary private tutoring. 11 from 12 most successful entrants have their education background from “secondary school and private tutoring”. It is striking that there were 4 graduates from private schools and from them 3 still used private supplementary tutoring. Only 2 graduates had their education background from public secondary school and both of them were succeeded entrant, one with grant and the second without grant.

Table 15 results of students` education background

<i>What is your educational background</i>	Group 1A. 12 persons Succeeded entrants with grant	Group 2B. 12 persons Succeeded entrants without grant	Group 2A. 10 persons Entrants who failed at exams	Group 2B 12 persons Entrants who succeeded without grant, but cannot pay tuition fees	Total 46 persons
<i>Public secondary school</i>	1	1	---	--	2
<i>Private secondary school</i>	---	1	---	---	1
<i>Public secondary school and private tutoring</i>	11	8	10	11	40
<i>Private secondary</i>		2	---	1	3

<i>school and private tutoring</i>					
--	--	--	--	--	--

The answers on this question indicate once more time the huge scale of shadow education in Georgia. The fact that private tutoring has supplementary character in Georgia is proved again. Such overwhelming spreading of PT has very negative influence on background fairness. The entrants whose parents cannot afford to pay for PT are in disadvantage situation with concern of background fairness.

6. Summing up of Findings and Discussion

In this conclusive part of the study the author wants to sum up core finding of empirical data and discuss results of data analyses. This chapter is divided in two parts: the first part is devoted to sum up the findings of data analyses and the last section is devoted to discuss challenges of equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia illuminated by theories and concepts presented in chapter 2 and 3.

The summative part of chapter 6, accordingly subchapter 6.1, is organized around three research questions:

- *What are the ideas behind introduction of GAT as admission tool*
- *What is the experience of different stake holders of general Ability Test (GAT) and its impact on state study grant distribution policy?*
- *What are general challenges of fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia and to what extend had introduction of GAT influences these challenges*

The main research problem of this study, fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia will be examined from the perspectives on the social functions of higher education and to what extend GAT promotes more fair access to higher education in Georgia. Discussion is divided into two subchapters: in subchapter 6.2. discussion concerns on assessment and admission tools role in promoting of equity and fairness in access to higher education; and subchapter 6.3 presents discussion on conditions for equity and fairness within competitiveness driven education policy in Georgia.

6.1. Summing up of empirical findings

The answer on my first research question, *what are the ideas behind introduction of GAT as admission tool* requires summing up of all issues related to ideas behind introduction of GAT. The data from interviews, questionnaires and policy documents regarded to this question have been summarised and analysed according to the perspectives on social justice.

General Ability Test is assumed as the tool for social justice in Georgia by Minister of education and science of Georgia and leader of GAT group in NAEC. They claimed that test is not private tutor biased and it means that GAT is more equity friendly and fairer to use it for distribution of state study grant. Their main arguments behind introduction of GAT as admission tool is that the test have three main functions: the first ensure fair admission to HE and be less sensitive toward entrants social economic background; the second, to ensure less loses in countries human resources and give admission to them who will be most able to utilize state study grant for higher education and the third is to give chances to entrants from minorities to gain scholarship and get access to HE. Some researchers (Bolinger 2004, Sadlack 2004) have same point of view and argue that such tests are more equity friendly than common high stake examinations. They, as leader of GAT group in NAEC argue that such test measure ability and logical thinking and it is less coachable than common subjects. The idea is noble and serves as a tool to achieve Jacob's model of equal opportunities. Jacobs in his study argues that using of SAT I for university admission is maybe more equity friendly than school achievement scores, but white-black score gap in such testing is still a fact in US. The same gap exists between white and Latino students in United States as well. The explanation of the gap is closely related to SES factor. In this case using of SAT I and other ability tests means simply to justify social differences and give access to HE to "descendants of ruling class" as elite reproduction theorists claim (p. 12).

According to the law on HE of Georgia, State study grant recipients are students who scores high at GAT. The rationale of the law is that GAT is less SES biased and subsequently more equity friendly and simultaneously, ensures better utilisation of countries human resources (Law on HE of Georgia, §. 54, p.48). Some policy makers in Georgia claimed as well that GAT ensures better use of countries human resources as high scores in GAT is in high correlation with high academic achievements of students on their first year of study at HEIs. The logic asserts that the best brains are financed by state and human resources are maximally utilised. However, other researchers (Atkinson 2001, Whetton, McDonald and Newton 2001 and Lohman 2005a, b) claim that, good quality schools and private tutoring in GAT is very important to reach success in GAT. According to Atkinson (2001), courses for preparation for SAT are earning a lot of money by offering assistance in SAT I in USA. The same is happening in Georgia, but with one difference: SAT I preparation courses in US are

paying taxes in the budget, but private tutoring of GAT in Georgia belongs to shadow education.

All policy makers, included ex Minister of Education and sciences and leader of GAT group in Georgia agreed that decisiveness of the General Ability Test in state study grant distribution policy resulted in emergence of private tutoring in this “not coachable” test. This fact is threatening the idea that GAT is tool for social justice. Another stake holders, students, does not experience GAT as more fair and equity friendly admission tool as well: 14 students from 46 answered that GAT does not help to promote fairness and equity in access to HE, 21 students consider that it helps a little and only 11 of them claimed that GAT promotes fairness and equity in access to HE.

As we see fight against private tutoring and thinking toward more fair grant distribution policy is main idea behind introduction of General Aptitude Test for university admission. But it is not only reason: leader of the GAT group in NAEC named that idea behind introduction of General Ability Test was as well to have possibility to evaluate entrants in complex way. The entrants should have possibility to show her/his real ability as in some high mountain regions pupils cannot attend classes for some days or weeks because of heavy snowing. In such a way they have gap in curriculum and in competition for grant based on curriculum based examinations they would find themselves in a challenging situation. Current policy gives them possibility to gain grant based on only GAT scores, throughout that they have to pass through compulsory exams in Georgian language and literature and foreign languages. Of course the fact that because of above mentioned facts those students cannot score very high in curriculum based examination, they still preserve chance to gain state study grant. But in reality, students from high mountain regions have to pass two curriculum based exams in order to get access to academic programmes²⁹ and if they score too low³⁰ in those exams they cannot be admitted to the desired faculty or university. As state

²⁹ To get access to degree programs that are assumed to be more popular in Georgia, entrants have to take admission exams in Georgian language and literature, foreign language and GAT. To be admitted at higher education diploma studies entrant needs to take only GAT.

³⁰ To score low means that they passed it but with very low scores: For example: entrant has to score above 25 (from 100) in order to pass subject test. But it does not imply that student can be accepted at desired faculty (faculties). The competition on public universities is very high and in reality such low scores in subject based tests cannot help to get access to public universities despite of high scores in GAT and gained scholarship.

study grant covers tuition fees only at public HEIs³¹, the competition for places at public universities is commonly extreme high. Despite of the fact that entrants has to get more than 25 point from 100 in order to pass exam, the possibility to get place at public HEIs with so low scores (26) is very low. Such low scores maybe is enough to get place at private HEIs, but tuition fees there are as well at least twice more. To some extend it does not help to score high at GAT and low in other curriculum based examinations because competition is too high at public HEIs. The most common case is that student who scores high at GAT are scoring high as well in other exams in order to be admitted at public HEIs.

The third idea behind introduction of GAT as admission criteria and criteria for distribution of grants is to give minorities' equal opportunity on entrance examination. Grant distribution policy based on sum scores will give minorities' disadvantage starting position. Minorities have right to have primary, secondary and postsecondary education in their languages, but language of instruction at public HEIs is only Georgian³² and the obligation of exam in Georgian language and literature is natural outcome of this policy; future student has to be fluent in language of instruction. But the fact is that they score lower in test in Georgian language and literature and in the case of sum scores based grant distribution they would find themselves in disadvantage situation to fight for state study grant. As I have already mentioned GAT is available in four languages in Georgia and minorities have opportunities to take this test in native language that enhance their chances to score high in GAT. In the case of minorities, GAT (in minority languages) linked financing of higher education is more fair financing policy than grant based on sum scores.

The idea behind introduction of GAT is to develop fair admission tool that ensures fair distribution of state study grant among students. Fair admission procedures in scholarships distribution policy are very important to avoid losses of countries human resources in reference with entire population of the country included minorities. At the end it is worth to

³¹ As I have already mentioned before, student are free to use state study grant in any accredited public or private university, but grant covers only tuition fees at public HEIs, not for private ones. For example: 100% state study grant in 2009 was 2200 GEL and maximum tuition fees at public HEIs were as well 2200GEL. But tuition fees at Caucasian Business School or Black Sea University reaches to 6500GEL. Grant recipients can use state grant at those private universities, but it covers only 2200 GEL from 6500GEL. The gap has to be covered by student.

³² HE is closely connected with job market as well and Georgian is the only language which is used as language of official documents.

name that Georgia has merit based mass access to HE but there are signs of elite access to certain private higher education institutions. As state study grant covers tuition fees at public universities, it results in hard competition for places in public HEIs and entrants in reality need to score high in all three exams: in GAT and in subject based two tests. On the other hand competitions at private HEIs are not very high: applicant who applies for private HEIs can afford to pay user fees without grant or scholarships. It seems so that private universities are reserved for students from middle and upper middle class families. There is total ignorance of means based scholarships for special talented low income students from these universities.

According to Jonstones` table of forms of grants by target and their effectiveness in order to ensure more equal access to HE, researcher argues that grants based on academic promise, or prior high school achievement is attractive for political conservatives but it is questionable use of public funds as grants have minimal effect on student enrollment behavior. The target of such grants is high achieving students in secondary schools; in Georgian reality target is high achieving students in GAT.

The idea behind introduction of GAT as admission criteria and grant distribution tool reveals to be closely connected with education reforms carried out in Georgia in recent years. According to Carnoy`s definition of education reforms driven by globalization (chapter 3.5.1.), finance driven, competitiveness driven and equity driven reforms are interconnected and have complex character. Reform carried out in Georgia is good example of this complexity. “Money follows student “concept of financing high education institutions increased competitiveness among universities. They have to compete for students opposite to the old system when students had to compete for places. On the other side, competition for places in HE is still high, but students have possibility to use their grant in HEIs of their choice. Universities have to be more conscious in offering more job market related programmes and became more aware about quality assurance. They have to meet accreditation criteria set by state in order to reserve right to participate in Unified National Examination. At the same time state have better control over taxpayers money spent on financing brightest students: instead of giving the bulk of money to public HEIs for provision of free education for “budget students”, state financing brightest students itself in the form of state study grant and gives them possibility to use grant in university of their choice.

Second research question: *what is the experience of different stake holders of General Ability Test (GAT) and its impact (role) on state study grant distribution policy*, highlights experiences of different stake holders of GAT and its impact on financial support for higher education. The question consists of two parts and highlights two issues: what is stake holders` experience of General Ability Test and what is impact of GAT on state study grant distribution policy according to policy makers, expert and students.

GAT like SAT I is one of the admission tools in USA and is perceived as more equitable than using only school grades for admission. Test was originally designed as more fair admission tool that had to level out influence of SES factor on access pattern to HE (p. 35-36). The (ex)Minister of Education and Science of Georgia claimed in the interview that GAT is more equity friendly, less sensitive for SES factor and less coachable at the same time. He considered that private tutors had no or very little influence on test results. The same position had leader of GAT group in NAEC. Her experience is that GAT is more complex way to evaluate entrants. Despite of some gap in school curriculum, the test gives opportunity to evaluate entrant `ability to learn. The point of departure in her attitude about General Ability Test is that such admission tools (she meant obligatory exams in Georgian language and literature, foreign language and GAT) can give possibilities to students from low SES families to get state grant and at the same time to have good predicative validity for students` academic success at HEIs. However not minister of education and science and neither leader of GAT group have neglected that new wave of tutors has emerged after launching GAT as admission tool in Georgia. Students experience as well pointed out that private tutors in GAT are as common as in other subjects: students claimed that good private tutor could make difference in GAT results, but more than half of them have answered that personal ability is the most important factor in success in GAT. The questionnaires are rich with information: in addition of tick boxes students had possibility to express their point of view about current question. To some extend these comments highlights some problematic issues: some of the students who ticked the answer that personal ability is most important in achieving success in GAT, at the same time claimed that private tutors play an important role in student`s success in this test.

Statements of Minister of education and science and leader of GAT group that “in the case of GAT tutors have fewer jobs to do” and “there are often parent who desire that their child should have tutor in GAT” means that they(above mentioned state representatives) ignore

results of grant distribution: Almost all students who have passed mathematics as their fourth choice exam have state grant³³. Some of the entrants commented as well, that GAT to some extent gives priority to those entrants who are good in mathematics and it produces a new wave of private tutoring. This information deserves special attention: according to one entrant, the majority of private tutors in GAT are tutors/ teachers of mathematics. This fact underlines the importance of skills in mathematics in success in General Ability Test. It means that there is high probability of growth of private tutoring in mathematics for those entrants who otherwise do not need to invest heavy in mathematics (entrants who is applying for humanities, low and social sciences). Head of NAEC proves the fact that according to statistic of grant distribution pattern according to faculties, majority of those students who have got state grant, were the students who passed mathematic as their fourth exam subject. It is significant as well those 10 entrants (from 46) have ticked answer that mathematic is decisive in success in GAT. The percent is not high itself but 9 students have named in their comments that skills in math is very important to reach success in GAT and 3 of them were students who claimed that they considered personal ability as most decisive in success in GAT (see p.87). Claims, that skills in mathematic is important to be succeeded in GAT, means that it is not fairer to have grant distribution policy based on GAT than other curriculum based examinations.

The second representative of state, leader of GAT group in NAEC meant that reason for such unequal distribution of grant is that most well prepared students are applying on those faculties and explains that those students who are receiving 100% grant are scoring high in other subjects as well. The statistical data resumed by NAEC is telling same story as well: the correlation of GAT scores with scores in other curriculum exams is very high according to NAEC (http://www.naec.ge/files/355_GAT-GEo.pdf). According to research presented in chapter 3.2.1, high scores in curriculum based examinations is SES biased (Baber & Lindsay 2006, p.151). According to Baber & Lindsay, financial support for high education based on merit means give support to students from middle and high income families (Baber & Lindsay 2006, p.151). This fact is in contradiction with the claims that GAT based state grant distribution policy is more equity friendly and fair than financial support based on sum scores. Expert of the field dislikes this policy as well and considered that financial support

³³ http://naec.ge/files/954_2008-charicxul-abiturientta-sia.pdfnsiderable

has to be distributed according to sum scores. However expert had positive attitudes on possibility to take grant in four languages (Georgian, Armenian, Azeri and Russian) and admitted that such policy improved access to HE for minorities.

The introduction of General Ability Test for university admission was innovation for Georgian society and students. The data from questionnaires shows how Georgian students experience GAT. On the question how they experience the test, easy, difficult or very difficult to manage (chapter 5.3.4 p.85) there were only five entrants who considered that GAT is very difficult to manage. This fact indicates that grade of difficultness in GAT is not horrifying Georgian students. Also here was one who claimed in her comment that it is not difficult to manage GAT if one invests hard in mathematic. 14 students experienced that GAT does not help at all in promoting fair access to HE. It is approximately 27% of student who filled questionnaire. The open question about entrants` attitudes on such financial support policy (chapter 5.3.7 p.89) demonstrated that large majority of students (37 from 43 who answered) considered that it will be fairer to distribute study grant based on sum score. Open questions helped me to receive additional information about how students experience GAT and financial support policy based on GAT. The information I have collected in such a way contained valuable information which was sometimes contradictory of that one I have got only from closed questions with multiple choice.

The third research question: *What are general challenges of fairness and equity in access to higher education in Georgia and to what extend had introduction of GAT influences these challenges*, figures out general challenges in equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia. Introduction of GAT in admission anxiety was an attempt to fight with the challenges in secondary education in Georgia and leveling starting position in competition for admission and scholarships.

The major challenge of equity in access to higher education is situation in public schools and spread of private tutoring. These two issues are closely connected and have to be discussed together.

Georgia has adapted Friedman voucher system to finance secondary education³⁴. The model implies to increase competition among public schools, and between public schools and private ones. The voucher is given to any child and parent can choose to redeem it in any school (public or private one). The policy gives initiatives to schools to improve their teaching quality and attract as many as possible pupils. The policy was invented to improve school quality, as previous system of financing public schools were considered less productive and less efficient: low quality of teaching, not initiatives to attract many pupils, universal spreading of private tutoring in the upper secondary school, lost interest from teachers side to upgrade their professional skills were characteristics of old system. That is why it is important to underline that problem of low quality of public schools and widespread of private tutoring were heritage from old system and are not products of vouchers systems in schools. So, it will be unfair to put blame of private tutoring and low quality of public schools on voucher system alone. But all three stake holders in this case policy makers, expert and students are pointing out together that reform launched in order to improve efficiency of financing of the secondary schools in Georgia did not result in substantial changes.

The data collected via statistical data collected by MES, interviews and questionnaires indicates that general challenges of equity and fairness in access to HE in Georgia are: low quality of public schools in Georgia and almost universal spread of private tutoring. These two reasons are of course very closely connected with each other.

Chief of NAEC claims, the situation have not been improved after introduction Friedman`s voucher system in financing of secondary education of Georgia. The system cased in spiral declining of many schools and spiral upgrading of few schools according to the chief of NAEC. From nearly 2300 public schools in Georgia, about 1600 are deficit schools and cannot cover basic expenses.³⁵ In such difficult financial troubles schools have no possibility to improve schools quality by attracting better teachers or improve infrastructure. Middle class parents, dissatisfied with school quality are moving their children in private schools or

³⁴ Using word:” secondary education” I mean always primary, low secondary and upper secondary education.

³⁵ Source of information is interview with chief of NAEC. Unfortunately, official data about deficit schools is not available on official web-page of MES.

are willing to pay money for private tutors. The consequence is that weak (financially) schools are losing pupils together with good teachers and consequently money and became more and more devastated. The policy gives initiative to middle class parents to move their children in private schools. The vouchers can cover a part of expenses and they are more likely to pay difference between voucher and tuition fees. Statistical data published by MES proves once again this fact (see Figure 1.) that teachers, parents and pupils themselves are more satisfied with the quality of private schools than teachers, parents and pupils in public schools. The thinking back introduction of voucher system is the same: to gave initiatives to parent to send their children to private schools as private schools are assumed to offer better quality of education than public schools. As the result of this policy, students from low SES families who cannot afford to pay the difference between voucher and tuition fee at private schools are in disadvantage situation, as quality of secondary education is decisive at UNE. The only way out from this situation for some low income parents are to pay for private tutoring for their children at the last year of upper secondary school. But the situation is even worth if the family cannot afford to pay for private tutoring at all and numbers of such parents are expected to be very high as well. Student from such families are less expected to try to pass unified national examinations as their chances in competitive examinations are very low.³⁶ One of the indicators of this trend is that from the students who filled questionnaires, very high number 43 of 46 confirmed that they have used PT. The majority of those students (40 from 43) were gradulators of public schools, but 3 of them were gradulators of private schools and still used PT in order to increase their chances in access to HE. From three students who did not used PT one is graduator of private school and only two informants have their educational background from only public school, and it is worth to mention that both of them were succeeded at UNE : one with grant and the second without scholarship (table 8, p.89).

After summing up all information collected via policy documents, interviews and questionnaires it is possible to state that main challenge of equity and fairness in access to HE in access to HE in Georgia is low quality of public schools and consequently wide spreading of private tutoring according to informants of the study. Private lessons costs are high and low income families cannot afford to pay. GAT is perceived to be less sensitive for

³⁶ The official data to proof this case does not exist.

tutoring. But influence of private tutors in this “not coachable” test is perceived to be high according to students. The rapid growth of number of private tutors in General Ability Test is threatening the idea that this test can level out playing ground for low SES students. Quality of schooling is another determinant of success in such tests: policy makers are underlining that to be a good pupil in secondary school is one of the major determinants in success in GAT. The quality of many public schools in Georgia is not sufficient according to the minister of education and science of Georgia and chief of NAEC (p.73). Chief of NAEC mentioned that this fact fuels private tutoring and the best way out is to improve quality in secondary schools. No parent will be willing to pay for private tutors if they are confident that qualities of schools are sufficient. Simultaneously, GAT implies a certain level in mathematics, namely at the stage of basic education (up to 10th grade). But if there is not sufficient quality in many schools than parent has to pay for private tutoring in mathematic despite of pupil/student is applying to humanities, social sciences or economies. This fact fuels private tutoring in mathematic for those entrants who otherwise should not had a need of PT in mathematic.

Leader of GAT group have mentioned that teaching process in upper secondary schools are often very poor in many schools: majority of students are taking private lessons because of coming admission examinations and have no time to attend regular classes. Teachers claim that they are not motivated to offer quality lessons by such total nonattendance in upper secondary schools. And students themselves complain that they are not motivated to attend classes in upper secondary schools because of poor quality of teaching. There is no reason to doubt in their claims. Students are seeking more quality education than they can receive in overcrowded classrooms in order to compete for places in higher education and state study grant. Teachers are not motivated to upgrade their teaching qualifications because of extreme low wages in public schools. On other side they are motivated to offer private tutoring against payment in order to reach minimum living standards. It arises as well some ethical issues that are not going to be discussed in this thesis.

6.2. Pitfalls and promises with GATin admission policy

The main problem that is figured out in this study is fairness and equity in admission to HE. Notion of equity and fairness is closely linked with assessment tools in admission policies.

This subchapter explores the contribution of assessment and admission tools in achieving equal and fair access to higher education.

The public debates in 2004 in Georgia about transformation of old decentralised admission system to undergraduate programmes with new totally centralised unified national examinations was fuelled with anger and confusion from university professors. Confusing novelty was introduction of General Ability Test as one of the compulsory exams in Georgia. GAT is standardised test that gives possibility to rank students according to their scores or ability. The questionable is to what extent is scores gained in GAT or SAT I equivalent to person's ability and what it measures in reality. The problem is that notion of "ability" is often conjoined with discourse "merit" (Leathwood 2005) and is closely related to attempt of the government to use "ability" based tests to justify social inequality (Bourdieu 1974, p.42). The quality of schooling, in Georgian case private tutoring, and social economic status of student's family are documented to have influence on scores of GAT and SAT I (chapter 5.3.8; Lewis, 2000; Marcus 2003). GAT is not the only admission criteria in Georgia, but scholarships are directly linked only with its scores. This policy is fed up with thinking about social justice and equality in higher education participation. Information brochure about GAT names that scholarships are linked to GAT because it gives equal opportunity to all entrants. The assertion that SAT I/GAT are less coachable and are less biased to students social economic status (Bollinger 2004, p.8; Linn 2004, p.145; www.naec.ge/files/355_GAT-Geo.pdf) creates legal basis for current policy for financial aid in higher education in Georgia. Thinking toward more socially fair and equal admission to higher education that is equally achievable for students from divers social economic background and various ethnical groups, made basis for developing assessment and admission tools for university admission in Georgia, namely the mixture of curriculum based examinations and GAT. Subject based tests have high correlation with SES (Stringer 2008, p.55) and accordingly, to private tutoring, but aptitude tests like GAT are perceived to be less coachable. Conclusion made by NAEC based on analyses of GAT results in 2005 and 2006 sounds that GAT discriminates entrants on basis of ability. The data collected in Georgia via questionnaires shows that respective part of the students meant that personal ability is decisive in success in GAT, but the comments made by same students revealed that they often mixed personal ability in to be good in mathematics. The fact that majority of high scores in GAT had passed mathematic as their forth free choice exam at UNE proves the fact that knowledge in mathematic influences

scores in GAT. Take departure from this fact it is worth to ask if GAT based financial aid policy for higher education creates fair and equity friendly admission policy or it produces other type of inequalities in certain countries and for certain type of students, namely for them who applies for the faculties of humanities, arts and social sciences. In Georgian case GAT based grant distribution policy made pressure to score high in GAT and in order to manage it, students began to invest in mathematic in the form of private tutoring.

GAT linked scholarships means merit based scholarships. Merit based admissions/scholarships suggest that who works the hardest are rewarded the most (Baber & Lindsay 2006, p.151). This thinking paves way to theory on social mobility that is crucial for any states future development. State has to ensure conditions for social mobility. The most common way of social mobility is access to HE for entire population. At the same time public resources for free HE in the forms of grants and scholarships has to be distributed to them who can utilize it properly. There is clear evidence that students from middle and high income families score highest at exams as well as have highest achievement from upper secondary schools (Baber & Lindsay 2006, p.151). High correlation of GAT results with subject based test results proves this fact once again.

Notion of fairness in admission anxiety³⁷

When non competitive model of equality of opportunity is in practice unimaginable (Jacobs 2004, p.13) then equal opportunity shaped by fair competitions can compensate for it. As discussed in chapter 3.1, Jacobs presents three dimensions of fairness which interplay in different ways in different contexts. For this study it is important to conceptualize it in the Georgian context. Combination of procedural, background and stake fairness creates basis for reaching fair admission to higher education.

Procedural fairness is the first stage in developing fair admission tools. Fair admission procedure is heavily relied on standardised tests (Jacobs 2004). The examinations has long tradition in Georgia, but the form of oral examinations or combination of written and oral

³⁷ "Anxiety" in the context of my study refers to education policy and not to students' performance anxiety or to psychological stress.

exams as admission tool were most common assessment tool in soviet and post soviet Georgia until 2005. Absent of standardised and anonym testing created procedural unfairness before introduction of UNE. Contemporary admission policy in Georgia is regulated by fair admission procedures based on standardised tests and it means that at least the first stage toward equality of opportunities defined by Jacobs is fulfilled.

The second and most important condition in reaching equality of opportunity is background fairness (Jacobs 2004). The notion of background fairness in Georgian reality is closely connected with status equality defined by legislation. The law on secondary education gives equality of opportunity to all graduates of upper secondary schools despite of social status or ethnicity to participate in UNE. Status equality (which is corn stone of background fairness) is important perspective in access policy and creates more fair distribution of scarce public resources among competitors. Introduction of GAT based state study grant distribution among the students is a policy toward creating status equality in admission examinations in Georgia (GAT has to compensate for low quality of schooling and not availability of private tutoring). Throughout the study it is defined that relying only on creating of status equality through GAT is not sufficient in achieving real equity in admission to higher education in Georgia.

Stake fairness is the last stage on creation of three dimensional model of equality of opportunities and has possibilities to fill gap created by admission policy. Dimension of stake fairness can compensate inequalities resulted by merit based enrolment and merit based grant distribution policy: stake fairness implies that government or self universities can issue certain avenues for certain disadvantage groups who lacks access to selective universities or degree programmes. This dimension in Georgian reality of admission anxiety is conceptualised by grant distribution policy that implies partial financing of students according to their scores³⁸. As merit based financial aid policy in HE is closely connected to social economic status of the students, absent of means based scholarships for higher education issued by the state or selective universities creates unfair conditions for socially disadvantaged students to gain access to selective public or private universities.

³⁸ Partial financing of students in HE in Georgia refers to availability of 100%, 70%, 50 % and 30% of grants according to GAT scores.

6.3. Challenges for equity and fairness in access to higher education within competition driven education policy

Higher education has ultimate function for social mobility and countries future development in globalised world (Altbach, 2000). Throughout opposing point of views about role of education on social mobility (Brennen & Naidoo 2008; in Moore 2004), expanded higher education despite of existing inequalities made impressive progress (Altbach 2004). In last decades neo-liberal thinking in education advocated by WB and IMF became influential (Kless 2008). Many developing countries and countries in transition had to lend money for carrying out reforms in education from this institution; consequently they had to implement the policy these organisations were suggesting.

Georgian education reform launched in the years 2004-2005, transformed not only entrance examinations for university admission, but covered total education system of the country. Transformation of old decentralised university entrance examinations with centralised Unified national Examinations for University Admission were carried out with the slogan “fairness and equity in access to HE”. In order to evaluate challenges of fairness and access to HE, there is a need to understand the educational policy in the country and its wider influential context.

Globalisation is often interpreted as increased competition started from national state level down to competition among primary schools in the country and it is not surprising that, reforms driven by globalisation emphasises heavily on competition. Voucher schemes based financing of secondary education in Georgia is example of dealing with challenges existing in secondary education³⁹ with neo-liberal “prescription”: rise quality of public schooling by increased competition among public and private sector and within public schools (Kless 2009). Voucher based schemes of financing of secondary education encourages middle and high income parents to send their children to private school, on other side, voucher system encourages schools to rise quality and be more competitive (Kless 2009). Research conducted by *Gorbi* on equality of education offered by public and private sector in Tbilisi reveals that teachers, parents and pupils are more satisfied with quality of education in

³⁹ I must underline that challenges in secondary education in Georgia existed before introduction of voucher schemes, but situation have not improved at all after launching vouchers in secondary schools.

private schools (*figure 1*). The customers of private schools are assumed to be students from middle class or high income families as costs of private secondary education is considerable higher than value of voucher (Kless 2008). It is worth to name once again that quality of schooling is documented to have effect on SAT I/GAT results (Whetton, McDonald, Newton 2001) and in this situation socially disadvantaged students who have no resources to go to private schools or afford private tutoring have less chances to be succeeded at UNE. Second negative impact of “voucherisation” is spiral declining of many public schools (Kless 2008). Generally, Georgian education policy is heavily relied on competition: among schools and competitive admission policy to HE based on merit. Education reforms launched in Georgia in 2005 can be called as competition driven reform than equity driven reform throughout the fact that reform in university admission examinations had emphasis on “fairness and equity in access to HE”. It is worth to admit that competitiveness driven reform can be combined with equity driven and finance driven reforms in education as educational reforms are complex and combines different discourses (Carnoy, 1999). But heavily relied merit based access and absent of stake fairness in form of means based scholarships for low SES students, leads to uneven distribution of country`s scarce resources for HE in Georgia.

High demand and limited supply to higher education in combination with low quality of public schools fuels private tutoring that have negative impact on equity (Darell & Dunder 2002). Prior research on admission exams in Turkey has showed that, *“probability of applicants from lower socio-economic group passing the competitive exams has been estimated to be three times lower than applicants from high income groups. Moreover the possibilities for private tutoring and possibilities for attending higher quality private or public secondary schools have reinforced the fact that students from higher income groups are much more likely to pass admission exams”*(Darell & Dunder 2002, p.171). As no reports on the influence of PT in Georgia exist, we can turn to a Turkish report to shed light on this issue. This report shows that students who took PT were more successful at in examinations than students who did not take such tutoring (ISYM, 1992; cited in Darell & Dunder). However, problem of PT takes its origin in secondary education and education policy makers has to have focus on supply of quality public secondary education to entire population in order to fight with private tutoring and ensure more equity in access to HE.

Choice of HEIs and programmes is important determinant of fairness and equity in access to HE: In many developing countries most prestigious private higher education institutions are

inaccessible for students from lower SES families, because of high tuition fees at those HEIs. This problem is worth to be researched separately, but it must be admitted that inaccessibility of such institutions can result in limited employability potential of low SES students after graduation (Darell & Dunder 2002). Hence to this problem historical perspectives of access to HE will be revealed:

In the 21st century, which according to Trow (2000) is characterized by well developed mass access to HE and partly developed universal access to HE, the access policies in Georgian higher education still shows signs of elite access. The main characteristic for elite access to HE is access based on social class and private contracts (Trow 2000). In contemporary world there is less chances to get access based only on private contracts or on basis of aristocratic descendant. However, inaccessibility of some private HEIs for low SES students, even brightest ones, gives possibility to conclude that elite access do exists, but is transformed according to rules of 21th century. Throughout that all entrants can apply to all accredited HEIs of their choice, middle or low SES students (and I must admit that nearly 70% of applicants are among them)⁴⁰ have not chances to study there even they are recipients of state study grant. To apply to those HEIs makes no sense, as tuition is three - four times higher than scholarship and private HEIs are not offering scholarships for low income, but brightest students. To look at historical perspectives of access “*Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge preserved their exclusive status by requiring Greek and Latin for admissions, courses only offered by a small set of secondary schools catering to the wealthy*”(Trow 2006, p.147), Georgian prestigious private HEIs require high tuition fees that makes those universities unreachable for majority of students. Expensive and prestigious private universities are common everywhere. However, it is widespread practice in developed countries that very prestigious HEIs have also high aid for low income students. Such regulation gives greater institutional and programme choice for low income students and there is no reason to true that the same practice will give different outcome in Georgia (Darell & Dunder 2002).

⁴⁰ There is no official evidence to proof it but tuition fees of some very prestigious HEIs are not accessible for the majority of population in Georgia.

7. Conclusion

Having analysed findings from policy documents, qualitative interviews and students' questionnaires, author of this thesis has possibility to draw out certain conclusions. In this final chapter I will summarise what the study has shown, suggest some directions for further research, and finally provide a short note on the development in Georgia since the data for this study was collected.

7.1. Concluding on the research questions

The first research question concerns the ideas behind introduction of GAT as an admission tool. The policy documents figure out that idea behind this policy was fight against social inequality. As educational outcomes in subject based test are perceived to be closely connected with SES of the students, GAT is perceived less SES biased by certain group of researchers and some policy makers in Georgia. However analyze revealed that high scores in GAT is closely connected with high scores in other subject based tests. It means that they are as SES biased as subject based tests. Private tutors perceived to be major threat of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia and introduction of GAT scores for grant distribution was presumed to have positive effect by some policy makers. But high correlation between GAT results and subject based test results in Georgia proves that the goal is not reached.

One of the most important functions of any test which is decisive in grant distribution is to ensure less loses of countries human resources and ensure most complex assessment of entrants. Georgian entrants` GAT results are in high correlation with subject based test results and it ensures good prediction for their academic success at higher education institution. In the brochure about GAT (www.naec.ge/files/355_GAT-GEo.pdf), NAEC states that purpose of using GAT as admission criteria is to predict possible success of students in higher education institution. If we take into consideration that merit based distribution of grants has to have good predictive possibilities (Stringer 2008, p.55), this purpose of using GAT is achieved.

One of the ideas behind of linking GAT to scholarships was giving opportunity for receiving scholarships to non-Georgian school leavers. Availability of GAT in four languages creates equal condition for Georgian and non- Georgian entrants to compete for grants. Sum scores based grant distribution policy, that was highly appreciated by chief of NAEC and majority of students would have negative impact on minorities' chances to compete for scholarships.

The second research question shows different stake holders experience of GAT. The data analysed reveals that there are different point of views about GAT among different stake holders: Ex- Minister of Education and Science of Georgia and leader of GAT group in NAEC experience that using of GAT contributes more equity and fairness in access to HE and it is not as SES biased as curriculum based exams. They perceive that private tutors play considerable role in students' success in curriculum based examinations, but their role in General Ability Test is very limited. This claim is in contradiction with document published by NAEC where centre claimed there are high correlation between high scores in GAT and high scores in other subject exams. The same was repeated by leader of GAT group. It means that high scorers in other subject score high in GAT as well and vv. High scores in curriculum based examinations are known to be very SES biased according research (see at p.33) and according to policy makers as well (p.88, 89). Logical analyse of this facts indicates that GAT is as SES biased in Georgia as curriculum based examinations. Students attitudes about GAT based grant distribution policy is very critical: 43 students used their right to express their point of view about GAT as the only measure for getting state study grant and 37 of them stated that they wished that scholarships were linked to sum scores and not only to GAT. Only 6 students were satisfied t by current policy of grant distribution. It is worth to mention that I have not included question about nationality in my questionnaire, but I consider that majority of students were ethnic Georgians.

The third research question investigates more general challenges of fairness and access to HE. The empirical data analyse indicates on following challenges in access to Higher education in Georgia: Low quality of public schooling, universal spread of private tutoring, education policy that favours competition and remains no space for means based scholarships, and new type of elite access to the most prestigious private universities. To some extend there are some objective reasons that creates bed conditions to implement more equity friendly access to HE in Georgia. Challenges in secondary education are not new ones: they are rooted in insufficient resources for secondary education. However reform in

secondary education and changing school financing system with voucher schemes based financing of secondary education did not result positive changes. The policy that promotes increased competition among schools and gives financial rewarding for attracting many students, results in spiral declining of many schools and spiral upgrading of fewer schools.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned analyses of facts I assume that competitiveness driven reform has very strong position in Georgian education reform. In this framework, it is difficult to improve accessibility of HE for disadvantage groups. Georgian policy makers thinking toward equity driven reform is manifested in using of GAT scores in financing brightest students instead of sum scores from GAT and subject based test. However, GAT's role in promoting of equity and fairness in access to HE is very limited within competitiveness driven education reform.

7.2. Suggestions for future research

Considerable time is spent on narrowing of research scope and collecting the data. It is impossible to cover all issues related to equity in access to HE in the study like this. Unfortunately, there are even more challenges in employability of graduate students from low income families in Georgia and in entire world. This problem is equally important for developing and developed countries and is better to be studied in comparative perspective. Research shows that prestigious private universities are in practice inaccessible for low income students that have influence on their employability potential after graduation. An interesting aspect of my study, for the wider international field of research on educational policies and systems, is that Georgia represents a country with competing discourses and societal models that 'live simultaneously' – between Russian and western influence.

7.3. Afterword

During my writing of this master thesis, admission policy to HE have changes three times. The first change happened in 2009, when NAEC announced about introduction of fourth compulsory exam according to the faculty entrants were applying. For example: entrant who applied for humanities, have to pass the fourth compulsory exam in literature, or entrant who

applied for economies have to pass mathematic in addition with exams in foreign language, Georgian language and literature and GAT. But grant distribution policy remained the same. Justification of this change was: focus on more subjects and more interest to attend classes in upper secondary school. The second change touches admission exams in 2010 and it was announced by NAEC in October 2009. This time change occurred in grant distribution policy: State study grant will be linked with sum scores in admission for 2010, according to new adjustment. And the last change was announced after two months from announcement of previous change: Admission examinations were replaced in secondary schools: all gradulators have to pass minimum limit of competence in all eight subjects in order to get school graduation certificate. The scores applicants gain through these examinations determines their access to HE. Sum scores in selective subjects (according to the faculty of entrant`s choice) are linked with scholarships. New reform is directed to improve attendance in upper secondary schools and increase importance of schooling for admission examinations on the expense of declining of private tutoring. It belongs to the future to see how these reform initiatives work out, and I hope they will attract the interest of researchers.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1. What do you consider is a main determinant of success at Unified National Examination?

Secondary school private tutoring both of them

Comment: _____

2. How do you characterise Unified national Examination?

Very unfair and corrupt Very fair and equal Better than previous system

Comment: _____

3. What is a faculty of your choice?

Economic/BA Law Humanities mathematic and natural sciences

Medicine Social Sciences

4. Do you consider that GAT as:

Easy to manage difficult very difficult

Comment: _____

5. What do you think is decisive in success in GAT?

Personal ability secondary school private tutoring

Good knowledge of mathematic

Comment: _____

6. To what extent, in your opinion, does GAT promote Equity in access to HE"?

Strong degree it helps a little it does not help to secure equity in access to
HE

Comment:

7. What is your opinion about General Ability test as the only measure for getting State Study Grant?

8. What is your age?

9. Gender: female male

10. What is you background as an entrant?

Public secondary school Public secondary school and private tutoring Private secondary school private secondary school and private tutoring

Appendix 2

Interview Guide

- To what extent provides introduction of GAT fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia.
- Why are scholarships linked with GAT?
- Do you consider that GAT favourites mathematic
- Do you consider UNE as fair and equity friendly in access to HE?
- What are main challenges of fairness and equity in access to HE in Georgia?
- What are the results of current grant distribution policy?

