

## The Increase of Women's Role with Higher Education in the Economy of the US and Georgia

Irina BAKHTADZE \*  
Elene SHENGELIA \*\*

### Abstract

Over the past two decades, American women's positions and opportunities in the educational sphere have improved dramatically which gave women a chance to make a substantial educational progress. The university education gave personal advancement to American women to be extensively involved in social, political, and economic success of the country. University education is associated with better labor market outcomes including higher earnings, lower poverty and lower unemployment. In addition, education is linked to various other benefits including higher job satisfaction, better marginal benefits, and better health. Understanding the relationship between educational attainment and employment outcomes requires accurate data about identifications that have value in the job market.

**Keywords:** gender equality, gender studies departments, Georgian women with higher education survey results, history of women's higher education in America and Georgia, women and higher education, women's role in the growth of economy, women and employment

### Introduction

Nowadays, women enroll in greater numbers than men in both undergraduate and graduate institutions. By 2019, women are projected to account for nearly 60 percent of total undergraduate enrollment; however, there is some difference in gender participation in science and technology fields which can be considered a global phenomenon. OECD member countries reported that in the fields of humanities, arts, education, health and welfare, women comprised nearly two-thirds of graduates; however, in science and technology, females made up only about one-quarter of graduates. The increase of the number of women among college graduates is respectively reflected in the amplified number of women employment in all spheres of economy including small and medium business. The societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat males and females more equally, and that social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes. Between 1970 and 2009, women went from holding 37% of all jobs to nearly 48%. That's almost 38 million more women. Without them, US economy would be 25% smaller today. In 2010, 58% of all undergraduate degrees in the U.S. were awarded to women. As a result, women accounted for 53% of the total college educated population in the U.S. However, only 50% of the college educated workers were women.

International and non-governmental organizations in America play crucial role in support and advancement of

women with higher education. The mission of the National Association of University Women is to serve women, youth and the disadvantaged in our communities and in developing countries by addressing educational issues, advancing the status of women's issues, and strategically partnering with allied organizations. Non-governmental organization - Georgian Association of University Women - has been an affiliated partner of the AAUW within international partnership program since 2006.

Nowadays, women seek application of their education and self-realization not only in their jobs and families, but also beyond them. This clearly indicates that women with university education have become professionally advanced, financially more independent and self-assured. They are motivated to apply their knowledge and experience in a wider political and social context. The analysis based on the survey conducted in Tbilisi in June 2014 demonstrates that Georgian women's majority view higher education as the most important vehicle for their employment and career advancement, also for their personal and social development.

Education has historically served as a means to liberate and empower both - men and women. In the previous decades the discussion of gender inequality in education escalated, becoming part of the research and political agenda of democratic countries. Though full equality of opportunities respecting gender has not been achieved, new understandings and prospects have emerged in the 20th century. A new term - "engendering" economics forces is to explain the

\* Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education and Humanities, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia.  
E-mail: ibakhtadze@ibsu.edu.ge

\*\* Graduate of the Faculty of Education and Humanities, Direction of American Studies, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia.  
E-mail: shengelia.elene@yahoo.com

role gender plays in economic life. It could help us better understand the evolution of social institutions and the way they shape market outcomes. (Forbe, 1995, pp. 1-2) The economic recession, which started in 2001 in the US, demanded additional workforce which caused women's active involvement in economic processes as a labor force. The university education gave personal advancement to American women to be extensively involved in social, political, and economic success of the country.

The present article explores the increased role of the higher education in American women's career development since the turn of the century, and makes a comparative analysis of the same period in Georgia to take a broad view on Georgian women's employment and self-realization who received higher education. In comparison with women in the US, Georgian women have had wider opportunities for their career development since the 1920s because of socialist revolution which formally liberated women and offered non-discriminating rights that promoted equality both in higher education and employment. But for some hidden political reasons women in Georgia could not achieve full participation in social and political life of the country. The analysis based on the survey conducted in Tbilisi in June 2014 will demonstrate Georgian women's attitude towards higher education and the role it played in their career and personal development, as well as in their social advancement.

## Early History of Women's Higher Education in the US

Throughout most of American history, women had only limited legal rights with restricted career opportunities. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions. Women were discouraged from pursuing higher education because it was culturally considered unnatural for a woman to be educated. Without a university degree it was very difficult for women to enter the professions. After a long struggle, women obtained right to become doctors. It was not until 1910 that women were allowed to become accountants and bankers. However, by 1900, there were only 200 women doctors and there were still no women diplomats, barristers or judges. American education has a long history of admitting newcomers first in segregated settings. Until the rise of public universities late in the 1800s, women most often attended all-female seminaries, academies, and colleges. Even at Oberlin, founded in 1833 in Ohio, one of the leading colleges in liberal arts and science till present, women studied only in the "Ladies Course." At most state institutions, female students studied either a regular course (that is, teacher training) or home economics. Many times, when given a chance, women proved that they could achieve as high standards as men did. As an example, a biography of an outstanding scholar Ellen Henrietta Swallow Richards, (1842-1911) can be mentioned. She attended Vassar College, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in 1870. Afterward she applied for admission to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technologies) and in January 1871 became the first female student to attend MIT, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1873 in chemistry. In 1910, Smith College conferred the honorary degree Doctor of Science on Ellen Swallow Richards. A powerful leader, a wise teacher, a tireless worker, of sane and kindly judgment, Dr. Richards

taught and inspired thousands to carry forward the movements which she inaugurated. (Retrieved from <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/exhibits/esr/esr-biography.html>)

At the beginning of the 20th century it was still very difficult for women to obtain a university education. Colleges were slow to accept coeducation, although public universities admitted women more easily than the older private universities. In the United States, the prestigious Ivy League institutions on the East Coast remained all-male until the 1960s; those that allowed women an earlier place generally did so in "coordinate" arrangements like Radcliffe College to Harvard University or Barnard to Columbia. One of the most firm arguments against "feminization" was a fear that women's increasing choice of a particular curriculum or institution would automatically threaten men's opportunities. (Eisenmann, n. d., p. 65)

Over the past two decades, women's positions and opportunities in the educational sphere have improved dramatically which gave women a chance to make a substantial educational progress. The large gaps between the education levels of women and men that were evident in the early 1970s have essentially disappeared for the following generations. The stereotypes that math fields are for males and art fields are for females – have been gradually broken in the United States starting from the 1990s. Currently, the number of women involved in science and engineering is growing continuously. In elementary, middle, and high school, girls and boys take math and science courses in roughly equal numbers, and about as many girls as boys leave high school prepared to pursue science and engineering majors in college. Yet fewer women than men pursue these majors. Among first-year college students, women are much less likely than men to say that they intend to major in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM). By graduation, men outnumber women in nearly every science and engineering field, and in some, such as physics, engineering, and computer science, the difference is dramatic, with women earning only twenty percent of bachelor's degrees. Women's representation in science and engineering declines further at the graduate level of higher education. Although, they still lag behind males in mathematics and science achievement, high school females on average outperform males in reading and writing and take more credits in academic subjects. In addition, females are more likely than males to attend humanitarian colleges after high school and are as likely to graduate with a postsecondary degree. (Hill et al., 2008)

## Statistics of Higher Education in USA 1990-2010

For the last forty years, the number of people going to colleges has increased dramatically throughout the world. This could be credited to the fact that the labor market benefits of higher education. What could be considered surprising, however, is that the increase has been mostly among women. In 1970, far fewer women went to college than men, except in a few of the richer countries. But by 2010, the number of women who had attained a college education was greater than that of men in 67 of 120 countries around the world, including 17 relatively poor countries.

In an article in the May 2010 issue of the *American Economic Review* entitled "The Market for College Graduates and the Worldwide Boom in Higher Education for Women," Nobel laureate, economist Gary S. Becker and colleagues William H. J. Hubbard and Kevin M. Murray attempted to explain this phenomenon. Becker and his colleagues present a model of the optimal investment in higher education for a person. Furthermore, to increase lifetime earnings, the model's determinants include the benefits of a college education for a person's health, marital prospects, investments in his or her children, and propensity for coping with unexpected events. By each of these measures, people with more education generally are better off than those with less education. The decision to go to college also depends on the costs involved, including tuition and the prospect of doing well in college. The authors attribute the increase in higher education to greater benefits relative to costs from attaining a college education. In other words, the "rate of return" to higher education has increased in recent decades in the United States and in many other countries, and although the overall benefits are still greater for men than for women, the gap has narrowed substantially. (Hubbard et al., n. d.)

In another article, *Women and higher education*, Garry S. Becker argues that because the returns to attaining a college education have increased over time, both the demand for and the supply of college graduates have increased as well. More women than men currently go to college because women's elasticity of supply with respect to earnings is greater than men's. Women tend to have greater "non-cognitive abilities," such as self-discipline, perseverance, and social skills than men, so women's costs of attending college are lower than men's. Thus, the increase in demand for college graduates has induced more women than men to go to college, even when the benefits are the same for both. (Becker, pp. 56-72)

Between 1990 and 2012, educational attainment among 25- to 29-year-olds increased: the percentage who had received at least a high school diploma or its equivalent increased from 86 to 90 percent, and the percentage who had completed a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 23 to 33 percent (National Center for Education Statistic, 2013).

## Higher Education Demand among Women

Gendered approaches have limited women's experience in a number of fields. The power of the beliefs that dominated for centuries have led to three misinterpretations of women's historical behavior: first, that they "feminized" certain fields, driving men out; second, they have been minor and unsuccessful participants in science; and third, their educational participation in the early post-World War II era was merely incidental. In many ways, women's performance was severely criticized by the society. Thus, women's impetus in higher education remained inhibited by those earlier beliefs.

Education delivers a variety of benefits; so the higher educational attainment is associated with better labor market outcomes including higher earnings, lower poverty, and lower unemployment. In addition, education is linked to vari-

ous other benefits including higher job satisfaction, better marginal benefits, and better health. American women and girls have made substantial progress in educational attainment and achievement in the last few decades. This trend showing steady gains in education among women holds across racial and ethnic groups and is also visible in other developed countries. In many instances, the progress made by females in recent decades exceeded that of their male counterparts across an array of educational measures. Understanding the relationship between educational attainment and employment outcomes requires accurate data about identifications that have value in the job market. Current Federal sources on educational attainment have two main data limitations. First, there is slight information available on the relationship between degree attainment in specific fields of study and labor market outcomes. Second, current surveys of educational attainment do not count non-degree credentials such as postsecondary (mostly vocational) certificates or industry-recognized certifications—both of which prepare women for work.

## Enrollment and Graduation

Nowadays, women enroll in greater numbers than men in both undergraduate and graduate institutions. From 1972 through 2008, regardless of age, the immediate college enrollment rate—defined as the percentage of high school completers of a given year who enroll in two- or four-year colleges in the fall immediately after completing high school—increased for both males and females, but the increase was greater for females than males. In 2008, the immediate college enrollment rate for all females was higher than that for all males, 72 percent versus 66 percent, respectively. By 2019, women are projected to account for nearly 60 percent of total undergraduate enrollment. The number of females in graduate schools surpassed the number of males in 1984. More recently, between 1997 and 2007, the increase in female full-time graduate students was nearly double that of males. Women also have higher graduation rates at all academic levels. In 2008, non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic females age 16 to 24 had lower high school dropout rates than their male counterparts. Female students also took more Advanced Placement exams than their male counterparts (1.6 million and 1.3 million, respectively). Women earned more postsecondary degrees than men within each racial and ethnic group in 2007–2008. This finding is particularly notable for non-Hispanic Black women, who earned more degrees than non-Hispanic Black men across all postsecondary levels. The trend toward increasing female educational attainment is not limited to the United States. In 2010, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that females earned, on average, 58 percent of undergraduate degrees conferred in OECD countries. The increase of the number of women among college graduates is respectively reflected in the amplified number of women employment in all spheres of economy including small and medium business. (National Center for Education and Statistics. (Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11542-eng.htm>)



## Academic Fields and the Role of Women Studies University Programs in Raising Awareness among Society

Notwithstanding the progress that women have made in postsecondary education, some differences remain in the relative performance of female and male students in specific academic fields. Female students generally score lower than male students in mathematics assessment tests and higher in reading assessment tests. Women are generally found in different academic areas of specialization than are their male counterparts. In the United States, the percentage of women entering various science and technology fields, specifically in engineering and information sciences, continues to be lower than the percentage of men. This difference in gender participation in science and technology fields is a global phenomenon. OECD member countries reported that in the fields of humanities, arts, education, health and welfare, women comprised nearly two-thirds of graduates; however, in science and technology, females made up only about one-quarter of graduates.

Women's studies, also known as feminist studies, is an interdisciplinary academic field that explores politics, society, media, and history from women's and/or feminist perspectives. Those respectively new university programs played an outstanding role in understanding the significance of gender approach in different fields, such as economy, politics, education, business, finances, employment, and health care. Popular methodologies within the field of women's studies include standpoint theory, multiculturalism, transnational feminism, reading practices associated with critical theory, post-structuralism, and unexpected theory. The Women Studies researches and criticizes societal norms of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other social inequalities. Therefore, it was first born as an academic rubric apart from other departments in the late 1960s, as the second wave of feminism gained political influence in the academy through student and faculty activism. As an academic discipline, it was modeled on the American studies and ethnic studies (such as Afro-American studies). The first accredited Women's Studies course was held in 1969 at Cornell University. The first two Women's Studies Programs in the United States were established in 1970 at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University) and SUNY-Buffalo. Carol Rowell Council was the student co-founder along with Dr. Joyce Nower, a literature instructor. The SUNY-Buffalo program was also the result of intense debate and feminist organizing led by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, and it was eventually birthed out of the American Studies department. In 1972, Sarah Lawrence College became the first institution to grant Masters Degrees in Women's History. Throughout the later 1970s many universities and colleges created departments and programs in women's studies, and professorships became available in the field which did not require the sponsorship of other departments. The first Ph.D. program in Women's Studies was established at Emory University in 1990. By the late twentieth century women's studies courses were available at many universities and colleges around the world. A 2007 survey conducted by the National Women's Studies Association included 576 institutions offering women's studies or gender studies at some level.

Nowadays, women's and gender studies fields are very popular and demanded for women as for men. Women's and Gender Studies provide critical thinking skills and an understanding of women's diverse contributions to society, which are valuable for a wide variety of careers. Women's and Gender Studies Programs are committed to realizing the equality of women and men in all areas of life, so that our relationships, both personal and social, are characterized by the freedom and mutuality which can only occur among equals. Increasingly, specialists in Women's and Gender Studies are being used as consultants in industry, higher education, insurance companies and personnel firms – even state and federal government agencies require people who have special training in understanding gender relations. A lot of universities have these departments in the United States, for example, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey offering tertiary education, BA MA and PhD. Women's and Gender Studies offers students an interdisciplinary examination of women's roles, contributions, history and experiences as well as a critical study of gender structures in societies and cultures in the U.S. and the world. It utilizes gender along with race and class as a category of analysis, helping students investigate the role that gender plays in our history, literature, art, politics, education, sports, health and family.

Women's Studies International the Rutgers's university library covers the core disciplines in Women's Studies to the latest scholarship in feminist research supporting the curriculum development in the areas of sociology, history, political science and economy, public policy, international relations, arts and humanities, business and education.

Within the framework of the Researchers Exchange US Programs, and Soros Foundation education programs, Georgian professors and scholars working in the field of women and gender studies have been given a unique opportunity to visit Rutgers University and share the valuable experience accumulated in gender studies; work with unique library sources and statistics which the University has been developing for half a century. The partnership between Rutgers University and Georgia has already had a fifteen-year history, among the professors who visited the University and contributed significantly to the development of the named field in Georgia are: Professors of state and private universities: Tamara Shioshvili, Elene Medzmariashvili, Iago Kachkachishvili, Medea Badashvili, Ialashvili, Peride Zurikashvili, and others. The visiting scholars have established close contacts with American Universities and participated in gender studies conferences. They have developed gender studies curriculum and syllabi in different subjects and have worked out innovative reaching strategies. The assistance extended by the American universities and educational centers to Georgian scholars is invaluable and has had a long-term effect on the development of gender-sensitive attitude in our government and society at large.

## The Role of National and International Organizations in Evaluation of Women's Role in Economic Development

Most major international organizations, including the United Nations and the World Bank, have special units devoted to

research and policy formulation on women's issues. A widespread consensus on the benefits of investing in women's education has radically altered public policy in many parts of the world. Yet discussions of gender have remained segregated within special reports or specific policy initiatives, having relatively little impact on the mainstream discourse of development economics. There are many good reasons to focus on women. Women generally have lower incomes and less leisure time than men, and seldom have equal opportunities to develop their capabilities. Investments in women's human capital typically yield a greater rate of return in labor productivity, child health, and family welfare than investments in men's human capital. But apart from these practical benefits lies the possibility that the growing literature on women's productive and reproductive work will offer important insights into the development of the process itself. "Engendering" economics – forcing it to explain the role gender plays in economic life – could help us better understand the evolution of social institutions and how they shape market outcomes (Forbe, 1995, pp. 1-2).

The most influential evidence on the importance of women to economic development has come from research the World Bank's 'Gender Mainstreaming Strategy' launched in 2001. This research highlighted that societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat males and females more equally, and that social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes (World Bank, 2001).

Identification of women as being a reliable, productive and cheap labor force makes them the preferred workforce for textiles and electronic transnational corporations. Perception of women as 'good with money,' including being better at paying back loans, has led them to be targeted in microfinance programs. Recognition of women as more efficient distributors of goods and services within the household has led to them being targeted with resources aimed at alleviating poverty, such as cash transfer programs. The above shows how the justification for including women in development in economic growth has been an efficient argument. Critics suggest this instrumentalist approach to engendering development, while bringing economic growth gains, will not fundamentally change the position and situation of women. It is important to note that while gender equality will help bring economic growth, economic growth will not necessarily bring gender equality. Advancing gender equality requires strengthening different dimensions of women's autonomy: economic and political autonomy, full citizenship and freedom from all forms of violence, and sexual and reproductive autonomy. (Bradshaw et al., 2013, pp. 4-6)

## How Women Contribute to Economic Progress

Women have been a growing factor in the success of the U.S. economy since the 1970s. Indeed, the additional productive power of women entering the workforce from 1970 until today accounts for about a quarter of current GDP. As the U.S. struggles to sustain historic GDP growth rates, it is critically important to bring more women into the workforce and fully position high-skill women to drive productivity im-

provement. At a corporate level, where many high-skill women are employed, the opportunity is to continue to advance women into leadership positions where they can make the greatest contributions. While companies have worked hard to eliminate overt discrimination, women still face the destructive force of mindsets that limit their opportunities. Companies that aspire to achieve sustained diversity balance must choose to transform their cultures. Management needs a powerful reason to believe such as the potential competitive and economic advantage from retaining the best talent.

Between 1970 and 2009, women went from holding 37% of all jobs to nearly 48%. That's almost 38 million more women. Without them, US economy would be 25% smaller today—an amount equal to the combined GDP of Illinois, California and New York. GDP growth is driven by two factors—an expanding workforce and rising productivity. Back in the 1970s when women and a huge cohort of baby boomer men were entering the workforce, 65% of GDP growth arose from workforce expansion. Today, nearly 80% of growth is related to productivity increases, according to the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI).

To sustain the historic rate of GDP growth of approximately 3% and maintain the United States' leadership in the global economy, MGI reports that the nation will need a combination of some workforce expansion and a burst of productivity driven by innovation and operational improvements. Women are critical to both forms of growth: Bringing more women into the workforce. About 76% of all American women aged 25-54 are in the workforce (i.e., currently employed or seeking work). Underneath the U.S. average, there is considerable variability among the states, and the top 10 states have participation rates at 84%. This suggests an opportunity. Getting all states up to an 84% participation rate would add 5.1 million women to the workforce. This is equivalent to adding 3-4% to the size of the US economy. Fully tapping the talent of high-skill women; training women for the most productivity enhancing jobs. In 2010, 58% of all undergraduate degrees in the U.S. were awarded to women. As a result, women accounted for 53% of the total college educated population in the U.S. However, only 50% of the college educated workers were women. Simply said, we don't have the full amount of female college educated talent in our workforce. Changing this could improve corporate performance and help raise national productivity. But doing so will depend on finding ways to keep ambitious, well-qualified women moving up the management ranks. Women can also contribute to the productivity challenge by training in disciplines with impact on increasing productivity, such as finance, professional services, and science & technology.

## Increase of Women's Role in Small and Medium-size Businesses

Job related trainings and education in management, leadership, and accounting is in direct relationship with the rising number of women in the US economy and in small and medium size businesses. Women-owned firms continue to diversify into all industries. The industries with the highest concentration of women-owned firms are: health care and social assistance (53% of firms in this sector are women

owned, compared to a 29% share overall), educational services (45%), other services (41%), and administrative support and waste management services (44%). The industries with the lowest concentration of women owned firms (in industries contributing 2% or more of the business population) are construction (where just 7% of firms are women-owned), transportation and warehousing (11%), and finance and insurance (20%). All other industries are close to the 29% share in all industries—again illustrating that women-owned firms are staking a claim in all sectors of the U.S. economy. Looking at the distribution of women-owned firms by industry sector finds that the greatest number of women-owned firms is found in health care and social assistance (including doctors and dentists, residential care facilities and child care providers)—17% of women owned firms own health care or social services-related businesses. Other top sectors for women-owned firms include other services, with 15% of women owned firms in that grouping; professional/scientific/ technical services (including attorneys, accountants, public relations and human resources/organizational development consulting) 14%; retail trade, 11%; and administrative support and waste management services, 10%. The fastest growth in the number of women-owned firms over the past 11 years has been in education services (up 63%), administration and waste services (up 58%), health care and social assistance (up 45%), and transportation and warehousing (up 40%). When comparing the growth in the number of women-owned firms to that of all firms in each industry sector since 2002, we find that women-owned firms exceed overall sector growth rates in eight of the thirteen most populous industries. In order from widest to narrowest growth gap they are: administrative support and waste services (up 58% among women-owned firms compared to 29% growth overall in the sector, for a 29-point gap), wholesale trade (12-point gap), other services (9-point gap), real estate (9 points), finance and insurance (7-point gap), health care and social assistance (+4), professional/scientific/technical services (+3), and arts/entertainment/ recreation (+3). After analyzing trends in the growth in the number and size of women-owned firms in the 1997, 2002 and 2007 economic censuses, and extrapolating those trends forward (taking into account economic conditions), we estimate that, as of 2013, there are over 8.6 million women-owned businesses in the United States: 8,617,200 to be precise. As of this year, women owned firms are generating \$1,335,095,100 (over \$1.3 trillion) in revenues and employing nearly 7.8 million (7,754,600) people. Between 1997 and 2013, when the number of businesses in the United States increased by 41%, the number of women-owned firms increased by 59%—a rate 1½ times the national average. Despite the fact that the number of women-owned firms continue to grow at a rate exceeding the national average, and now account for 29% of all enterprises, women owned firms only employ 6% of the country's workforce and contribute just under 4% of business revenues—roughly the same share they contributed in 1997. When large, publicly traded firms are excluded, women-owned firms comprise 30% of the privately held firm population and contribute 14% of employment and 11% of revenues. Combining equally owned firms with women-owned enterprises finds that women-owned and equally owned number 13,554,000 as of 2013. These firms generate \$2,736,241,900 (over \$2.7 trillion) in revenues, and employ 15,861,500 people. Women-owned and equally owned firms together represent 46% of U.S. firms and contribute 13% of

total employment and 8% of firm revenues. This analysis also takes a look at the all-important issue of job creation. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between January 1997 and January 2013, the total number of employed persons increased by 14%, from 128.3 million to 143.3 million. There's a significant difference in the pre-recession and post-recession trends, however. Between 1997 and 2007, employment grew by 11%, while it has declined by 2% since 2007. There are actually 2.7 million fewer jobs as of January 2013 than there were in January of 2007. Looking more narrowly at private sector jobs, contributed by the businesses included in the Census' Survey of Business Owners, there were 103 million people employed in non-farm private sector jobs as of March 1997, 118.6 million in March 2007, and we estimate that there are now 123.9 million persons employed in the private sector as of March 2013. This represents a 20% increase over the entire 16-year period, including a 15% increase from 1997 to 2007 and a more modest 4% increase over the last six years. Therefore, indeed, while women-owned firms remain smaller than their peers in terms of average employment and revenues, they are not only showing higher percent growth in numbers but also higher absolute growth in terms of job creation (U.S. Women in Business, 2014, pp. 3-8).

## Non-governmental Organizations in Support of Women Advancement

Generally, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are critical change agents in promoting economic growth, human rights and social progress. USAID partners with NGOs to deliver assistance across all regions and sectors in which they work and to promote inclusive economic growth, strengthen health and education at the community level, support civil society in democratic reforms and assist countries recovering from disasters. National Association of University Women is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations in the US. It was founded in 1910 and still plays a significant role in support, empowerment and advancement of women's higher education and training. The mission of the National Association of University Women is to serve women, youth and the disadvantaged in our communities and in developing countries by addressing educational issues, advancing the status of women's issues, and strategically partnering with allied organizations. This organization also sponsors, promotes and enthusiastically conducts educational activities that are designed to provide community outreach services to learners at every level of development; It partners with educational institutions and other organizations to improve educational standards and fosters academic and intellectual attainment.

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is also the oldest one. It was founded in 1888, and is the nation's leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls. Since its foundation, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental issues of the day — educational, social, economic, and political. It is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization which encounters more than 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, as well as 1,000 local branches and over 800 college and university partners. Throughout the history, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the funda-



mental issues of the day — educational, social, economic, and political (Retrieved from <http://www.aauw.org/who-we-are/>). Non-governmental organization - Georgian Association of University Women - has been an affiliated partner of the AAUW within international partnership program since 2006. (Prof. Dr. Tamar Kiknadze, the president, and Prof. Dr. Irina Bakhtadze, executive director). The Georgian association has carried out a number of projects advancing and supporting women in higher education. Cooperation with the American partners has been fruitful; we shared policy and strategy, as well as the rich experience accumulated by AAUW for more than a century (Retrieved from <http://www.ewuwgs.com/what-can-i-do-with-a-major-in-wgst/>).

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Higher Education for Development (HED) have announced that five universities in the United States have been selected to partner with higher education institutions in five countries to promote gender equality and women's leadership. In the 2011–2012 academic year, U.S. colleges and universities enrolled 3.5 million students who are also single parents, a group that represents 15.2% of the undergraduate population. This growing demographic group of post-traditional students must balance academic, family, and work responsibilities at the same time.

## Georgian Women with Higher Education and Employment Opportunities

An educate society serves as a foundation of every successful and powerful nation. The first priority of the state policy of Georgia is to provide quality education and make investments in future generations. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia aims at establishing modern and innovative education and scientific environment in close cooperation with civil society, advocating democratic principals, such as freedom of choice, fair competition, equal opportunities, equity and integrity. Georgian women have century old traditions of higher education; the first Higher Education Courses for Women were opened in 1909 in Tbilisi with two faculties: Humanities and Social studies; two years later the Medical faculty was added and soon the Institute became the center of University education for the women of Caucasus countries – Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Higher Education Courses had four graduations, approximate number of graduates amounted to four hundred. The Courses had similar curriculum as did the University of Petersburg, and the professors were invited from Russian and European well-known Universities. In 1918, many Georgian professors alongside with Professor Ivane Javakhishvili actively participated in foundation of Tbilisi State University which widely opened its door to the first women students; so, women's higher education is one hundred years old in Georgia. Moreover, when Georgia joined the Soviet Union, it automatically adopted the Soviet Constitution which declared the equality between men and women; but in many cases - in politics and economy particularly - gender equality was not achieved in reality.

Today, Georgia, a democratic country, implements the core principals of gender equality. In the Concept on Gender Equality adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2006 and the Law "On Gender Equality" (adopted by the Parliament

of Georgia in 2010) special emphasis is made on ensuring the equal rights between women and men and improving women's participation in the political, economic and social processes. Gender equality has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative aspect implies the process of generating and handling of gender disaggregated data in all public spheres, such as demography, education, health care, employment, social protection, crime etc. The qualitative aspect provides analysis of realization of the rights of women and men and of the level of accessibility of application and control of resources existing in the country.

## Georgian Women's Role in Economics Business and at Labor Market

According to research on women's economic opportunities of 2012, published in a Georgian quarterly journal, *Economist*, women play enormous role in the economy of Georgia. The women's active involvement in economic life positively affects on growth of country's GDP. According to data from 1995, women have the great share in the growth of GDP in Europe. Considering the data on women employment opportunities, higher education attainment, professional training and other aspects of gender equality, Georgia could be placed among advanced European and central Asian countries.

Gender stereotypes, imperfectness of Georgian Labor Code and some other reasons create a series of problems for women full participation in economic life. According to 2011 survey, (The Economist, 2014) out of 344 employed persons - 39% are women and 61% are men. According to the same survey women are mostly working at small and medium-size businesses in private sector. 61% of women and 59% of men are employed in Tbilisi. In addition, there is a lack of employment culture in our country; employers can follow their own interests violating the rights of their employees. Some types of discrimination which America faced early in the 60s-70s which was overcome with legislative acts are now present in Georgia. One example is age discrimination when the priority is given to the "young and good-looking women" particularly at the entry and middle-level jobs. The employers openly give privilege to the young, inexperienced graduates because they believe that new standards of education and learning skills worked out during university years are necessary accomplishments which will motivate them for the further education and professional growth. Till present, merit system as the selection criteria does not work in Georgia; the labor rights of women are often brutally violated by the employers, e.g. maternity leave, sick leave, and others are often not extended to women. The higher education, qualification and experience often mean very little for potential employers and professionalism is often disregarded. Georgian legislation should reflect the democratic countries' most recent achievements in human recourse management and ensure its timely implementation.

Most of the unemployed in Georgia are people with higher education, from 2010 to 2012 the number of unemployed women increased by 5.2%, men – by 6.5%. According to the National Statistical Service, in 2012 women comprised 47.4 % of the workforce, men - 52.6 %. By age group, in 2012, highest percentage of employees is recorded in the

middle age group; out of which - 35% are working women, and 28.8% are working men. People aged 15-24 are more often unemployed, respectively, every third person from this category is unemployed. In addition, 47 % of women with higher education are unemployed while for men this figure totals 33.9%.

## A Survey Results

According to statistics, most of the unemployed in Georgia have higher education and among them women are majority; this motivated us to conduct a survey of women with higher education in Georgia, which was carried out in June 2014, in Tbilisi. The number of survey participants was fifty and they were selected by random selection. The main goal of the study was to investigate social status, qualification and most importantly, the role higher education played in their life and career development. The data were collected through data collecting instruments: a. the questionnaire, and b. quantitative interviews, and in some cases, qualitative, informal interviews. The respondents' age varied from 25 to 60. Out of 50 women, 14 were 25-28 years old, 13 - were 29-35 years old; 11-were 36-45 years old; and 12 women were 46-60 years old. As for their marital status: 20 women out of 50 were single, and 30 were married.

The essential question: what role the higher education played in their life, only 3 women out of 50 answered that the higher education plays in their life "somewhat important role", and for the rest 47 respondents, the higher education is the most important aspect of their existence. The question which aimed to reveal respondents' satisfaction concerning their career development, considering their level of education, only nine women responded negatively, out of whom their only 5 are single and 4 - married. So, the rest, 19 single and 22 married women answered that they are satisfied with their success. The question dealing with salaries seem to be one of the most difficult one, and we asked the respondents to consider the country's average salary when responding the question. No one thinks that the salary corresponds to level of their education and qualification, though, 65 % thinks (20 single and 13 married women) that their salary is more or less relevant to their education and qualification, 8 single and 9 married answered that their salary is not relevant to their education and qualification. To my question where women can use their university education besides their workplace, 8 women out of 50 answered at home with their children, 2 women answered that with their friends and relatives, and 40 out of 50 women think that their knowledge and experience can be applied by any social group they deal with, such as NGOs, professional societies, media, etc.

To sum up the survey results, the majority of our research participants are employed, and they are more content with their career development rather than disappointed. Also, the survey showed that married women are as much dedicated to their careers as single women do. This indicates to the most significant change in women's lives; women's attainment in higher education is not motivated only by the wish to enhance their children's future; now, single women find personal and social realization in their jobs, and the married ones are able to combine their careers with their family responsibilities. Though only 50 percent of the

respondents think that they have "more or less relevant salary", still they continue to work to achieve their recognition. It is noteworthy, that women seek application of their education and self-realization not only in their jobs and families, but also beyond them. This clearly indicates that now women with university education have become professionally advanced, financially more independent and self-assured. They are motivated to apply their knowledge and experience in a wider political and social context. The fact is that less than 18% (9 women out of 50) was not satisfied with their career development. They are employed but still they had far greater ambitions than they have been able to achieve so far. From a certain point of view this attitude could also be viewed positively because it means that they have not accomplished their goals, and therefore they will continue their efforts, but on the other hand, the presence of "glass ceiling" particularly in women career development is evident; therefore, the women who identified their careers as "being unsuccessful" have to be studied as a separate case.

## Conclusion

Women enrollment in Universities has significantly increased for the last 25 years in the US. The geography of the faculties and the areas of science they choose have widened significantly. Demand for higher education and training is increasing equally among men and women not only in democratic countries with developed economies, but also in those ones which are now trying to maintain economic standards, achieve efficiency in economy, in social and gender equity, and thus raise the standards of life.

Based on the survey results conducted in Tbilisi, it can be concluded that 80 percent of respondents with university education have had a chance to find a job and continue their career that makes them more self-reliant, purposeful, and socially active. It helps them to achieve a certain status in society and leads to the leadership positions. Besides, they find application of their knowledge, experience and skills beyond their work place, which demonstrates how women view their role as citizens who can bring change in their workplace and beyond it.

An extensive study of women's roles, contributions, history and experiences as well as a critical study of gender structures in societies and cultures in the U.S. and in Georgia will help the governments to work out efficient gender policy which will lead a society to a well-balanced and steady political, social and economic progress.

## References

- American Association of University Women. Retrieved November 5, 2014, from <http://www.ifuw.org/>
- Becker, G. S. (n. d.). *Monthly Labor Review*.
- Bradshaw, S., Castellino, J., & Diop, B. (2013). Women's Role in Economic Development: Overcoming the Constraints. Retrieved November 12, 2014, from [http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Bradshaw-Castellino-Diop\\_Womens-Role-in-Economic-Development-Overcoming-the-Constraints.pdf](http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Bradshaw-Castellino-Diop_Womens-Role-in-Economic-Development-Overcoming-the-Constraints.pdf)



- Ellen Swallow Richards. Retrieved from [http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/genre/shared/Genre\\_docs/3534\\_Actes1998/4-Eco-Folbre.2.pdf](http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/genre/shared/Genre_docs/3534_Actes1998/4-Eco-Folbre.2.pdf).
- Eisenmann, (n.d.). *The Impact of Historical Expectations on Women's Higher Education*.
- Forbe, N. (1995). *Engendering Economics: New Perspectives on Women Work and Demographic Chance*.
- Hill, C., Corbett, C., & Rose, A. St. (2008). *Why so Few?* Retrieved November 24, 2014, from <http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/Why-So-Few-Women-in-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Mathematics.pdf>
- Hubbard, William H.J. & Murray, Kevin, M. Institute for Research on Women. (n. d.). Retrieved October 14, 2014, from <http://irw.rutgers.edu/programs/global-scholars>
- National Center for Education and Statistics. (2013). Retrieved November 23, 2014, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11542-eng.htm>
- The Economist. (2014) Retrieved September 15, 2014, from [http://www.bpi.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2885%3Athe-economist-----&catid=945%3A2011-12-20-02-05-02&Itemid=126&lang=ka](http://www.bpi.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2885%3Athe-economist-----&catid=945%3A2011-12-20-02-05-02&Itemid=126&lang=ka)
- U.S Women in Business. (2014). Retrieved October 12, 2014, from <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/us-women-business-0>
- World Bank's 'Gender Mainstreaming Strategy', Launched in 2001 Yale News: Honoring Yale's Pioneering African American Alumni. (2013). Retrieved May 8, 2014, from <http://news.yale.edu/2013/02/28/honoring-yale-s-pioneering-african-american-alumni>