

Sunday, October 10, 2010

[Survey of PhD Students in Georgia](#)

We recently undertook a small online survey of PhD students at Georgia's two major universities. This comes at a time when significant programs and support are already available to Georgian PhD students: [CSS](#) is launching a new PhD program, [ASCN](#) is offering significant research opportunities, the US Embassy will launch a program with Ilia State University, and now there is [CARTI](#) as a further opportunity.

The survey was done in Georgian, had 108 respondents, who probably are representative of active and engaged PhD students in Tbilisi, by virtue of responding to the request for participation. One should, of course, be cautious about generalizing from the results.

What, then, about existing students? 23 respondents said they had earned their degree abroad, while 75 said they had not. English seems in the ascendancy: 83 respondents said they had professional competency in English, compared with 66 in Russian, 12 in German and 6 in French.

PhD students are busy, and not only with their dissertation: 44 respondents said that they were teaching at university, and 81 respondents said they also had another job outside university. The jobs outside university are distributed across public-sector (33), NGO (25), private sector (20), and other (17). This illustrates that it may be difficult for students to focus on their research in the way that many Western PhD students can.

Libraries are surpassed by electronic resources. Only seven respondents say they use libraries. Free electronic materials are used by 31 respondents, and electronic catalogues such as EBSCO by 21, with 12 saying that they have a password to electronic libraries of universities abroad. Eleven respondents say they get materials from abroad. No one says that they use sources that exist in their department.

The upgrading of skills of Georgian professors at universities is seen as necessary or very necessary by 74 of the respondents. The PhD students themselves attend a fair amount of trainings. The last training they attended was on their field of specialization (28), teaching methods (26), research methods (22) and academic writing (5). 27 respondents said that this last training took place abroad, illustrating that PhD students enjoy reasonable levels of mobility.

And which skills do PhD students want to upgrade the most? 50 respondents told us they need training research methods, 21 want training in their particular field of specialization, 13 in teaching methods, and 10 in academic writing.

To be sure, this was the survey we organized in a little more than an afternoon, primarily out of curiosity. It suggests that more systematic work should be done to understand how to develop Georgia's research capacity. Given the amount of investment into PhD programs and research support, the PhD students themselves are curiously underresearched.