

BOLOGNA SYSTEM IN ARMENIA. THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE





Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Office in Yerevan



Bologna System in Armenia. The Student Perspective

Survey Report

Yerevan, 2015

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The views expressed in the study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of OSCE or OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Creation of the European higher education area without borders has become a vision of each rational person for more than a decade. However, in view of a number of social and economic developments taking place in Europe, we see certain shortcomings in the system. European students have been supporting the establishment of the idea of common higher education area since the moment of introduction of the Bologna Process, although they continuously face difficulties, limitations and failures of the system occurring in the course of its development.

Being the biggest representative body of students at the national level, the Armenian National Students' Association (ANSA) undertook the assessment of level of awareness among the possible broad range of students with regard to the Bologna Process, as well as detection of students' attitude towards the latter.

The opportunity of presenting the students' viewpoint on the higher education reforms on the run in Armenia for already a decade to the broad scope of co-partners in the area of higher education was provided under the high auspices of Office in Yerevan of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe.

We would like to express our gratitude to all state, national, international organizations, personnel of higher educational institutions, all students who participated in the research on a voluntary basis and free of charge and research coordinators for their support provided during the research.

We are grateful for showing interest to our research work and are hopeful that you will gain an interesting and full picture about the research topic.

Sincerely,
Armenian National Students' Association

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Preamble

Building and ensuring that the education system operates and performs its functions effectively is one of the pillars of stability and development of any country. Nowadays both developed and developing countries are trying to find the road to the best education system worldwide since given the rapid dynamics of current life each system must adapt to changes to gain tangible results.

The aforementioned problem is especially noticeable and appreciable for education system of the Republic of Armenia since the development of education system is deemed as undisputed guarantee of building the knowledge-based economy. At present, the Bologna Education System, which has proved its effective applicability in different European countries, has been chosen as a means of solution to this problem providing in a definite manner. However, it is also important to understand whether the education system effectively operating in the European developed countries will be equally effectively operational also in the Republic of Armenia.

The foundation of the European Higher Education Area is underlying on *the quality of higher education*. Quality assurance and elaboration, operation, supervision and assessment of its effective mechanisms have essential significance in the higher education system. Different educational institutions ensure the quality of provided education through internal or external mechanisms (or through both of them simultaneously). Advanced education institutions equally employ both internal and external mechanisms of quality assurance.

The quality assurance is performed through procedures elaborated jointly by higher educational institutions, national education systems and quality assurance international agencies. The quality of education immensely depends on academic independence, academic and scientific activity and competition. This process may succeed only when peculiarities of institutional culture of the certain educational institution are taken into account. This internal culture fosters respective motivation and promotes efficiency of quality assurance mechanisms.

Effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms requires the presence of the following elements:

- Quality assurance agencies;
- Transparent and precise standards and expectations;
- Studies on their own quality assurance conducted by academic or educational institution and self-assessment (different quality assurance agencies and educational institutions have different approaches to the matter whether the entire institution should be assessed or separate programs and subdivisions);
- External studies by visiting experts;
- Written recommendations;
- Public accountability.¹

¹ Quality and Effectiveness of Measures for Improvement of Qualification of Professors (upon YSU example), A. Anapiosyan, H. Hovhannisyanyan, A. Mejlumyan, Yerevan, 2015.

European ministers have committed to promote the further improvement of quality of educational institutions at national and European levels. Emphasis is made on the demand of elaborating mutually agreed standards and methods of quality assurance.

The ground of construction of the European Higher Education Area is *mobility* of students, professors, researchers and education administrators. Ministers highlight its significance not only in scientific and cultural but also in political, public and economical fields. They are pleased to note that mobility is growing in the periods between the ministerial meetings, undoubtedly also with the help of programs funded by the European Union. They also consider necessary to take steps to increase mobility of students and to improve quality.

Ministers stress the importance of European Credit Transfer System in facilitating student mobility and developing international educational programs. The European Credit Transfer System is becoming the common ground for national credit system.

Emphasis is made on *mutual recognition of education qualifications and the validation of system of comparable educational degrees*. Ministers highlight the importance of Lisbon Convention which should be validated by all signatory countries of the Bologna Process. ENIC/NARIC, the network of academic mutual recognition and mobility services network, is called to support the implementation of Convention together with national authorities.

Ministers welcome also the *participation of higher educational institutions and students in the Bologna Process* by noting that the guarantee of success is the engagement of all participants of education process.

Emphasis is made in introduction of *European dimensions in higher education*. Ministers specify that additional modules, training course and curricula are being developed in view of European dimensions in response to Prague Communiqué.

The development of *attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area* is underscored. Ministers pursue to reinforce the attractiveness and availability of the European Higher Education Area. They are ready to grant scholarships to students from the third world.

Ministers highlight the opportunity of higher education for *lifelong learning*. They are taking steps to maintain a joint lifelong learning policy and to encourage higher educational institutions and all related organizations to expand opportunities of lifelong learning in the higher education system, including recognition of previous education. They stress that such actions must be an inseparable part of higher education process.²

Armenia, joining the Bologna Process in 2005, initiated implementation of a number of fundamental reforms in the field of education and in particular in higher education. Nowadays persons responsible for higher education constantly single out the importance of introduction of effective system and confirm that Armenia is implementing this process at the satisfactory level.

Nevertheless, as evidenced by a number of researches and experts, students have

² Berlin Communiqué, “Construction of the European Higher Education Area”, Joint Declaration of Ministers responsible for higher education in Europe, Berlin, September 13, 2003.

a slightly different viewpoint with regard to this matter. The Bologna Process has already a history of a decade in Armenia and considerations of students, the most important beneficiaries, prove that there are sufficient shortcomings in the process of introduction of the system. In this respect, conducting of inquiry which reveals students' viewpoints on the Bologna Process and its urgent key issues in Armenia is in demand.

By taking into account opinions of as many students of Armenia as possible, the objective of research entitled "Bologna System. The Student Perspective" was to present the attitude of the latter related to introduction of the Bologna system, the current situation and key issues of the Bologna Process in Armenia.

The Research Methodology

Methods of Data Collection

The objective of the research on “Bologna System in Armenia. The Student Perspective” was to detect students’ awareness and attitude towards the education reforms implemented in Armenia.

The method of quantitative inquiry was selected to conduct the research through tailored questionnaire. A questionnaire comprising of 104 questions was prepared for that purpose in which the questions were distributed in seven sections according to the key provisions of Bologna system on:

- Tertiary education system;
- Academic mobility;
- Social inclusion;
- Student-centered learning;
- Credit accumulation and transfer system;
- Quality assurance process;
- Lifelong learning.

The Armenian National Students’ Association (ANSA) submitted the questionnaire to National Center of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQA), RA Ministry of Education and Science and international experts. The questionnaire was modified and edited based on their comments.

The inquiry was performed using the method of face-to-face interviews.

The research was conducted in the period of October 2014–April 2015.

Structure and Justification of Sampling

To ensure the accuracy of sampling, the representatives of ANSA and OSCE contacted the RA Ministry of Education and Science and all Armenian HEIs in order to receive statistical data on students’ number. The MOES and Armenian HEIs supported in implementation of the research by providing data on students’ number according to education degrees (bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and post-graduate study) and to HEIs (state, interstate, non-state).

The main cluster of the research was 108.880 students. The sampling cluster was 1723. In case of such volume of sampling, the probability of error is 2.8% and the range of confidence is 99%. These figures ensured the representativeness of sampling and allow expecting high trustworthiness of conclusion made.

The stratified (multistage) random sampling was applied. At the first stage of sampling the number of students was divided among state, non-state and interstate HEIs according to the percentage ratio, and then the ratio was extended to sampling cluster (1723). The sampling covered all state and interstate HEIs, and 2 HEIs were chosen out of non-state HEIs. In general, the research included 37 Armenian HEIs.

Before launching the research, contacts were made with rectors of all HEIs

and their consent to conduct the inquiry was received. No inquiry was conducted in the Armenian National Agrarian University and International Academy of Education (“Haybusak” Yerevan University) since they refused to participate in the research. Therefore, Eurasia International University was included in the sampling.

31% of respondents were male and 69% female. No limitation in terms of gender was exercised in conducting the inquiry and it was based on the principle of maintaining proportionality. The main reason of sharp difference between female and male representatives was due to the fact that more cases of refusing the participation in inquiry was registered among male respondents, as well as showing “irresponsible”, non-serious behavior in connection with questions in the course of interviews (due to which the questionnaires were considered as void).

Among participants of the inquiry 28% of students studied on a state-funded basis and 72% were included in the self-paid learning system.

The distribution of sampling according to HEIS is as follows:

Table 1. Research Sampling and Distribution according to HEIS

	Frequency	%
State HEIs		
Yerevan State University /YSU/	309	17.9
Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan	188	10.9
Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences	65	3.8
Armenian National Agrarian University (Vanadzor Branch, Sisian Branch)/	14	0.8
Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts	18	1
Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography /YSITC/	19	1.1
National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia	61	3.5
Yerevan State Medical University after M.Heratsi	111	6.4
Yerevan State Conservatory named after Komitas	33	1.9
State Engineering University of Armenia	140	8.1
Public Administration Academy of the RA	10	0.6
Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture	47	2.7
Armenian State University of Economics /ASUE/	154	8.9
Vanadzor State University	59	3.4
Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute	116	6.7

	Frequency	%
Goris State University	31	1.8
Gavar State University	41	2.4
Vanadzor Branch of State Engineering University of Armenia	9	0.5
Kapan Branch of State Engineering University of Armenia	5	0.3
Ijevan Branch of YSU	28	1.6
Gyumri Branch of ASUE	15	0.9
Yeghehnadzor Branch of ASUE	2	0.1
Gyumri Branch of YSC	3	0.2
Vanadzor Branch of YSITC	3	0.2
Gyumri Branch of YSITC	3	0.2
Interstate HEIs		
French University of Armenia	17	1
Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University	48	2.8
American University of Armenia	21	1.2
Non State HEIs		
Yerevan Northern University	113	6.6
Eurasia International University	40	2.3
Total	1723	100

In the second stage of sampling, the sampling cluster was divided according to groups of bachelor's, master's and post-graduate studies following the data provided by the HEIs.

The departments were preliminary classified according to their types/orientation (e.g. humanitarian, social, natural sciences, etc). A number of departments were chosen out of them through the random number generator. Specializations and training course were also randomly chosen upon the same principle.

The sampling step for selection of respondents was defined as 3, i.e. the first, the fourth, the seventh and next students according to the third step were selected from students' registers. Where selected participants were absent or rejected participation, 1 was added to the sampling step, i.e. each second, fourth, eighth participant was selected and it was continued in that way.

Data Analysis Methods

- ✓ Answers to open questions included in the questionnaire were codified;
- ✓ The analysis of findings was conducted using SPSS statistical software package.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms

The following steps were conducted to perform the quality supervision of research:

- ✓ A pilot research was conducted in the results of which the gaps existing in the questionnaire were corrected;
- ✓ Seminars were conducted with 15 interviewers during which the technique and rules of ethics of conducting interviews and completing of questionnaire were presented in detail;
- ✓ The person responsible for the project participated in one pilot interview with each interviewer to evaluate the quality of interviews;
- ✓ A guide on completion of the questionnaire was provided to interviewers;
- ✓ 4 coordinators who were responsible for supervision of field work worked with the group of interviewers;
- ✓ The coordinators supervised also the data entry process prior to which the questionnaires underwent logical analysis, and attention was paid to answers of “question-traps”.

Bologna System in Armenia. The Student Perspective

1. Awareness and Opinions about the Bologna System

At present the higher education system of Armenia is in a very important phase of reforms. Many questions have been raised to which no answers are found yet: is the Bologna Process still topical? How to attain effective introduction of all aspects of the process in Armenia? It is obvious that even 10 years after introduction of the system, the gaps and failures in the process of recognition of degrees, considered as fundamental, are still topical. In this section of the research we will try to present the general picture of perceptions and awareness of students with regard to the Bologna system.

78% of responding students are aware about the Bologna system operating in their HEIs. 22% of students think that the Bologna system is not operating in their HEIs or they are not aware about it.

It should be mentioned that in higher educational levels, e.g. master's programs, the level of awareness among students about the system is higher. Among the responding bachelor's degree students 75% is aware about the system, whereas the proportion of informed master's degree students is higher - 82%. Among the postgraduate students this figure is 85%.

The difference is also seen among the level of awareness of bachelor students of different years of study. Thus, the level of awareness about the Bologna system is 82.8% among fourth year students, while the figure is maximum 77% among students from first year to third year.

A significant difference in this question is also seen among different years of study in master's degree studies. Although the awareness indicator is 70.8% in the first year of master's degree study, in the second year of study it is significantly higher - 89.7%.

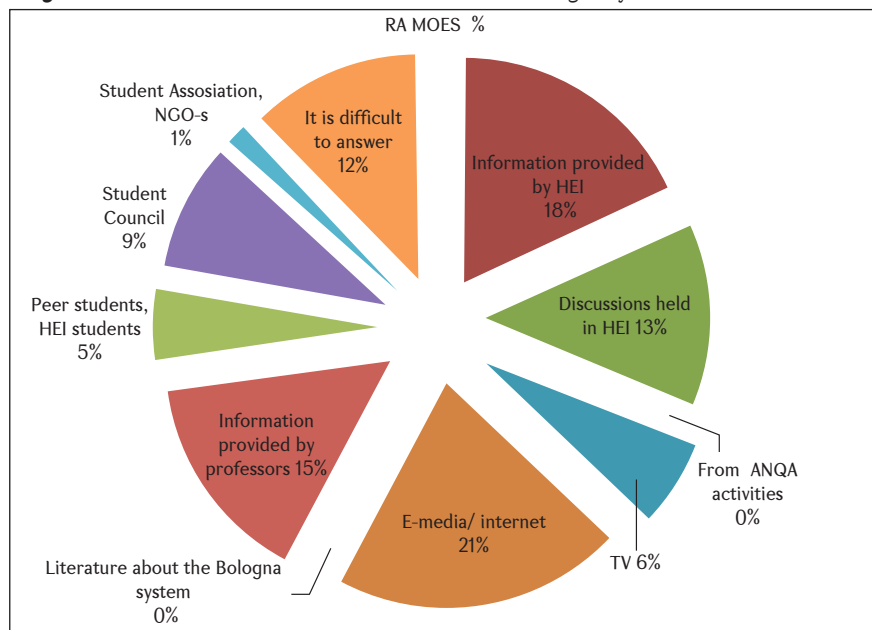
It is worth mentioning that in terms of awareness no significant difference is found between students studying in regional and Yerevan HEIs (Annex 1).

When asked how they become aware of the Bologna system, 60% of the respondents mentioned internal sources of HEIs. The following are mentioned as primary sources: information provided directly from HEIs (18%), information provided by professors (15%) and various discussions held in HEIs (13%). It is interesting that students' councils play comparatively weak role in terms of awareness: only 9%. The most important external (other than HEI) source of information is the internet (21%).

Disturbing is the circumstance that none of students mention about studying special literature on the Bologna system. This fact may prove both the absence of such literature as well its unavailability or unattractiveness.

The passive role of the MOES and ANQA in connection with student awareness also should be mentioned. The responding students do not mention about their awareness while studying in high school.

Diagram 1. Main sources of student awareness about the Bologna System



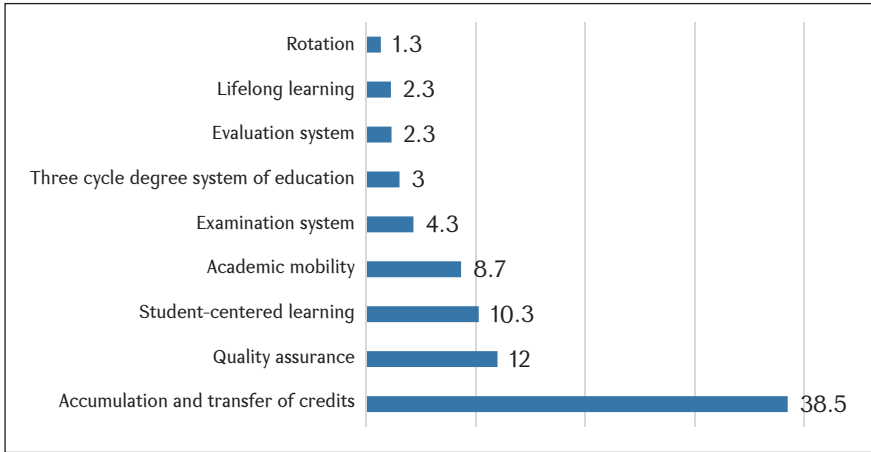
Although the majority of students consider the provided information sufficient or partially sufficient (67%), each third or 33% of respondents mention that the information is not sufficient.

It is interesting that the information provided about the Bologna system is considered as satisfactory by 25% of students in marzes, whereas 18.6% of students in the capital city mention that they are satisfied with the information provided. This difference does not prove unambiguously that information in marzes is more available or complete. It is possible that demands of Yerevan students in this matter are higher, and therefore, the level of satisfaction is lower.

Among master's degree students the share of respondents satisfied with the information provided about the Bologna system is higher by approximately 3%.

Rather interesting are perceptions of students with regard to the essence of the Bologna system which are presented in the diagram below. It should be mentioned that approximately 14% find it difficult to answer the question.

Diagram 2. Essence of the Bologna System according to students (%)



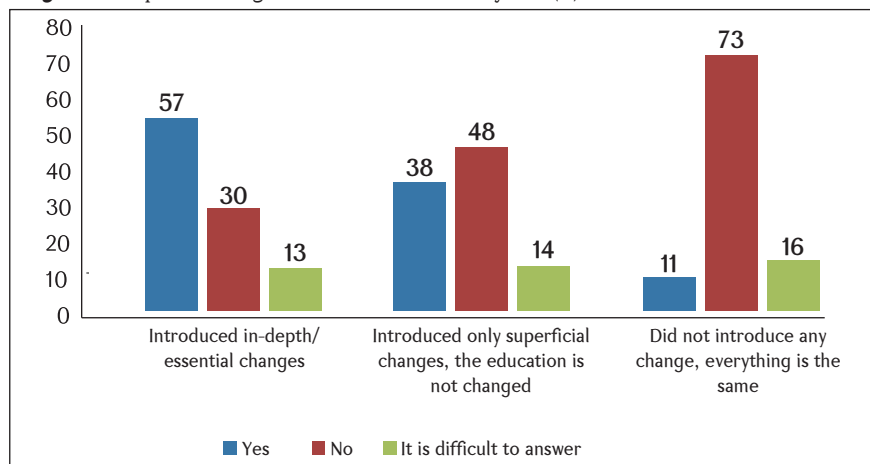
Below are those perceptions on the Bologna system the frequency of which does not exceed 1% of answers:

- European international system - 0.7%
- Combination of work and education - 0.5%
- Competition - 0.5%
- Interactive lessons, new methods - 0.7%
- Requiring knowledge of languages - 0.4%
- Student motivation - 0.1%

It is obvious that in conceptions of the Armenian students the Bologna system is ranged with the credit accumulation and transfer system, which, in its turn, is perceived as purely an evaluation system based on scores. The number of students who identify the Bologna system with quality assurance and student-centered learning is also high. Finally, the number of students who describe the Bologna system according to its key components is negligible.

Students evaluate also the impact of the Bologna system on the educational system of Armenia.

Diagram 3. Impact of Bologna Process on education system (%)



With regard to the first judgment illustrated in the Diagram, the prevailing viewpoint is that the Bologna system introduced rather in-depth and essential changes in the RA higher education system. On the other hand, the number of students having opposite viewpoint is significant (30%).

47% of respondents agree with the next judgment (“The Bologna system introduced only superficial changes, the education is not changed”), which is a disturbing, negative figure.

Finally, the prevailing majority of respondents (73%) agree with the judgment that “The Bologna system introduced no changes, everything is the same”, which is extremely negative expression of students’ perception.

A significant number of students (13-16%) have difficulties in expressing their attitude towards the specified judgments. Absence of the definite viewpoint in this matter is also a negative phenomenon, which approves either about indifference or low level of awareness of students.

Students of marzes have more positive perception with regard to the judgments illustrated in the diagram. For example, 64.8% of them agree with the judgment that “Introduction of the Bologna system conducted to rather in-depth and essential changes in the field of education”, whereas in Yerevan only 59.5% of students agree with this statement. The similar picture is in case of the next two judgments.

Table 2. Perception of students about the impact of the Bologna System in Yerevan and marzes

		Yes	No	It is difficult to answer
Introduction of the Bologna system conducted to in-depth /essential changes in the field of education	Yerevan	59.5%	28.5%	12%
	Marz	64.8%	31.1%	4.2%

		Yes	No	It is difficult to answer
Introduction of the Bologna system conducted only to superficial changes, the education is not changed	Yerevan	38.9%	48.9%	12.1%
	Marz	36.6%	60%	3.4%
Introduction of the Bologna system conducted to no changes, everything is the same	Yerevan	11.7%	74.8%	13.5%
	Marz	7.6%	89%	3.4%

The next table allows comparing viewpoints of bachelor and master students with regard to the same judgments.

Table 3. Perception of Bachelor's degree students and Master's degree students about the impact of the Bologna System

		Yes	No	It is difficult to answer
Introduction of Bologna system conducted to in-depth/essential changes in the field of education	Bachelor's degree	60.3%	28.8%	10.9%
	Master's degree	52.9%	40.8%	6.3%
Introduction of Bologna system led only to superficial changes, the education is not changed	Bachelor's degree	37.8%	51.6%	10.6%
	Master's degree	46.6%	43.7%	9.8%
Introduction of Bologna system conducted to no changes, everything is the same	Bachelor's degree	11.7%	76.8%	11.5%
	Master's degree	7.1%	82.3%	10.6%

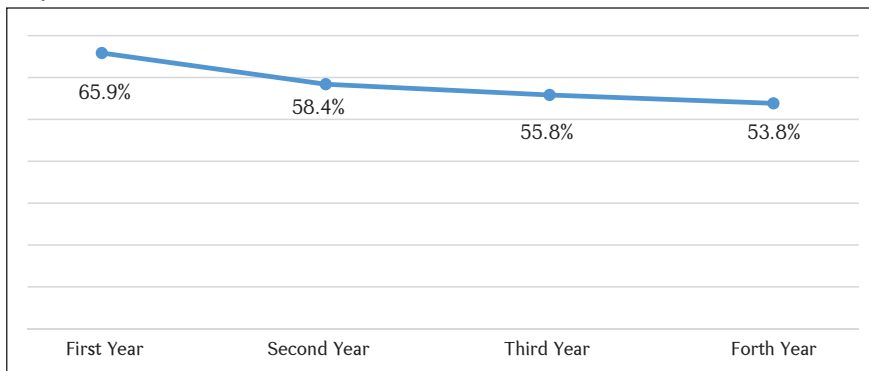
As seen, bachelor's degree students evaluate the changes brought in by the Bologna system higher. For example, while among master's degree students the disagreement with the judgment that "Introduction of the Bologna system conducted to in-depth/essential changes in the field of education" is 40.8%, the share of disagreeing bachelor degree students is 28.8%, i.e. lower by 12%.

The share of master's degree students thinking that introduction of the Bologna system conducted to only superficial changes is higher by almost 10%.

It is possible that this difference of perceptions is conditioned by the fact that master's degree students study longer and have more experience of identifying gaps in the system. In addition, higher demands with regard to education by master students may also have impact.

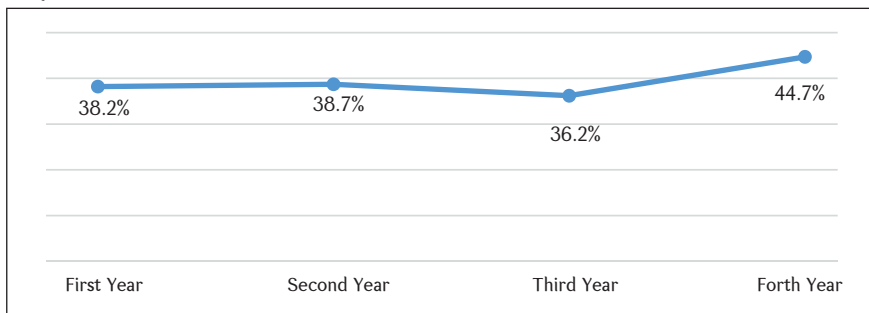
Rather interesting is the picture with regard to the specified judgments of students in different years of bachelor's studies. A definitive pattern is observed: the share of students who have positive perception about the Bologna system is decreasing parallel to learning process.

Diagram 4. The share of students who agree with the judgment that “Introduction of the Bologna system conducted to in-depth/essential changes in the field of education” according to the years of bachelor’s studies



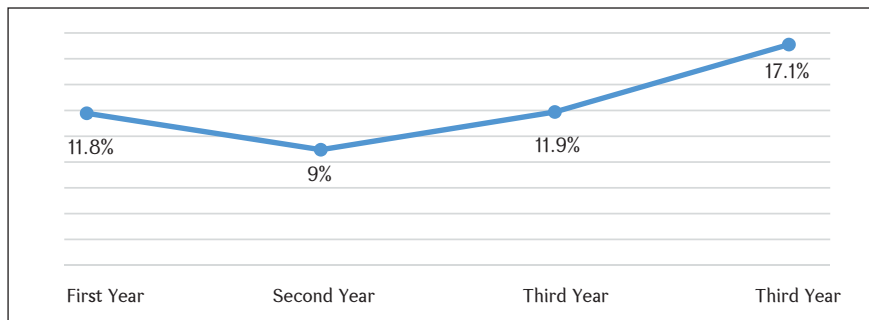
Like in the previous diagram, the next diagram also shows obviously that the share of senior students who consider introduction of the Bologna system as a superficial change is high.

Diagram 5. The share of students who agree with the judgment that “Introduction of the Bologna system conducted only to superficial changes, the education is not changed” according to the years of bachelor’s studies



Finally, similar picture is found also with regard to the last judgment.

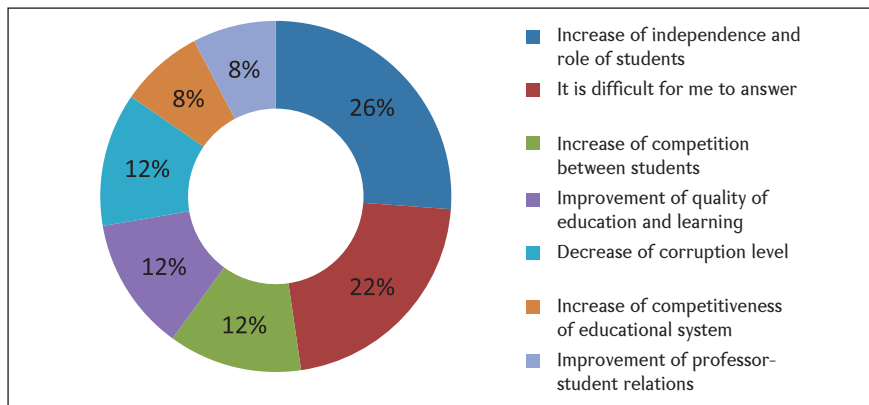
Diagram 6. The share of students who agree with the judgment that “Introduction of the Bologna system conduced to no changes, everything is the same” according to the years of bachelor’s studies



It should be emphasized that this regularity is typical also for the first and second years of master’s degree studies. There are definitely more students in the second year with negative perception about the impact of the Bologna system.

The majority of responding students believe that the most essential changes resulting from introduction of the Bologna system is the increase of independence and role of students, the stimulation of competition between students, the improvement of education quality, as well as the decrease of corruption phenomena. Further details of the mentioned issues are described in Annex 2.

Diagram 7. Important changes in the result of introduction of the Bologna System

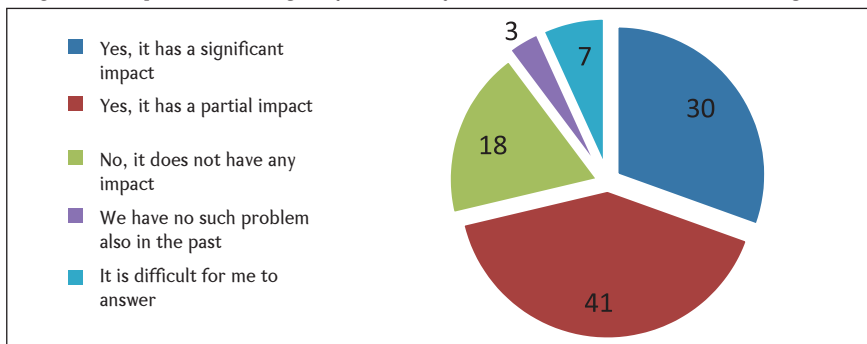


Almost half of the responding students believe that after introduction of the Bologna system students have become more protected and their problems are heard. Small number of students (13%) believe that introduction of the system has no impact on this problem.

Again, like in case of previous questions, a significant number of students (22%)

find it difficult to answer. This figure proves that benefits of the Bologna system are not obvious and tangible for each fifth student. On the other hand, this answer may be the result of lack of experience necessary for comparison. To evaluate advantages of any system students must have sufficient information about previous or alternative systems. It is possible that a large number of students have no opportunity for such comparison.

Diagram 8. Impact of the Bologna System on objective evaluation of students' knowledge (%)



41% of respondents believe that the system has a partial impact of mechanisms of objective evaluation of students' knowledge. 30% states about the significant impact and 18% states lack of any impact.

Thus, the level of awareness about the Bologna system among students is rather low. Students mention that the information they receive is not sufficient to gain a full picture of the system.

At the same time, there is a rather narrow perception about the essence of the Bologna system. It is mainly identified with credit accumulation and transfer system or, in the best case, with quality assurance process. The first is mainly perceived as purely a score-based evaluation system, which is conditioned also with the circumstance that a part of professors, not comprehending the content of credit accumulation and transfer system, are guided by the previous evaluation system (translating 5 point marks into 20 or 100 scores without being able to explain the essence of the credit).

As for identification of the Bologna system with quality assurance, it is mainly connected with active actions of quality assurance centers operating in HEIs, which may be deemed as a positive tendency.

Introduction of the Bologna system, pursuing the integration of Armenia into the European Higher Education Area, according to students, has not been fully accomplished not because the system is good or bad but due to shortcomings of the introduction process. As a result, students think that the RA higher education still does not comply with international standards.

After the introduction of the Bologna system in the Armenian HEI-s, according to students, apparently student-professor relations have not been improved, as well as corruption risks have not been decreased. At the same time, after introduction of the system significant changes take place in terms of improving objective evaluation, which

is the result of introducing of test system. Due to stimulation of competition between students, their independence and activeness is increased.

Students of marzes have more positive perception about the impact of the Bologna system as compared with students in Yerevan. A higher percent of them agree with the judgment that “Introduction of Bologna system conduced to in-depth/essential changes in the field of education”.

Bachelor’s degree students, as compared to master’s degree students, evaluate the changes brought in by the Bologna system higher. The share of master’s degree students thinking that introduction of the Bologna system conduced to only superficial changes is higher by almost 10%.

The difference between understandings may be conditioned with the circumstance that master students have more experience in recognizing gaps of the system and higher demands set for the quality of education.

There is a definite regularity: parallel to years of study the share of students with positive perception about the impact of the Bologna system is decreasing. The share of students considering introduction of the Bologna system as a superficial, non essential change is higher among students of senior years of both bachelor’s degree and master’s degree as compared to junior years.

2. Three Cycle Education System

Since the very first moment of joining the Bologna Process, the introduction of the three cycle education system has become one of its main objectives. After signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the two cycle education system and related credit system were introduced as important factors for fostering the academic mobility. Then, in Bergen Communiqué the two cycle system was transformed into a three cycle system by adding the third (doctor’s) degree to the first (bachelor’s) and second (master’s) degrees. Currently quite extensive activities are conducted in this field, in particular related to acknowledgment of necessity to introduce doctoral institutions.

Many of the students who participated in the inquiry consider the three cycle education system a rather good opportunity to extend vocational education, to change specialization, to receive education recognized/compatible in the international education system and to continue studies in other countries. At the same time, for a great number of students (19%) it is difficult to answer which positive opportunities open the three cycle education system to them. This proves once again the low level of awareness about the system.

Table 4. Students’ viewpoints about opportunities opened by the three cycle education system (%)

	Per cent
Expansion of vocational education	38
Opportunity to change specialization after bachelor’s degree studies	14
Opportunity to receive education in other countries	11

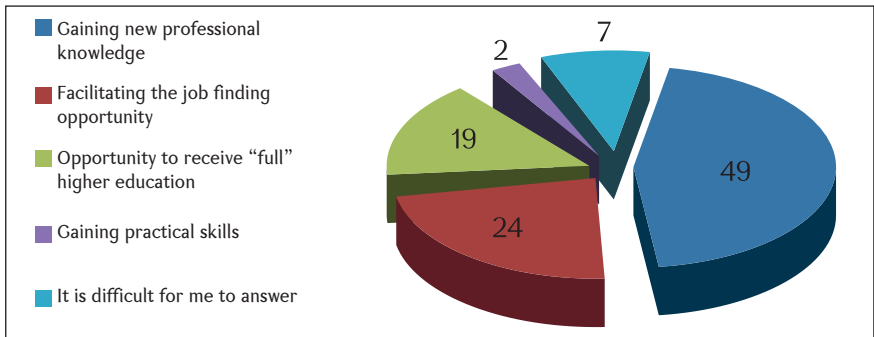
	Per cent
Education recognized/compatible in the international education system	9
Job opportunity	3
It has superficial nature, gives no change	3
Practical knowledge	1
It facilitates learning	1
Independence	1
It is difficult for me to answer	19

The prevailing majority of bachelor’s degree students - approximately 79% - are determined to continue education in master’s degree studies.

It is worth mentioning that the share of students who express such desire is higher in marz and totals to 84.2%, while in Yerevan it is 74.8%, lower by almost 10%.

Almost half of students consider obtaining of new professional knowledge as the main incentive to continue studies for master’s degree. The number of those who would like to facilitate the burden of finding job and receive “full education” is also high ³.

Diagram 9. Incentives to continue education in master’s degree (%)



Students consider professional promotion (37%), development of science (27%) and gaining reputation (12%), as well as evasion of the military service for males (7%) as the basic incentives to continue education for master’s degree.

In addition, according to students, the opportunity of finding professional job is increasing approximately by 30% in case of having master’s degree and postgraduate’s degree.

According to students, the extension of professional knowledge (24%), the introduction of more practical subjects (21%) and the provision of practical training (16%) are among the essential steps aimed at complying with the labor market demands.

³ The inertia of perception that bachelor’s degree ensures incomplete, not full education without master’s degree.

12% of respondents state that nothing is done to harmonize the master's studies with the labor market demands, and 25% find it difficult to answer.

There are partial repetitions in educational programs of bachelor's and master's degrees according to the majority of master students (60.1%).

13.5% of master students state that there are lots of repetitions in programs, and 3.4% of them state that the educational programs of two degrees are completely the same. Only 18.3% of master students state that the programs differ completely.

It is interesting that there is a difference in distribution of answers according to different years of study in master's degree. For example, as compared to 15.2% of the first year master students stating that there are lots of repetitions, this viewpoint is shared by 27.8% among the second year respondents. Probably this significant difference proves that parallel to education process students are developing more precise, experience-based assessment.

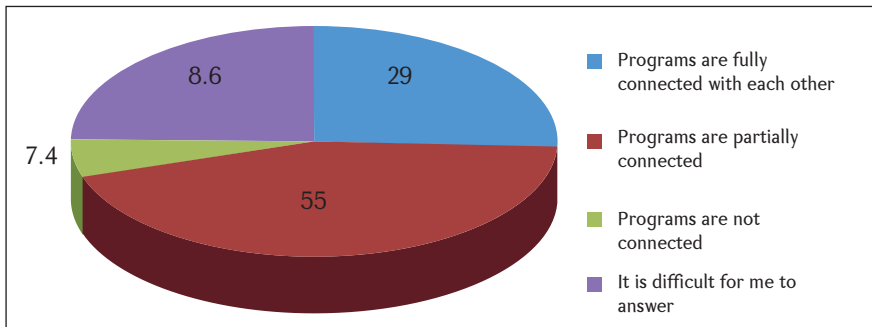
Similar picture is found with regard to the question on evaluation of changes in teaching methods. If among of the first year master students 42.6% state that there are no essential changes in teaching methods in bachelor's and master's degrees, among the second year respondents this opinion is shared by 48.6%. Again, parallel to increase of students' experience, the probability of critical approach is increasing.

57.9% of students studying in Yerevan state about repetitions in bachelor's and master's educational programs (options of "there are partial repetitions in the programs" and "there are lots of repetitions in the programs" together), whereas only 34.5% of students of marzes agree with this opinion.

The option "Bachelor's and master's programs are fully identical" is chosen only by 2.7% of students in marzes as compared to 7.7% of students in Yerevan (more by 5%).

The interrelation of educational programs is also an important issue. A significant number of master students (55%) believe that educational programs of bachelor's and master's degrees are partially connected with each other.

Diagram 10. Interrelation of educational programs in the three cycle system according to perception of master students (%)



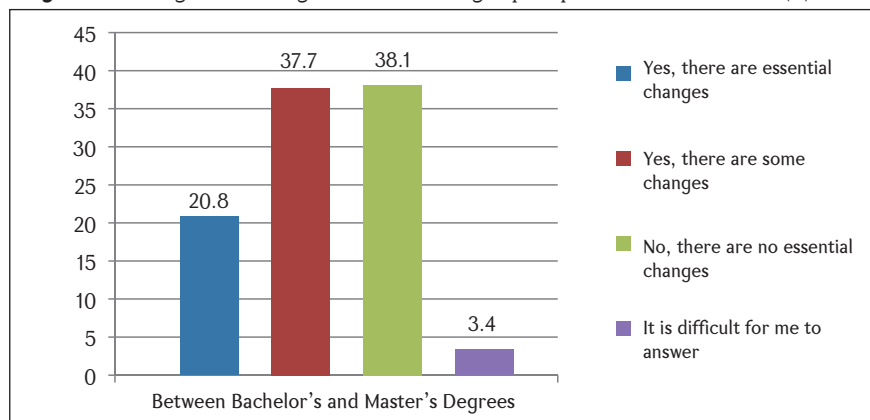
Reflecting the issue of changes in teaching methods in different educational levels, 38.1% of master students state that there are no essential changes. Only a small number

of respondents (20.8%) state that some essential changes are observed.

37.7% of master students state about some changes in teaching methods.

The opinions of students studying in Yerevan and marzes do not differ basically with regard to this question.

Diagram 11. Changes in teaching methods according to perception of master students (%)



Thus, the level of awareness of the RA HEIs students is low not only from the point of view of general perceptions about the system, but according to its separate components as well. In particular, the three cycle education system is considered as an opportunity for deepening professional knowledge, changing specialization and continuing studies in foreign countries by many students.

The desire of a high number of bachelor students to continue education in master's degree students with the purpose of finding jobs more easily allows to conclude that the bachelor's degree is still considered as incomplete higher education in Armenia. Naturally, this approach is not in line with the basic principles of the Bologna system and is the result of misinterpretation of the system.

Disturbing is the circumstance that the incentive of continuing education in postgraduate programs for male students is evasion of military service, which is also not in line with philosophy of the Bologna system as well.

It encourages that students expect to receive new skills and to gain professional knowledge and experience when passing from one cycle to another within the three cycle educational system. However, the system does not operate effectively since, as claimed by master and postgraduate students, educational programs of different levels are interrelated partially and, in addition, partially repeat each other. The same subjects in terms of content are taught in master's degree programs, but under different names.

Only a small number of master students (each 5th respondent) state that essential change in teaching method is observed. The great majority of respondents think that there are no essential changes in teaching methods in bachelor's and master's degree programs.

As compared to the first year of master’s degree studies, the share of the second year respondents who think that there are lots of repetitions in programs is higher, as well as the percentage of students who think that there are no essential changes in teaching methods in bachelor’s and master’s studies.

Probably this difference in perception is conditioned with the circumstance that parallel to increase of student’s experience, the possibility of critical and precise, experience-based assessment is increasing.

3. Academic Mobility

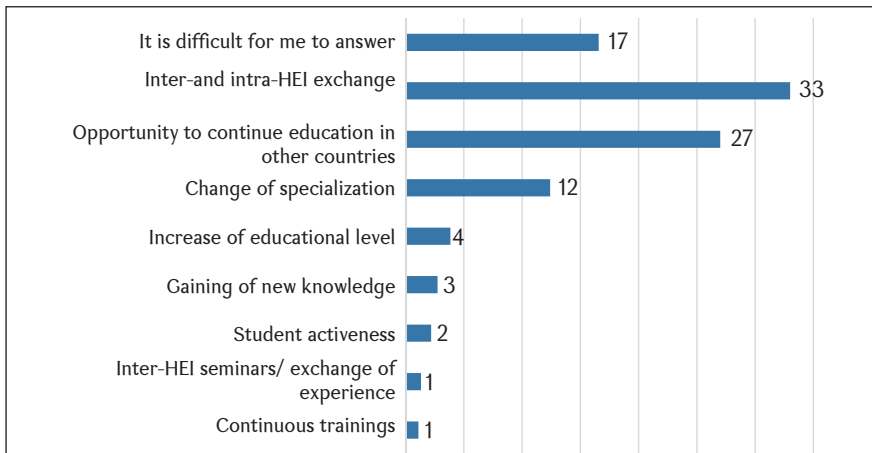
Mobility of students has always been of great importance within the framework of the Bologna education system for ensuring mutual recognition and exchange of knowledge in the European Higher Education Area. Mobility fosters the dissemination of values of diversity, tolerance and democracy throughout Europe.

Student awareness about the academic mobility is quite low. The great majority of students are not aware about this component, one of the most important components of the Bologna system. It should be mentioned that the respondents, in answering the question about the primary source of awareness, mention the internet and seminars and discussion organized in HEIs, as well as professors and student councils. However, only half of the respondents consider the information received from the specified sources as partially sufficient. Each forth respondent considers the information insufficient.

As in case of previous questions, students of marzes are again more satisfied with the provided information (28.9%) as compared to students in Yerevan (20.1%).

Those students, who are aware of academic mobility, consider it as an opportunity of inter-HEI and intra-HEI exchange (33%). There is a great number of students who consider the mobility as a means to change specialization (12%), as well as to continue studies abroad (27%).

Diagram 12. Academic mobility according to students (%)



Opportunities of academic mobility are mainly ensured within the HEI, then among the Armenian HEIs, and less in foreign HEIs. According to the majority, the mobility in the RA HEIs and abroad is ensured partially. However, only a small part of respondents (5%) studied abroad. It should be mentioned that their share is almost equal in Yerevan and marzes (5.1% and 5.8% respectively).

The number of students who have ever used the intra-HEI (11%) and inter-HEI (17%) mobility opportunities is also small. Therefore, answers given to this question are based not on personal experience of a respondent, but on observations and perceptions shaped from different information sources.

More than half of students think that all students have equal opportunities to use academic mobility. At the same time, the groups of students who have more opportunities of using academic mobility are identified (high academic achievement, knowledge of languages, students with sufficient finances and students who have acquaintances/friends in HEIs).

The level of awareness with regard to this component is sharply lower as compared to other components. The prevailing majority of students were not able to define the notion of “academic mobility” during interviews. However, those students who have some idea about the academic mobility think that the mobility is mainly ensured with the HEI and there are certain obstacles in case of intra-HEI and international mobility. Students who have high academic achievements, finances and sufficient knowledge of languages are able to get over these problems in case of international mobility.

4. Social Inclusion

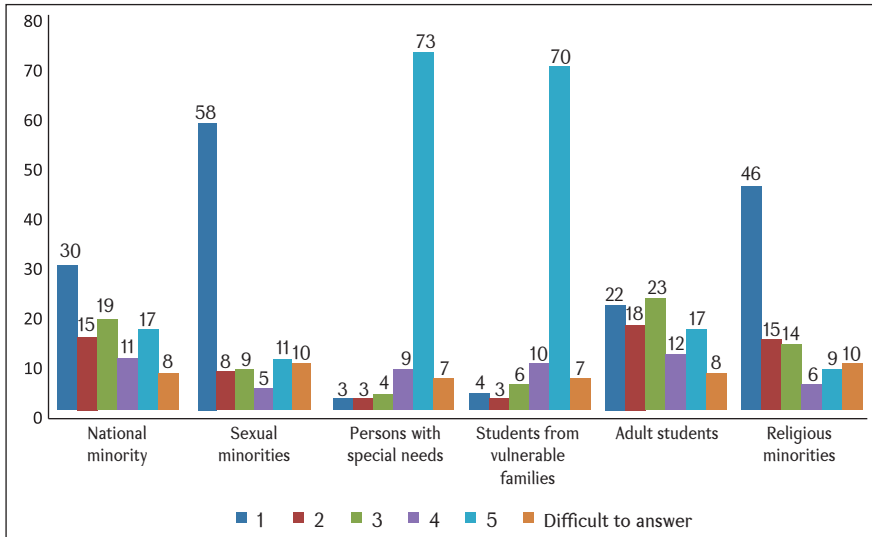
The Armenian National Students’ Association considers the social inclusion as one of the cornerstones of the Bologna Process. The aim of inquiries about social inclusion is to find out whether students belonging to all layers of society have equal opportunities or at least somewhat equal opportunities for access to the higher education system in the RA. Socially stable higher education system will have effective impact on development of the entire society since it will ensure the inclusion of different groups in different types of activities in terms of improving the quality of life.

According to the majority of students (61%) not all social layers have equal opportunities for inclusion in the higher education system.

Respondents evaluate the needs of protection of different groups of students in the higher education system using a 5-score scale. The minimal score of the scale, i.e. 1 means that there is totally no need to support the group, and 5 score means that the support is needed definitely. The evaluation results are provided in the diagram below.

Students with special needs (73%) and students from vulnerable families (70%) have the highest needs for protection. Students also state that the interests of national, sexual and religious minorities as well as those of adult students are relatively protected. The frequency of score “1” (“the group has no need for protection at all”) is definitely prevailing with regard to sexual and religious minorities. This figure may be the result of not only fixing the fact, but also of the negative stereotype approach of respondents towards the specified groups.

Diagram 13. Needs of protection of students in higher education system (%)



The prevailing majority of respondents (78%) consider that there is no gender discrimination in terms of access to master’s degree studies, and males and females have equal opportunities.

69% of respondents mention the absence of gender discrimination in case of postgraduate study. Nevertheless, 12% of respondents mention that preference is given to females and 5% - to males.

It is interesting to look at the distribution of answers of this question according to gender of respondents. Thus, 11.1% of male respondents think that in case of admission to master’s degree programs the preference is given to females, whereas only 6.5% among females share this opinion.

8.5% of responding males think that the preference is given to males in case of admission to postgraduate programs. This opinion is shared only by 5% of females.

In general, the share of those respondents who believe there is no gender discrimination is significantly higher (almost by 11%) among females as compared to males.

It seems there is a certain agreement among respondents of both genders with regard to postgraduate studies. Thus, approximately 14% of males and 11.6% of females believe that the preference is given to females in case of postgraduate studies.

On the other hand, 8.7% of males and 3.5% of females think that the preference is given to males for studying in postgraduate programs.

Thus, the number of respondents stating that the preference is given to females is high among respondents of both genders.

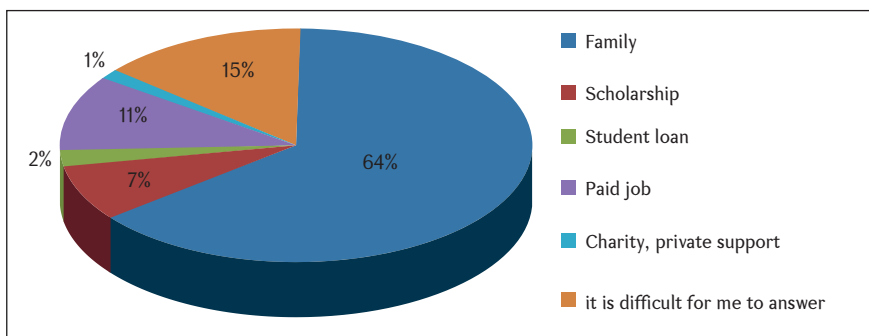
As for the question on existence of any legal act or regulation defining the rights of different groups/layers in HEI, the majority of respondents (47%) find it difficult to

answer and 30% is not aware about them. Students studying in universities located in Yerevan are more informed about legal acts in force in their HEIs.

30% of respondents use the opportunity of getting discounts for study fees and scholarships, and 3% of respondents use the opportunity of receiving allowances for free meal and transport.

In analyzing the sources of money spent on one academic term, it becomes clear that the main source is family budget in case of the absolute majority of respondents (64%). Among respondents 7% specify scholarships, 2% - student loans, 11% - paid jobs as sources; charitable foundations and private support is the source for 1%, and 15% find it difficult to answer the question.

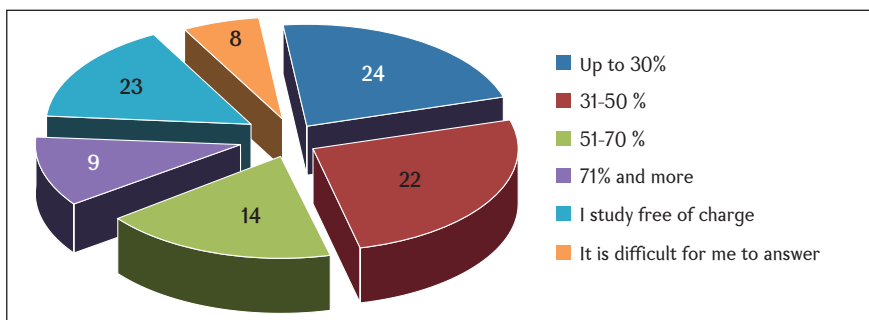
Diagram 14. Sources of money spent on one academic term (%)



In general, 23% of respondents have done different paid jobs in the entire course of education with the purpose of paying the education fee.

Respondents answer the question about which part of their family budget is spent for education fee. 22% of respondents mention that the higher education expenses comprise 31-50% of their family budget. According to 24% of respondents the expense is totaling up to 30% of the family budget.

Diagram 15. Part of family budget allocated for education fee (%)



Thus, according to the majority of students, not all social layers have equal opportunities for inclusion in higher education system. Need for protection is the highest among students with special needs and students from vulnerable families. The interests of national, sexual and religious minorities and also adult students are relatively protected.

The majority of respondents (78%) think that there is no gender discrimination for access to masters' degree studies, whereas only 69% share this opinion in case of postgraduate studies. Among females participated in the research the share of those who think that there is no difference between genders for access to master's degree studies is significantly higher (approximately by 11%) as compared to males. The number of respondents mentioned about the preference given to females in postgraduate admission is even higher among the respondents of both genders.

A significant number of respondents (47%) find it difficult to answer the question or mention that they are not aware (30%) about any legal act or regulation enforced in their HEI according to which the rights of different groups/layers are set. Mostly students studying in HEIs of the capital city are aware of the legal acts acting in HEIs.

5. Student-Centered learning

Student-centered educational philosophies are focused on demands of students. In narrower sense, they are educational models with the objective of organizing learning process by involving students. From the standpoint of student-centered learning, the education is deemed as an active and interactive process: students are active participants of education and bear responsibility for their learning. This leads to increase of autonomy of students and raise of mutual respect in professor-student interrelations.

Students understand the main point of student-centered learning as increase of students' role in decision making process, protection of interests of students within the scope of activity of HEI, increase of autonomy of students and expansion of individual learning. The number of students who have difficulties in answering this question is also high, which proves once again the lack of awareness about the system and its main components.

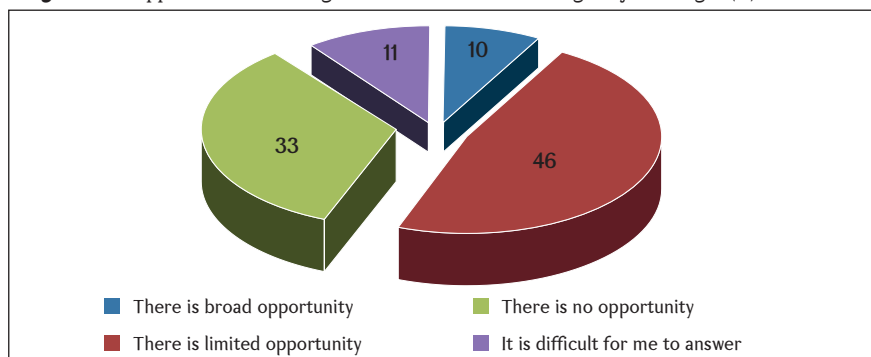
Table 5. Students' perception about student-centered learning

	Frequency of answer	%
Student's share in individual learning is increased	249	11.3
Autonomy of students is increased	291	13.2
Active role of students /involvement of students in decision making process is enhanced	469	21.2
All actions are directed to students	354	16

	Frequency of answer	%
The role of professor is decreased	53	2.4
Opinions of students become important	73	3.3
Easy contact between students and professors	12	0.5
Effective learning, provision of knowledge	21	1
Necessary literature is provided to students	6	0.3
Financial assistance to students	3	0.1
Student's knowledge is taken into account	4	0.2
Protection and expansion of students' rights, interests and opportunities	45	2
It increases student's awareness	4	0.2
Speaks up about students' problems	10	0.5
Individual approach to each student	6	0.3
Accessible and available learning	3	0.1
It is difficult for me to answer	605	27.4
Total	2208	100

The Armenian HEIs provide limited opportunity or no opportunity to students in terms of choosing subjects taught therein.

Diagram 16. Opportunities existing in HEI in terms of choosing subjects taught (%)



44.7% of students in marzes state about lack of any opportunity to choose subjects taught. In case of Yerevan the figure is 32.7%.

Thus, the essential difference of 12% is a disturbing fact, which proves the worse situation with regard to student-centered learning in marzes.

It becomes clear from the next table that opportunities of choosing subjects taught in master's degree studies is more limited as compared to bachelor's degree programs.

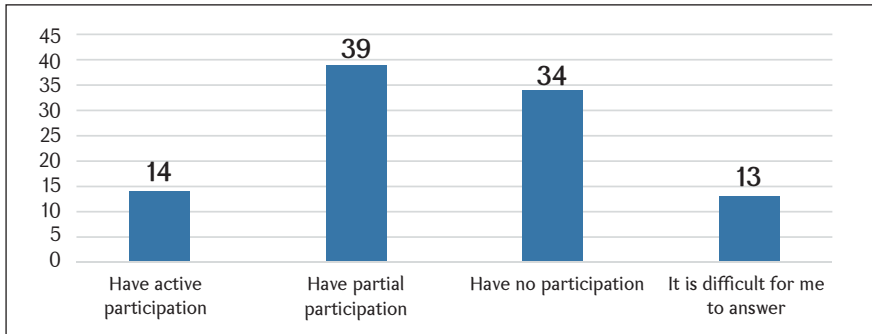
It is possible that this difference of opinions is conditioned not only with real differences existing in different levels of education but also with higher expectations (in choosing subjects interesting to them) of master students.

Table 6. Perceptions of bachelor and master students about opportunity of choosing subjects taught

	There is broad opportunity	There is limited opportunity	There is no opportunity	It is difficult for me to answer
Bachelor's degree	10.9%	44.8%	35.4%	8.8%
Master's degree	5.5%	60.4%	30%	4.1%

Students have either limited participation or no opportunity for participation in developing educational programs. In a number of HEIs the option of active participation is not registered at all, or its frequency is nearly 1-2% (only in certain HEIs).

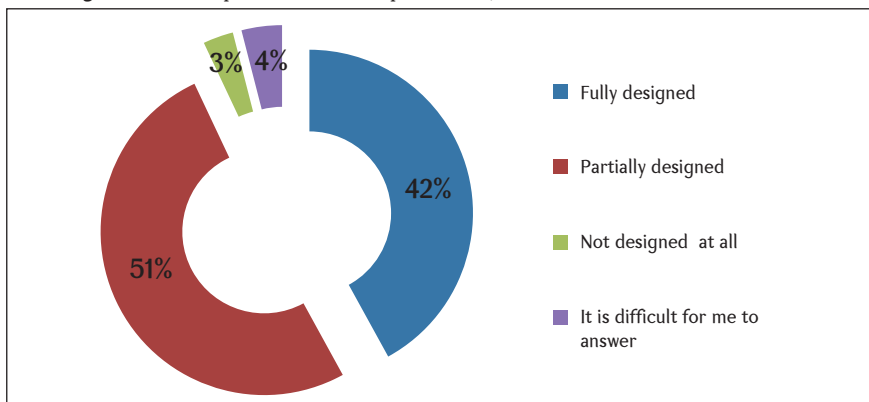
Diagram 17. Student participation in developing educational programs (%)



Sometimes educational programs are changed upon students' demands (such answer is given by 49% of respondents); however, each fifth respondent (20%) state that such case has never happened in the course of their study.

Students believe that the subjects taught are either partially or fully designed for shaping their capacities and skills as future specialists.

Diagram 18. Efficiency of subjects taught (“Are taught subjects designed for shaping your knowledge, skills and capacities as future specialists?”)



As for application of student-centered principles in practice, it may be stated that the Armenian HEIs are still exercising the Soviet, traditional methods of conducting lessons. In particular, it refers to the culture of dictating lectures. Of course, HEIs organize discussions, use interactive teaching models, but they are of limited nature.

In addition, obsolete literature is used in teaching process, and the use of recent publications is limited. Nevertheless, according to students, professors apply certain innovations and follow the worldwide contemporary developments in their field. The current teaching method, with certain limitations, fosters the development of analytical thinking among students.

The table below illustrates the figures reflecting agreement or disagreement of the respondents with judgments about teaching process.

Table 7. Students' opinion about teaching and learning process (%)

	I agree	I agree partially	I disagree	It is difficult for me to answer
Lectures are mainly dictated	44	33	16	7
Mainly discussions/interactive models are used	33	42	16	9
Educational programs involve obsolete professional literature	28	35	26	11
The most contemporary topics are included from the recently published literature (Armenian, Western, Russian, etc)	27	37	21	14
Professors do not use any innovations	13	34	43	10

	I agree	I agree partially	I disagree	It is difficult for me to answer
Professors follow the worldwide developments and innovations emerging in the academic field	33	39	15	13
Current teaching model fosters the development of analytical thinking among students	28	35	20	16

As for the structures which promote students' interests, it should be mentioned that more than half of students (53%) believe that student councils operating in HEIs are rather effective in exercising their powers. Each fourth respondent (25%) considers their activity as partially effective and only 12% of respondents state that student councils do not protect the rights and interests of students effectively.

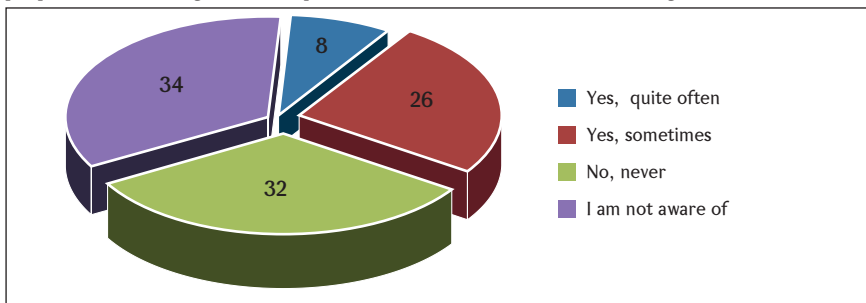
It is interesting that activities of independent student associations and NGO-s involved in protection of students' interests are evaluated as less effective as compared to student councils.

40% of respondents state that students involved in HEI management bodies have sufficient information and skills for protection of students' interests. 22% of respondents express opposite opinion by mentioning about lack of awareness and skills and 38% find it difficult to answer the question.

36.3% of students studying in Yerevan and 15% of students studying in marzes have difficulties in answering the aforementioned question. This significant difference may be conditioned with the circumstance that in Yerevan, due to the large number of students and other factors, many do not know those students who are involved in management bodies of HEIs. Therefore, they have difficulties in assessing their skills and awareness. While in marzes the activity of students' structures is more transparent due to stronger and recognizable community connections.

The next diagram illustrates the situation in HEIs in terms of activities aimed at protection of students' interests.

Diagram 19. Has your HEI ever collected signatures (or organized any other event) for the purpose of submitting students' opinions on different matters to the management bodies? (%)



Thus, almost one third of the Armenian students could not define or comment on the student-centered learning, which is one of the most important components of the Bologna system.

The findings of research prove that although the student-centered learning assumes the increase of students' role in organizing learning process, students still have limited opportunities of choosing subjects taught and preparing of educational programs in many state and non-state HEIs of Armenia. Shortcomings related to introduction of student-centered learning are also confirmed with the fact that there are hardly any changes in terms of teaching methods and innovation of learning process in general.

Master students have more limited opportunities in choosing subjects taught as compared to bachelor students.

High percentage of students studying in marzes (as compared with those in Yerevan) mention about the lack of opportunity of choosing subjects taught. The significant difference as compared to answers of students in Yerevan is a disturbing fact, which proves the worse situation of the student-centered learning in marzes.

As for effectiveness of protection of students' interests, the students believe that student councils are operating rather effectively. A greater number of respondents in Yerevan (as compared to respondents in marzes) find it difficult to assess the awareness and skills of students involved in HEI management bodies (from the viewpoint of protection of students' interests).

It is important to emphasize that student-centered learning is not pursuing only educational objectives. This approach promotes the involvement of students in introduction of other components of the Bologna system. Activeness and participation of students may counterbalance passive behavior of HEIs and their faculties, obtain enhancing and supervising significance over the activity of HEI administrative staff. In other words, successful application of one element of the system (student-centered learning) may sequentially promote the introduction and reinforcement of other elements of the system.

6. Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

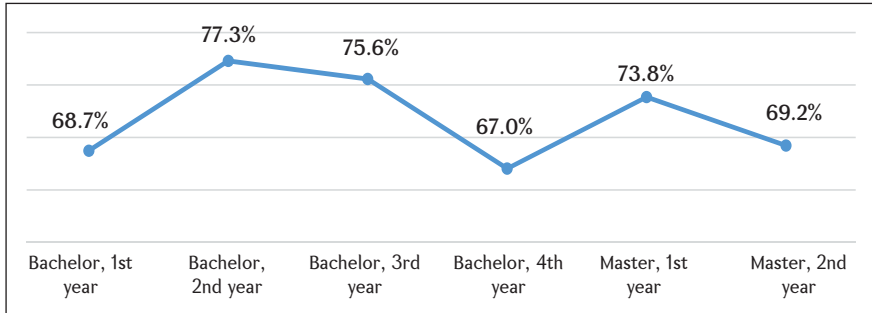
The objective of credit systems (such as European Credit Transfer System) is to facilitate exchange between institutions to ensure flexibility in recognizing academic achievements and education degrees. Following the Bergen Communiqué, the European Credit Transfer System serves not only as a means of exchange but also as a tool of accumulation within the framework of all educational programs. Although initially the credits have been presented as direct contact hours of study, later they have been improved and become as workload necessary for full study of the educational program. Ultimately, they start to interpret the credits as necessary workload for expected final outcomes. These changes are resulting from changes taking place in higher education, as the paradigm of lifelong education, within the context of student-centered learning and framework of qualification developed on outcome-based education.

70% of responding students are aware of the credit system operating in their HEIs, and the remaining 30% is not aware at all or find it difficult to respond. It is noteworthy

that the level of awareness among students studying in HEIs of Yerevan is lower (68.2%) as compared to those studying in marzes (90.5%).

Surprisingly there is no apparent link between the awareness about credit system and educational experience (years of study) of students, although the expected, positive regularity should have proved increase of awareness parallel to years of study.

Diagram 20. Level of awareness about credit system and educational experience of students



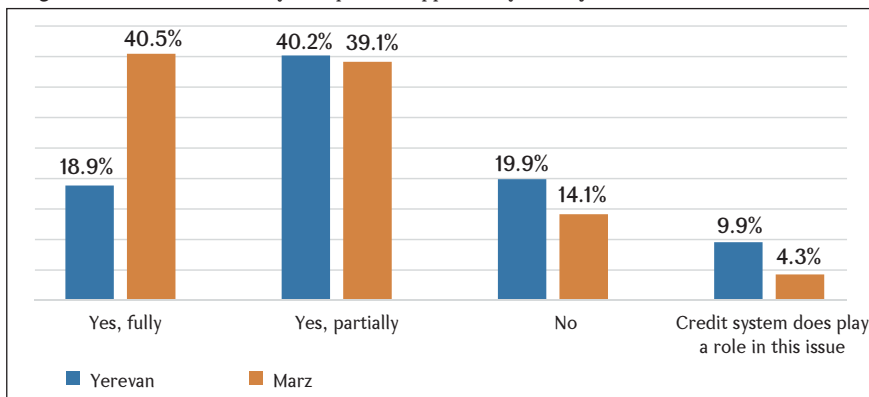
It is interesting that 48% of students aware of the credit system still do not know what a credit is. That is to say, this part of respondents, although having heard about the system has no idea about its real content. Only 52% of those aware of the system (70% of respondents who answer positively the previous question) state that they know what credit is.

Further questions provided during the research also detect non-ambiguous picture. Thus, the majority of those who provide positive answers about credits (37%) has difficulties in answering what credit is after all. 29% of respondents understand credit as the respective score of subject. Only 9% of answers (“Hour spent on the subject/workload”) are relatively close to the real content of credit.

Further the issue of objective evaluation within the scope of credit system is discussed. 49% of respondents think that this system provides opportunity for the objective evaluation fully or partially. Another half of respondents has difficulties in answering the question (37%) or is skeptical about the objectivity of evaluation (14%).

The next diagram illustrates opinions of students studying in Yerevan and marzes with regard to this question. As seen, the number of students considering that the credit system provides full opportunity for objective evaluation is higher among the marz students.

Diagram 21. Does the credit system provide opportunity for objective evaluation?

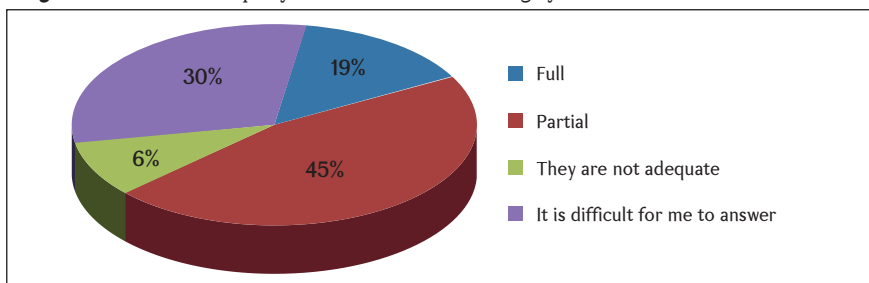


Senior students have explicitly negative viewpoint with regard to this question as compared to junior students. Thus, among the first to third year respondents maximum 20.6% state that the credit system provides no opportunity for objective evaluation, whereas among senior students this opinion is shared by 26.6%.

22%-27% of the first to third year respondents believe that the credit system provides full opportunity for objective evaluation, whereas this figure is extremely low in the fourth year of study - only 6.3%.

The research participants answered the question about the adequacy of accumulated credits to their knowledge, the results of which is shown in the next diagram.

Diagram 22. Level of adequacy of credits to the knowledge you obtained



As seen, the majority of respondents prefer the option that the adequacy of credits to knowledge is ensured only partially.

The shareshare of respondents among master students who think that accumulated credits are adequate to the real level of their knowledge is lower approximately by 3.5% as compared to bachelor students.

Only a negligible part (7%) of respondents has used the credit transfer system, 55% do not use it and the remaining part knows nothing about the system. The share of students in Yerevan who have used the opportunity is higher (10.8%) as compared to marzes (6.6%).

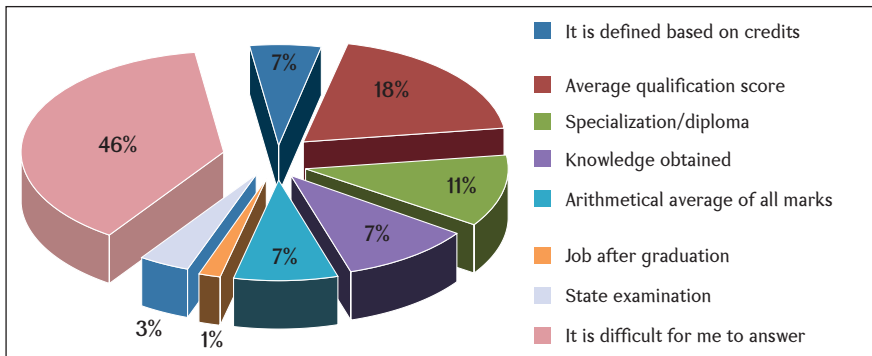
The share of students having used the opportunity is almost the same in bachelor's degree and master's degree studies.

Awareness about the opportunity and procedure of credit transfer is also at a rather low level. The prevailing majority of respondents (90%) is not aware about this opportunity.

The credit system for cooperation between the RA HEIs, according to 23% and 26% of respondents, provides broad and some opportunities, respectively. 5% of respondents believe that the credit system does not provide such opportunity, and the prevailing majority (46%) has difficulties in answering the question. The same picture is found in discussing opportunities of cooperation with foreign universities. 17% of respondents believe that the system provides broad opportunities, 26% think that there are some opportunities, 6% do not see any opportunity and 51% find it difficult to respond.

Only 25% of respondents give positive answer with regard to awareness about outcome-based education and 75% give negative answers. The next diagram illustrates how many students interpret correctly the outcome-based education among 25% of students having answered "Yes".

Diagram 23. What is outcome-based education?



As seen, although in answering the previous question a significant part of respondents (46%) state that they know what outcome-based education is, still it is difficult for them to interpret it. And options of provided interpretation are also very different and disputable.

Initially one third of the Armenian students have stated that they are not aware whether credit system operates in their HEI. At the same time, those students who stated that they are aware of the system, mainly define it as evaluation score. As for credit transfer, 90% of respondents have no idea about the process. Outcome-based education is basically defined as average qualification coefficient, as a diploma, as knowledge obtained, etc.

These results prove the necessity of measures aimed at increase of students' awareness. One of the obvious gaps related to introduction of the system is that students, studying several years in HEIs, have even no idea about their outcome-based education or the system in which they receive education in general.

Surprisingly there appears no link between the credit system awareness and educational experience (year of study) of students. Meanwhile the expected, positive regularity must have proved the increase of awareness parallel to years of study.

Senior year students, as compared to junior students, have explicitly negative viewpoint about the opportunity provided by the credit system for objective evaluation. The share of master students who think that accumulated credits are adequate to the real level of their knowledge is low as compared to bachelor students.

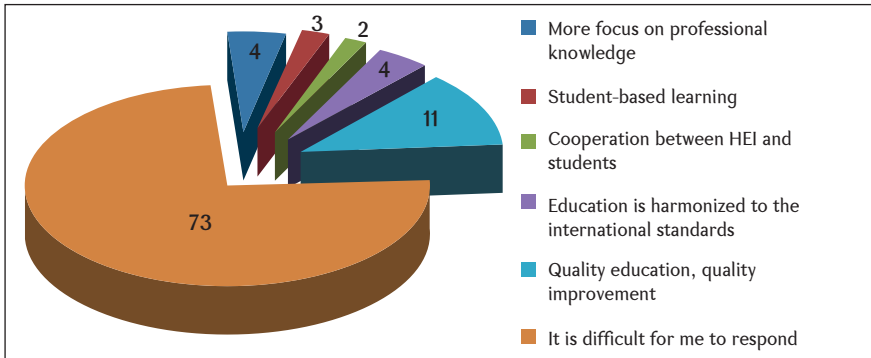
7. Quality Assurance Process

One of the most important principles of the Bologna Process and important preconditions for development of the European Higher Education Area include intensification of the European cooperation in quality assurance process. Quality assurance per se has many objectives, the important ones of which are expansion of learning and education framework, increase of mutual trust between players in the field of higher education, ensuring the compatibility of qualifications, etc. In addition, the objective of quality assurance is to make HEIs accountable, as well as to ensure necessary and sufficient information about activities of the latter.

Only 19% of the responding students are aware of vocational education quality assurance process, and the significant majority (81%) is completely unaware about it. In analyzing the awareness of respondents according to HEIs we see that students of the capital city are more informed.

The next diagram shows students' understandings/perceptions about quality assurance process.

Diagram 24. Viewpoints about education quality assurance process⁴ (%)



It is clear from the above diagram that the absolute majority of respondents has no idea about the process and finds it difficult to interpret it in any way, and 11% repeats the same concepts in their interpretation (“quality education”, “quality improvement”).

44% of respondents state that students are involved in the quality assurance process. Surprising is the circumstance that this figure is essentially higher in the marzes. In marzes 57.9% of students state students’ involvement in QA, whereas in Yerevan the figure is lower by approximately 20%, comprising only 37.5% of the respondents.

53.2% of master students state that students are involved in the quality assurance process. The figure is approximately 44% among bachelor respondents. It seems the opportunities of participatory process are higher in master’s degree studies.

More informed are those students who are taking part in the process: they are mainly representatives of student councils who have participated in self-assessment. Surprising is the fact that representatives of the higher educational levels (postgraduates) are less informed about the quality assurance process. Only 1/5 of students mention that they know about the process, but the significant majority of them could not define it.

8. Lifelong Learning

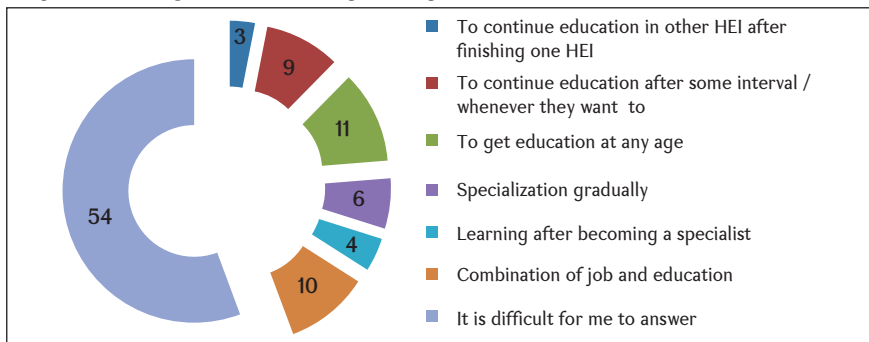
Lifelong learning may be achieved in different ways, including flexible learning and on-the-job (distance) training. This is one of the important preconditions in expansion of student participation in higher education system. In 2009 the European ministers pointed out that the policy of lifelong learning must be exercised within the scopes of active collaboration between public authorities, higher educational institutions, students, employers.

Different beneficiaries interpret lifelong education in different ways, mentioning, for example, that it is a process which provides citizens with opportunities of self-improvement, social integration and participation in knowledge-based economy.

⁴ Answers the frequency of which is below 1% are not presented.

The majority of respondents are not aware about lifelong learning and only 23% of them mention that they know its content. Questions directed to these persons provide the following options with regard to interpretation of the idea of lifelong learning:

Diagram 25. Viewpoints about lifelong learning⁵ (%)



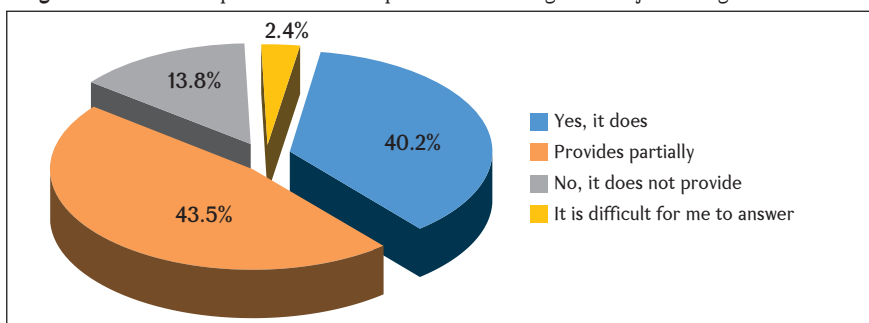
Thus, despite the positive answer to the previous question (concerning awareness about lifelong learning) more than half of respondents find it difficult to interpret it.

As in the case of previous question on awareness of the quality assurance process, students studying in Yerevan have some advantage in terms of awareness about lifelong learning, and the awareness is completely lacking in some HEIs of marzes. The awareness is distributed almost with the same proportionality in all three educational levels.

9. Perspectives

The below diagram illustrates the viewpoints of respondents concerning the question about provision of practical knowledge by HEI sufficient to find job after graduation.

Diagram 26. Does HEI provide sufficient practical knowledge to find job after graduation?



⁵ Answers the frequency of which is below 1% are not presented.

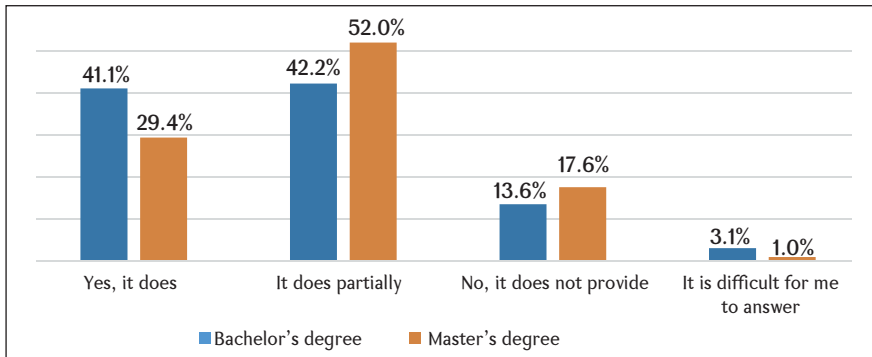
It is interesting that students studying in marzes are more optimistic about this issue: the share of students who consider that the HEI provides sufficient practical knowledge is higher by 10%. The following table illustrates the viewpoints on the question given by students in Yerevan and marzes.

Table 8. Does HEI provide sufficient practical knowledge for finding job after graduation? (Yerevan and marzes)

	Yes, it does	It provides partially	No, it does not provide	It is difficult for me to answer
Yerevan	37.9%	45.4%	13.6%	3.1%
Marzes	48%	37.1%	14.6%	0.3%

Sharp differences in viewpoints on this question are observed according to educational levels. For example, the share of master students who think that HEI provides sufficient practical knowledge is significantly lower (only 29.4%).

Diagram 27. Does HEI provide sufficient practical knowledge for finding job after graduation? (Bachelor's degree and Master's degree)



The next important issue is related to the question about potential professional job which students may apply after graduation.

47.3% of respondents state that they know where to apply for employment after graduation. 39.8% of them mention they know partially where to apply and 10.5% state that they have not decided yet.

The interesting and unpredicted picture is again found among the respondents of marzes. A great part of them states about their orientation as opposite to students studying in Yerevan.

Table 9. Do you already know which potential job you will apply after HEI graduation? (Yerevan and marzes)

	Yes, I already know	I know partially	I have not decided yet	It is difficult for me to answer
Yerevan	42.8%	43.4%	10.9%	2.9%
Marzes	61.8%	28.2%	9.4%	0.6%

Positive is the circumstance that master's degree students are more orientated in this issue.

Table 10. Do you already know which potential job you may apply after HEI graduation? (Bachelor's degree and Master's degree)

	Yes, I know	Know partially	Have not decided yet	It is difficult for me to answer
Bachelor's degree	45.4%	41.1%	10.6%	2.9%
Master's degree	55.5%	34.1%	9.4%	1%

Finally, disturbing results with regard to this question are registered according to educational experience (years of study) of students.

Table 11. Do you already know which potential professional job you may apply after HEI graduation? (Bachelor's degree and Master's degree)

	Year	Yes, I already know	I know partially	I have not decided yet	It is difficult for me to answer
Bachelor's degree	1	43.2%	41.6%	11.9%	3.3%
	2	47.5%	39.2%	11.3%	2%
	3	47.4%	40.6%	9.7%	2.3%
	4	41.9%	47.3%	8.6%	2.2%
Master's degree	1	73%	23.9%	1.6%	1.6%
	2	66.7%	28.2%	5.1%	0%

As obviously seen from the table, there is less definition among both senior bachelor and master students with regard to applying for professional job as compared to junior students. This figure may be explained by the fact that in senior years students have more realistic ideas about the opportunity of professional jobs; their ideas are more based on experience and objective information as compared to previous years of study. It is possible that in first years of study ideas about professional job are less realistic and do not have a structured nature.

Summary

Since joining the Bologna Process in 2005, Armenia has initiated a number of fundamental reforms in the field of education, in particular, in the field of higher education. Currently persons responsible for higher education point out the importance of effective introduction of the system and state that the process is implemented at sufficient level in Armenia. However, as proved by many researches and experts, students are pointing out sufficient gaps in the process.

The Bologna system, in conceptions of the Armenian students, is ranged with the credit accumulation and transfer system, which, in its turn, is perceived as purely a score-based evaluation system. There are also a great number of students who identify the Bologna system with quality assurance and student-centered learning. Finally, a few students describe the Bologna system according to its real, core components.

Students participating in the research express contradicting viewpoints about the impact of the Bologna system. For example, although the prevailing viewpoint is that the Bologna system has introduced in-depth and essential changes in the RA higher education system (57%), on the other hand, a significant number of students (30%) have opposite viewpoint. A big number of students find it difficult to express their attitude about this and similar judgments about the Bologna system. The absence of definite position/viewpoint is also a negative phenomenon, which proves either indifference or low level of awareness among students.

Bachelor students evaluate the changes introduced by the Bologna system higher as compared to master students. The share of those master students who believe that the introduction of the Bologna system has brought in only superficial changes is higher by almost 10%.

The difference between understandings may be conditioned with the circumstance that master students have more experience in recognizing gaps of the system and higher demands set for the quality of education.

There is a definite regularity: parallel to years of study the share of students who have positive perception about the impact of the Bologna process is decreasing. The share of those students who consider the introduction of the Bologna system as superficial, non important change is higher in senior years of both bachelor's and master' programs as compared to junior years.

The majority of respondents think that the most essential changes brought in by introduction of the Bologna system are the increase of autonomy and role of students, the stimulation of competition between students, the improvement of quality of education, as well as the decrease of corruption phenomena. Almost half of the respondents think that the system impacts partially on the mechanism of objective evaluation of students' knowledge.

Introduction of the Bologna system, pursuing the integration of Armenia in the European Higher Education Area, according to students, has not been accomplished fully yet not because the system is good or bad but due to the implementation quality of introduction process. As a result, according to students, the RA higher education does not comply with the international standards yet.

Students have no sufficient understanding about opportunities provided by the three cycle educational system. A great part of students consider the three cycle education as an opportunity to expand their education, to change specialization, to continue study in other countries.

There are partial repetitions in bachelor's degree and master's degree programs according to the majority of master students. Only 18.3% of them mention that programs are completely different. Only a small number of master students (each fifth respondent) state that they see essential changes in teaching methods. The majority of respondents think that there is no essential difference between teaching methods in bachelor's degree and master's degree studies.

The share of respondents thinking that there are a lot of repetitions in programs is higher in the second year as compared to the first year of master's degree, and the percentage of students believing that no essential changes are found in teaching methods in bachelor's degree and master's degree programs is higher as well.

This difference of perception may be conditioned with the circumstance that parallel to increase of students' experience, the opportunity of critical approach and shaping precise, experience-based assessment is increasing.

The desire of a great number of bachelor's degree students to continue education in master's program "for the purpose of facilitating the process of job finding" allows to conclude that in Armenia bachelor's degree is deemed as "incomplete" and "not full" higher education so far. Naturally, this approach does not comply with basic principles of the Bologna system and is the result of misinterpretation of the system.

Students' awareness about academic mobility is rather low. The majority of students are not aware of this component, one of the most important components of the Bologna system. According to the majority of respondents, the academic mobility is ensured partially in the RA HEIs and abroad.

The majority of students think that not all social layers have equal opportunities for access to higher education system. Needs of protection is higher among students with special needs and students from vulnerable families. Students mention that the interests of national, sexual and religious minorities as well as adult students are relatively protected.

Among female participants of the research the share of those thinking that there is no gender difference for access to master's degree is significantly higher (approximately by 11%) as compared to males. The number of respondents who mention about preferences with regard to access of females in master's degree studies is even higher among respondents of both genders.

As regards the selection of subjects taught, the Armenian HEIs provide limited opportunity or there is entirely no opportunity for students. Students have limited participation or completely lack the opportunity of participating in preparation of educational programs.

High percentage of students studying in marzes (as compared with those in Yerevan) mention about the lack of opportunity of choosing subjects taught. The significant difference as compared to the answers of students in Yerevan is a disturbing fact, which proves the worse situation of the student-centered learning in marzes.

Master students have more limited opportunities to choose subjects taught as compared to bachelor students.

The application of the Soviet, traditional methods of conducting lessons are still popular in the Armenian HEIs, and the culture of dictating lectures is in practice. Of course, HEIs organize discussions, use interactive teaching models, but they are of limited nature.

Obsolete literature is used during teaching, and the use of newly published works is limited.

More than half of students (53%) find that student councils operating in HEIs perform their powers rather effectively. A greater number of students in Yerevan (as compared to respondents of marzes) have difficulties in evaluating the awareness and skills (in terms of protection of students' interests) of students involved in HEI management bodies. It is possible that this difference is conditioned with the circumstance that due to a large number of students in Yerevan many do not know the students who are involved in HEI management bodies. Therefore, they have difficulties in assessing their skills and awareness. At the same time, activities of student bodies in marzes are more transparent conditioned also with stronger and recognizable links in communities.

Almost half of students who are aware of credit system still do not know what credit is. That is to say, this part of respondents, although have heard about the system, still has no idea about its real content. A significant number of students understand credits as respective scores of the subject.

The awareness about opportunity and procedure of credit transfer is also at rather low level. The prevailing majority of respondents (90%) are not aware of the opportunity. The prevailing majority of respondents find it difficult to interpret the meaning of the notion of "outcome-based education". The outcome-based education is mainly defined as a coefficient of average qualification, as a diploma, as knowledge obtained, etc.

Although it may be surprising, but there is no link between the awareness of credit system and educational experience (years of study) of students. Meanwhile, the expected, positive regularity should have proved the increase of awareness parallel to years of study.

Senior students, as compared to junior students, have definitely negative viewpoint about the question whether the credit system provides an opportunity for objective evaluation. The share of respondents believing that accumulated credits are adequate to their level of knowledge is lower among master students as compared to bachelor students.

Only 1/5 of students mention that they are aware of quality assurance process in their HEI. However, the significant majority of them could not describe its essence.

The percentage of master students who mention about involvement of students in quality assurance process is higher. It seems master students have more opportunities for participatory process.

The majority of respondents are not aware of lifelong learning, and only 23% of them mention that they know its content.

The percentage of respondents who mention that HEI provides sufficient practical knowledge for finding a job in the future is higher among students of marzes.

A drastic difference is observed with regard to this question according to educational levels. The share of master students who think that HEI provides sufficient knowledge is significantly lower (only 29.4%).

47.3% of respondents mention that they know where they may apply for job after graduation. 39.8% state that they know partially where to apply, and 10.5% state they have not sorted it out yet.

The distinctness related to applying for job is lower in senior years of both bachelor's degree and master's degree as compared to junior years. This figure may be explained by the fact that in senior years of master's degree the understanding about opportunities of professional job is more realistic, based on experience and objective information as compared to previous years of study. Possibly in junior years the understanding about professional job is less realistic and does not have a structured nature.

Recommendations

1. Large-scale substantive measures are necessary with a view to improving the Bologna system as quickly as possible and harmonizing the Armenian education with the international standards. HEIs must not be left alone in this process: it is necessary to support them at the state level, which should not be only in terms of ensuring legislation.
2. It is extremely necessary to increase awareness among students about the Bologna system, its certain components and opportunities provided. To this effect, it is necessary to activate operations of HEIs, in particular of quality assurance centers: to organize seminars and discussions among students to describe the system in plain language. We also think that it is necessary to conduct awareness raising events among faculties.
3. Measures aimed at increase of awareness of students and faculties are important not only in terms of exchange of information but also in changing certain stereotyped understandings. A significant part of problems refer not to the lack of information but rather to its voluntary and inaccurate interpretation. We believe that information booklets prepared in simple and plain language will be needed in this case.
4. It is necessary to clarify the role of departments and chairs as respects to awareness about the Bologna system. Students and faculties must know definitely the responsible person in their department/chair and how they can receive information and additional clarifications from the person.
5. Awareness about the Bologna system must be based on assessment of needs of different student groups. As shown by this research, there are significant differences in understanding and awareness among students in marzes and Yerevan, bachelor students and master students, as well as students of different educational levels (years of study). Social and local (marz, inter-university, vocational) peculiarities of each group of students should be taken into account for effective awareness.
6. We think that the increase of students' role in the process of preparation of educational programs may have essential impact on solution of the aforementioned problems. It is important to understand that the student-centered learning is not only pursuing educational goals. This approach promotes involvement of students in introducing other components of the Bologna system. Activeness and participation of students may counterbalance passive behavior of those responsible for the Bologna Process, obtain enhancing and supervising significance over activity of HEI administrative staff. In other words, one of the elements of the system (student-centered learning) may consequently promote reinforcement of other elements of the Bologna system.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Students' awareness about existence of the Bologna System in their HEIs (according to HEIs and educational levels)

		Are aware	Are not aware	Total
Yerevan State University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	175	110	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	15	8	
	<i>Postgraduate study</i>	0	1	
		190	119	309
Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	129	35	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	22	2	
		151	37	188
Yerevan Brusov State University of Language and Social Sciences	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	52	7	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	6	0	
		58	7	65
Armenian National Agrarian University (Vanadzor Branch, Sisian Branch)/	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	6	7	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	0	
		7	7	14
Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	13	4	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	0	
		14	4	18
Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	14	3	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	2	0	
		16	3	19
National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	20	33	

		Are aware	Are not aware	Total
	<i>Master's degree</i>	3	4	
	<i>Postgraduate study</i>	0	1	
		23	38	61
Yerevan State Medical University after M.Hertsi	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	70	8	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	17	0	
	<i>Postgraduate study</i>	16	0	
		103	8	111
Yerevan State Conservatory named after Komitas	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	21	1	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	11	0	
		32	1	33
State Engineering University of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	120	12	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	6	1	
	<i>Postgraduate study</i>	1	0	
		127	13	140
Public Administration Academy of the RA	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	2	0	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	7	0	
	<i>Postgraduate study</i>	1	0	
		10	0	10
Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	34	4	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	9	0	
		43	4	47
Armenian State University of Economics	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	96	20	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	30	7	
	Educational level of respondent is unknown	1	0	

		Are aware	Are not aware	Total
		127	27	154
Vanadzor State University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	48	11	
		48	11	59
Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	65	16	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	25	10	
		90	26	116
Goris State University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	21	3	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	6	1	
		27	4	31
Gavar State University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	28	12	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	0	
		29	12	41
Vanadzor Branch of State Engineering University of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	8	0	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	0	
		9	0	9
Kapan Branch of State Engineering University of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	5	0	
		5	0	5
Ijevan Branch of YSU	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	23	3	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	2	0	
		25	3	28
Gyumri Branch of ASUE	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	12	2	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	0	
		13	2	15
Yeghehnadzor Branch of ASUE	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	2	0	
		2	0	2
Gyumri Branch of YSC	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	3	0	

		Are aware	Are not aware	Total
		3	0	3
Vanadzor Branch of YSITC	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	2	1	
		2	1	3
Gyumri Branch of YSITC	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	1	2	
		1	2	3
French University of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	11	4	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	2	0	
		13	4	17
Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	39	4	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	4	1	
		43	5	48
American University of Armenia	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	2	7	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	8	4	
		10	11	21
Yerevan Northern University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	81	32	
		81	32	113
Eurasia International University	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	33	4	
	<i>Master's degree</i>	3	0	
		35	4	39

Annex 2. Students' viewpoints on Different Aspect of Impact of the Bologna Process (%)

Question / Judgment	%
The Bologna system makes student more protected / student's problems, demands and opinions are heard	
Yes, it impacts significantly	30
Yes, it impacts partially	47
No, it does not have impact	13
There was no such problem also previously	4
It is difficult for me to answer	6

Question / Judgment	%
The Bologna system allows to evaluate students' knowledge objectively	
Yes, it impacts significantly	30
Yes, it impacts partially	41
No, it does not have impact	18
There was no such problem also previously	3
It is difficult for me to answer	7
By introducing the Bologna system the RA higher education is harmonized with the international educational standards	
Yes, it impacts significantly	28
Yes, it impacts partially	37
No, it does not have impact	21
There was no such problem also previously	2
It is difficult for me to answer	13
The Bologna system has improved student-professor relations	
Yes, it impacts significantly	26
Yes, it impacts partially	30
No, it does not have impact	25
There was no such problem also previously	12
It is difficult for me to answer	7
The Bologna system has decreased corruption phenomena in HEI	
Yes, it impacts significantly	21
Yes, it impacts partially	25
No, it does not have impact	33
There was no such problem also previously	6
It is difficult for me to answer	14
The Bologna system encourages student's activeness	
Yes, it impacts significantly	48
Yes, it impacts partially	27
No, it does not have impact	13
There was no such problem also previously	3
It is difficult for me to answer	9
The Bologna system makes student more independent	

Question / Judgment	%
Yes, it impacts significantly	42
Yes, it impacts partially	34
No, it does not have impact	13
There was no such problem also previously	4
It is difficult for me to answer	6
The Bologna system stimulates competition between students	
Yes, it impacts significantly	47
Yes, it impacts partially	31
No, it does not have impact	11
There was no such problem also previously	3
It is difficult for me to answer	8

Annex 3. Opportunities available in HEI in terms of choosing subjects taught (% according to HEIs)

	There is broad opportunity	There is limited opportunity	There is no opportunity	It is difficult to answer	Total
YSU	2	11	4	2	18
ASPU	2	5	2	2	11
YSULSS	0	3	1	0	4
ANAU (Vanadzor, Sisian Branches)	0	0	1	0	1
YSAFA	0	1	0	0	1
YSITC	0	1	0	0	1
NUACA	0	1	2	0	4
YSMU	1	2	3	0	6
YSC	0	1	1	0	2
SEUA	0	3	4	1	8
RA PAA	0	0	0	0	1
ASIPC	0	1	2	0	3
ASUE	0	6	2	1	9
VSU	0	2	1	0	3
GSTI	1	3	2	0	7

	There is broad opportunity	There is limited opportunity	There is no opportunity	It is difficult to answer	Total
Goris State University	0	1	1	0	2
Gavar State University	0	0	2	0	2
Vanadzor Branch of SEUA	0	0	0	0	1
Kapan Branch of SEUA	0	0	0	0	0
Ijevan Branch of YSU	0	1	0	0	2
Gyumri Branch of ASUE	0	0	1	0	1
Yeghehnadzor Branch of ASUE	0	0	0	0	0
Gyumri Branch of YSC	0	0	0	0	0
Vanadzor Branch of YSITC	0	0	0	0	0
Gyumri Branch of YSITC	0	0	0	0	0
FUA	0	0	1	0	1
RAU	0	1	1	0	3
AUA	0	0	0	0	1
Yerevan Northern University	1	2	2	2	7
Eurasia International University	1	1	0	0	2
Total	10	46	33	11	100

Annex 4. The team of interviewers consisted of:

1. Armine Yaralova
2. Gohar Hovhannisyan
1. Ani A. Baghdasaryan
2. Yeranuhi Manukyan
3. Gagik Simonyan
3. Erik Vardanyan
4. Lara Alaverdyan
5. Tatev Hakobyan
6. Meri Hayrapetyan
7. Ani M. Karapetyan
8. Sate Avetisyan
9. Haykanush Nersisyan
10. Lusine Dadalyan
11. Haykaz Shahnazaryan
12. Davit Karapetyan
13. Diana Karapetyan
14. Anahit Danielyan
15. Arpine Hovsepian
16. Serj Rushanyan
17. Taguhi Abrahamyan
18. Haykaz Shahnazaryan
19. Anrieta Karapetyan
20. Rima Kharatyan
21. Ninel Avetisyan
22. Ani Papikyan
23. Nelli Hakobyan
24. Armine Sukiasyan
25. Ani Karapetyan
26. Ani G. Baghdasaryan

Bologna System in Armenia. The Student Perspective

Survey Report

