

Building Research Capacities Through Social Capital: The Role of Institutional Networks in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Research development in Georgian universities with post-Soviet experience faces certain difficulties, including lack of modern infrastructure, limited resources and consequences of long isolation from the international scientific community. The main challenges in social sciences are difficulties in assimilating global scientific achievements (Bregvadze, 2020). Against these challenges, creating effective research networks and consolidating resources are vital.

The research aims to study the role of social capital in strengthening the university community's research capabilities, particularly in terms of collaborative and partnership connections. Based on social capital and sociological institutionalism theories, the paper examines how institutional support contributes to improving research skills and outcomes. It aims to analyze how university society uses this support to create knowledge-sharing and innovative environments.

Research objectives:

- To study university policies for improving professors' and students' research skills
- To Analyze universities' practical activities, planned and implemented research programs
- To Analyze communication strategies for engaging professors and students in scientific research
- To Analyze inhibiting and stimulating factors in improving research skills through social capital

Research methods include document analysis (research strategies), in-depth interviews (with professors and administration) and focus groups (with students).

The paper will contribute new theoretical and empirical knowledge about using social capital in post-Soviet education systems and present strategic proposals for developing universities' research capabilities.

Overall, this work will be relevant for academics, policymakers and institutional leaders, as it explores how social capital can effectively strengthen universities' research potential and create a competitive, innovative higher education sector in Georgia.

Keywords: Social Capital, Sociological Institutionalism, Institutional Support, Higher Education, Research Capacities