

Abstract

The Unified National Examination (UNE) is a policy, which regulates the students' admission procedure to higher education institutions in Georgia. The UNE is a special policy in terms of its design, which manages admission procedure with a centralized and standardized approach. The main goal of this thesis is to study the 'side-effects' and challenges of UNE policy, explore its organizational structure and understand the main design patterns in the policy process to find the optimal solutions for current challenges. The research problem is studied through policy design conceptual framework in order to understand how a specific instrument mix was chosen by the policy-makers and how particular redesigns of the system were made in the previous years. The thesis discusses the design process of UNE, its design types and spaces and identifies the levels of government capacities in this process and its impact on tool choices. The thesis highlights the following challenges of UNE policy: contested testing model, controversial design of reforms, 'black holes' for corruption, inequality of access to higher education and restricted autonomy of higher education institutions, which need to be addressed for system sophistication in the future.

Keywords

Education policy, higher education system, national examination, Georgia, policy design, policy instruments.