

Minority Language Education in Georgia

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Georgia is the most diverse country in the South Caucasus region in terms of ethnicities and the identification and development of integration and inclusion policies for ethnic minorities has been ongoing throughout years offering many lessons learned. The sphere of education in these policies is an important one, and within education policies, the biggest challenges still remain on the general education level. This paper aims to analyze the current ethnic minority education policies in Georgia, to assess the existing challenges, and provide recommendations that could be helpful for policy makers as well as relevant stakeholders working in this direction.

Introduction

Georgia is the most diverse country in the South Caucasus region in terms of ethnicities. Although the currently published results of the official census reveal a decline in the share of ethnic minorities from 16.2 percent in 2002 to 13.2 percent in 2014, there are still around half a million ethnic minorities living in the country (National Statistics Office Of Georgia 2014).

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia has been struggling with the identification of an integration policy for ethnic minorities. For many years, different governments of Georgia have attempted to formulate strategies which would supposedly enable proper inclusion of the minorities. Despite this, many international and local organizations still claim that the governments' approaches are far from being adequate and effective in implementation.

Much of the criticism comes towards the educational policy for ethnic minorities. The latest opinion of the "Framework Convention of Protection of National Minorities" (FCNM) on Georgia emphasizes the lag in Georgia's progress regarding minority education in particular (Advisory Committee On the Framework Convention for the Protection Of National Minorities 2015). Although the current government attempts to introduce some best practices, they are predominantly *ad-hoc* and do not demonstrate a strategic and comprehensive approach.

Within the education policies, the biggest challenges still remain on the general education level. There are systemic problems which different governments of the country have not been able to deal with for decades, while consistently offering poor quality education to new generations of ethnic minorities.

This paper aims to analyze the current ethnic minority education policies, assess the existing challenges, and suggest recommendations which could be helpful for policy makers as well as relevant stakeholders working in this direction.

Methodology

Due to the complexity of the subject, a mixed methodological approach has been selected for the research in general. The paper has included two primary instruments for the identification and analysis of the current challenges:

1. Analysis of the existing reports and articles from international and local organizations on this specific issue. Further on, deep contextual research has been made on the existing strategic documents and programs/actions plans of the relevant governmental bodies and institutions.

- Interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of (MoES) Georgia, municipality Education Resource Centers (ERC), and school administrations. Further on, interviews have been conducted with the parents and school students from ethnic minority communities and local NGOs in order to identify the perceptions of the target group itself.

General education for ethnic minorities in Georgia

In Georgia, education is organized by the a three-level approach – Pre-school, General, and Higher education with an addition of vocational and life-long education. Out of the three above-mentioned, the most vulnerable situation still remains at the general education level.

In general, it can be argued that the MoEs of Georgia up until now had been dealing with the ethnic minority education in an *ad-hoc* manner – several programs have been designed and introduced to address some problems in this regard. However, there has never been a strategic and comprehensive approach employed besides the “National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration” (with Action Plan for 2009-2014) and its substitute the “State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration” (with Action Plan for 2015-2020). Nevertheless, the latter two documents have provided rather mediocre approaches in terms of education related problems.

Article 2, Paragraph “n” of Georgia’s Law on General Education states that education in Georgia is organized into three levels – Primary, Basic, and Secondary (The Parliament of Georgia n.d.).

Realizing the significance of a comprehensive approach to the existing problems for ethnic minorities, in November 2015, the MoES decided to start working on the elaboration of the strategy document, which would target ethnic minority education policy. Currently, it is still in the process of drafting and revision in cooperation with international and local organizations. The initial draft, prepared and presented by the Ministry staff in early December 2015, was a mere consolidation of information on the existing programs and it was missing a strategic vision and concrete plans for achieving

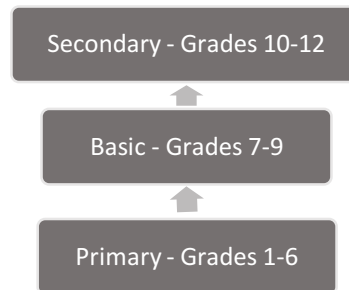


Figure 1 General Education System in Georgia

the desired objectives. Therefore, a consultant has been hired to work on the document, but results still remain to be seen.¹

Current situation

In order to better understand any issue concerning ethnic minorities of Georgia, it is of crucial importance to consider the general background. As mentioned above, 13.2 percent of Georgia’s population represent ethnic minorities. The significant majority of which (10.8 percent) are ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Therefore, problems peculiar for these two communities do not necessarily resemble the ones experienced by other ethnic minority groups.

Ethnicity	2014 #	2014 %	2002 #	2002 %
Georgian	3,224,564	86.83	3,661,173	83.75
Azerbaijani	233,024	6.27	284,761	6.51
Armenian	168,102	4.53	248,929	5.69
Russian	26,453	0.71	67,671	1.55
Ossetian	14,385	0.39	38,028	0.87
Yezidi	12,174	0.33	18,329	0.42
Ukrainian	6,034	0.16	7,039	0.16
Kist	5,697	0.15	7,110	0.16
Greek	5,544	0.15	15,166	0.35
Assyrian	2,377	0.06	No info	No info
Other	14,346	0.39	23,329	0.53
TOTAL	3,713,804	100.00	4,371,535	100.00

Table 1 Ethnic Composition of the Population of Georgia According the Official Census

In addition, an important factor is that ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis are compactly populated respectively in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions of the country. This again makes the issues of these populations different from the other minority groups which are predominantly urban

¹ This information was received in an interview with a representative of the MoES of Georgia in charge of Ethnic Minority Education Policy.

(Russians, Ukrainians, Assyrians, Yezidis) and living in the villages next to the Georgian ones (Avars, Udis, Greeks).

Therefore, the paper will be analyzing the situation regarding the two largest ethnic minorities in a separate chapter from the smaller ethnic minority groups. Considering the significance of the former, the body text of the paper concentrates on the issues of Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Russian language instruction schools.

A limbo for Azerbaijani and Armenian students?

Nowadays more than 300 Azerbaijani, Russian, and Armenian language instructed schools/sectors² exist in Georgia with most of them located in the two regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. According to the information provided by the local non-governmental organization (NGO) “Center for Civil Integration and Interethnic Relations”, graduates of non-Georgian language schools show 25-30 percent lower scores in the final school exams than the graduates of Georgian-instructed schools. This problem has been lingering on for 25 years with its root causes deriving from many aspects. The next sub-chapters attempt to identify these problems.

Adequate personnel

Human resources and their management in the field of general education is a challenge for all of Georgia. However, it is more intensive for non-Georgian language schools. The reforms which have been conducted in order to address problems have not necessarily been introduced in minority language-speaking schools. According to the data provided by the MoES’s National Center for Teacher Professional Development (NCTPD), there are 7,500 teachers at non-Georgian language schools/sectors amounting to 12.55 percent of the total number of teachers in the Georgian general education system while the number of schools/sectors 10.22 percent. The NCTPD admitted that out of these 7,500, only 31 are certified teachers (0.4 percent).

Lack of specialist in the field

In non-Georgian language general education institutions, it is a general practice for the personnel to teach several subjects at the same time, although they may have no competence. This to some degree is also the case for the high

² A sector in Georgian education system is a division within a school where the language of instruction is different than of the school itself.

mountainous regions and villages of Georgia, from where people tend to migrate for living conditions, and the number of local inhabitants is very low.

# of Subjects Teaching	# of such Teachers
9	2
8	12
7	129
6	395
5	215
4	1740
3	2,310
2	2,856
1	3,303

Table 2 Number of Teachers in Ethnic Minority Schools teaching such languages. Source: Tabatadze & Gorgadze (2015)

In the case of minority-populated villages, the main problems are regarding lack of qualified people with adequate expertise and skills to deliver the courses. This mainly goes to the subjects of natural sciences.

In an interview a schoolgirl from Akhalkalaki mentioned that her teacher “delivers Math, Chemistry, Physics and Geography at different times”.

According to the information indicated in a research there are cases when one teacher teaches 9 subjects (Tabatadze and Gorgadze 2015, 15). Table 2 describes the concrete number of the teachers at ethnic minority language schools that deliver several subjects at the same time.

The same study identifies that in one of the Marneuli municipality public schools, one teacher teaches following courses:

1. Natural Sciences (for Grades 1-6)
2. Math (for Grades 1-12)
3. Music (for Grades 1-9)
4. Native Language (for ethnic minorities, Grades 1-12)
5. Fine and Applied Art (for Grades 1-9)
6. Sport (for Grades 1-12)

Although during the interviews, most of the respondents from school administrations ruled out any possible damage this approach can bring to the quality of education, but the results prove otherwise.

Ageing

25 years have not been enough to overcome the Soviet legacy which has been kept within the system of education in Georgia. A teacher’s position still remains one of the lowest paid. Pursuing this carrier is not very popular and

there are no visible prospects for future development either. Thus, in the last two decades, the inflow of the new teachers and professionals has been quite low. This has caused ageing of the human resources in the education system of the country.

This is presented in dramatic terms in case of the minority schools. According to the quantitative study conducted by the Centre for Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations (CCIIR), teachers aged 60 or more comprise almost 25 percent of the total number, while practitioners or newly incoming teachers aged 21-25 are only around 4 percent. (Tabatadze and Gorgadze 2015, 5)

A recent study of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner for National Minorities on multilingual education in Georgia also confirms these facts, arguing that teachers continue teaching past the retirement age because they receive a very low pension from the state, and teaching is an additional source of income to supplement the pension (Wigglesworth-Baker 2015, 15). A representative from the Sulda village school administration in the Akhalkalaki municipality, when asked to reflect on this issue, responded: "In our village, there are no adequate human resources to substitute our teachers, while nobody wants to travel from the municipality center daily to deliver classes, since the salary is very low".

When the same issue was brought into the conversation with the leader of one of the local NGOs in Akhalkalaki, the respondent mentioned that the local environment is organized in a way that the new-comers are not "well accepted". Every time there is a job opening, the school administration, enjoying its administrative autonomy, always tries to fill it with the local inhabitants – ignoring the level of qualification.

In a private discussion with a representative from the MoES, it was argued that they try to distance themselves from this process since they do not want to be accused of "infringement on school autonomy or minority rights (in the case of job openings for a Georgian language teacher)".

As a result, it seems that all stakeholders have some sort of a justification for this problem, while the Ministry, which is in charge of the implementation of the education policy, has been so far negligent in terms of ageing problems faced by minority language instructed school.

Failures of inclusion into teachers' development processes

In an attempt to cope with some of the issues described and aware of the shortage of qualified teachers in Georgia, the MoES elaborated and adopted a

Teachers Professional Development program in 2009 – one of the first ever comprehensive approaches towards teachers’ professional development in the country. However, after realizing the shortcomings of this program (mostly due to the very poor performance of the teachers), the MoES decided to update it. Eventually, in 2015 a new “Teacher Induction, Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme” was adopted by the government of Georgia (Resolution of the Government of Georgia #68 2015 (in Georgian)).

Although the new scheme has been described as the most fitting solution of the current situation in the country (directed towards professional development, rather than certification), both schemes have failed to meet the needs of minority language school/sector teachers. The main reasons for this, as identified by the local teachers, can be found in the design of both of the professional development schemes:

1. The exams that the teachers had to pass for certification (one in the respective subject, another in professional skills) were available just in the state (Georgian) language.
2. Capacity development trainings available for teachers within these schemes were also available just in the state (Georgian) language.

Due to the lack of academic and professional competencies in the Georgian language of those teachers, they have nearly stayed out of the teachers’ development programs so far. As the interviews have found out, most of the teachers as well as school administration representatives are willing to be involved in the process, but the language barrier still prevents this from happening. The MoES’s negligence to take into consideration the needs of non-Georgian language school/sector teachers have further estranged them from the Georgian education system.

Currently, the NCTPD is running a 3-year program to address these problems. The program is further explored in the last chapter on state policies.

Textbooks

The second most frequently named reason for the relative lower performance of the education system among non-Georgian language general education institutions is textbooks.

The MoES of Georgia, according to its regulations has a “textbook approval procedure” determining the list of textbooks which can be used in the education process both in public and private schools.

Translation

For ethnic minorities language schools (Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Russian), only approved textbooks that are then translated into their respective languages can be taught. According to the information provided by the MoES, so far the number of approved textbooks prepared in accordance with the new National Curricula 2011-2016 and then translated into Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian are for the following subjects: Math, Nature, Art, and Music for Grades 1-6; “Our Georgia” and Information Technology for Grades 5-6 and Civil Defense and Security for Grade 6. Meanwhile, the rest of the textbooks for Grades 7-12 are those translated according to the old National Curricula. (Ministry of Education and Science (in Georgian)).

In general, the main concerns regarding textbooks are associated with the quality of the translation. Except for the Russian versions, both Armenian and Azerbaijani translations are done in a very poor level. “Sometimes it is even impossible for me to understand what is the idea of some sentences, and how are my students supposed to make a point out of them?!”, one of the Math teachers at a Marneuli municipality school commented adding that, due to this issue, textbooks from Azerbaijan are frequently used. An Armenian school student from the Ninotsminda municipality interviewed for this paper shared a similar point.

The bilingual approach

Bilingual textbooks, introduced as a component of the bilingual education pilot project, further estranged students from their textbooks. The methodology used for them implies translation into the minority language (Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian) of the 70 percent of the text, while 30 percent remains in the Georgian language. The above listed books written according to the new curricula are done in this style. Due to a fact that the academic-level competence in the Georgian language and especially the knowledge of terminology used in the book is at a very poor level among teachers as well as students, the effectiveness of the bilingual approach is very limited.

Upon the inception of the bilingual education pilot project by the Ministry, the target group teachers had undergone 3-month Georgian language courses. However, without any doubts, this was not enough for any of them to successfully uphold the objectives of bilingual education. As a result, some of the respondents frankly admitted that they have been skipping the parts in the textbook that are in the Georgian language.

One teacher noted that frequently a paragraph in the textbook in the minority language is followed by Georgian text which is contextually somewhat different than the idea developed by the previous paragraph. Therefore, it is hard for a student to follow this kind of shifts especially when those texts do not relate to each other.

A representative from a Marneuli municipality school administration maintained, “Bilingual textbooks can be very useful in the case when the teacher is capable of delivering the subject in the proper way. That person needs to be a virtuoso”. However, as it has been outlined, such skilled human resources are very few, if any.

Multiculturalism in general education

One of the dimensions of the “State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration” is the support to a tolerant environment not only among the ethnic minorities but also the population at large. General education is one of the instruments how this approach can be translated into practice. Although the general education curricula, in theory, also support the idea of promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity, the overall assessment of the approved textbooks indicate that this is not necessarily the case. A research of the textbooks of Grades 9-12, done by the “Tolerance and Diversity Institute” exposes the narratives of ethnocentrism and even xenophobia (Tolerance and Diversity Institute 2016).

Yet another study made on the textbooks of the primary level describes concrete passage that could lead to intolerant attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Tabatadze and Gorgadze, Intercultural Education Research in Primary Grades of Georgia 2013, 66). For example, a textbook of the subject “Our Georgia” reads:

“The inhabitants of our country went through a very difficult life. They went through wars, epidemics, forced displacement, natural disasters, crop failures, starvation, etc. This all hindered the population growth, reduced the life expectancy. In addition to this, throughout centuries, various ethnic groups from many countries moved and settled in Georgia. Their descendants are citizens of Georgia and enjoy the same rights as Georgians.”

The wording and sequencing of phrases used in this passage makes a reader think that ethnic minorities are some sort of a burden for the country, while emphasizing the dominant role of ethnic Georgians in the country – a clear indicator of ethnocentrism.

Furthermore, the textbook of the subject “History of Georgia and the World”, taught in Grade 11 includes a phrase from Ilia Chavchavadze’s diary-style novel “Mgzavris Tserilebi” (Letters of a Passenger) with the following xenophobic passage against Armenians:

“Today a newcomer Armenian robs us, our home more. In the old days, we were at least with a sword and a shield defending ourselves against the enemy, and what to do with the Armenian with whom you are not at war?”
(Jnews 2015)

Although this excerpt is a bit distorted from the original version, the main idea expressed by a local villager (in the novel) is completely out of the context for any history textbook. Citing this concrete paragraph of Chavchavadze who, by the way, also has more positive passages about Armenians, has a clear intention of suggesting xenophobic attitudes towards this ethnic group.

Approving such textbooks by the Ministry (and its translation in the relevant minority language) has consequences not only on the general tolerant environment in the country, but also dramatically affects students from this certain ethnic group, their perception of the country, and the willingness for further integration.

Management of the schools and subordination within the system

Since 2005, the Ministry has officially announced the decentralization of the general education as one of its priorities. The school administrations have been given the right to autonomously decide the course of the development of the school as well as the budgetary mechanisms and financial priorities.

Article 3, Paragraph “f” of Georgia’s Law on General Education provides that the “state ensures administrative and financial autonomy of general education institutions” (The Parliament of Georgia n.d.). The schools are given a status of a “legal entity of public law”, and their administrative and financial autonomy is guaranteed. A general education institution is to include a Board of Trustees, an Administration, a Teacher Council, a Self-Government of Pupils, a Disciplinary Committee, as well as an Appeals Committee. (The Parliament of Georgia n.d., Article 2, Paragraph “q”)

However, in practice, school administrations inherently still remain under the supervision of the municipality ERC which are structural local units of the Ministry. A research in the target municipalities revealed that non-Georgian

language school administrations are more frequently consulting their decisions with representatives of the ERC.

Although in the communication with the representatives of the municipality ERCs, respondents ruled out any kind of involvement in any affairs of public schools within their geographical areas, civil society activists believe that school administrations always make strategic decisions in accordance with the respective ERCs.

A representative of one of the ERCs of the Kvemo Kartli region maintained that it is against the law to get involved into the affairs of a school, but also admitted that if they seek “consultations”, they are always granted.

A representative of the Ministry shared the same position adding that in the official correspondence, they always indicate that each cooperation offer with any school needs to go through the school administration as much as the MoES does not have any leverage on them.

Two respondents from non-Georgian school administration also subscribed to this point, but one of them further added that “real autonomy” much depends on the management of the school: “There are some school principals which held the same position even during the Soviet Union, and they are used to hierarchical governance and always expect orders from the top.”

Poor management is also characteristic of the non-Georgian general education institutions. The issue of ageing is the case here as well as is the inefficiency due to a lack of sufficient Georgian language skills that are important for access to current procedures and modern approaches to better management.

According to an expert in the field of education, after the introduction of the voucher system funding for schools, the state finances students at non-Georgian language schools 15 percent more than the other students. This has accumulated for large schools into enormous additional funding. However, due to the lack of competence in administration and the lack of knowledge in using public funds, any extracurricular activities or infrastructural problems of the school are not funded even though close to half a million Georgian lari exists in their bank account.

Knowledge of the state language

As mentioned above, in many cases for both teachers and administration, the lack of knowledge of the Georgian language results in shortcomings for their development. However, in the case of students, the situation is even more

dramatic: due to the inability to get proper Georgian language courses, they can be left out of the process of civic integration in the future.

The Ministry, judging by its strategic documents and programs, sees the lack of knowledge of the Georgian language as the primary reason for other shortcomings and inefficiencies in the non-Georgian language school/sectors. However, the lack of state language competencies cannot be a balancing factor of the students' rights to get quality education in their native language.

The recent report of the FCNM notes that the "Georgian language skills are generally improving among persons belonging to national minorities, in particular among younger generations". However, these are mostly communicative skills, while neglecting the acquisition of higher literacy skills and the ability to pass exams. (Advisory Committee On the Framework Convention for the Protection Of National Minorities 2015)

A school student from the Azerbaijani community, when asked about the Georgian language, explained that her teacher "herself does not know enough Georgian" and that they have been given some handouts and were supposed to study themselves.

The NCTPD has elaborated and freely distributed textbooks of "Georgian as a Second Language" for Grades 1-12. A school administration representative in Akhalkalaki municipality explained that they "already have considerable improvements in teaching the state language" but he also expressed that the state officials are too much occupied with the Georgian language, while neglecting the quality of other subjects.

The forgotten – numerically small ethnic minority groups

A very unfortunate tendency in the field of education is that international observers, journalists, and organizations frequently neglect the problems faced by the minorities beyond the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian language communities in Georgia.

Numerically small ethnic minority groups in Georgia have, in some cases, cultural and ethnical existential problems out of which education plays one of the most important roles. Since 2012, minorities other than Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Russians face the problem of inability to learn their native language in public schools. Depriving the right of studying their native language was a clear breach of the 14th article of the FCNM – a document

ratified by Georgia in 2005. Moreover, removal of their native language – an important part of ethnic identity – from the school curriculum, further intensified the assimilation process of some of the ethnic groups in Georgia (Udis, Assyrians). (European Center for Minority Issues, ECMI Caucasus and others 2015)

Furthermore, the government is reluctant to provide effective measures to support, promote, and protect their cultural heritage. No museums, theatres or libraries work to preserve the identity of the numerically small ethnic groups though in most cases, they live compactly in certain villages.

These two problems (linguistic and cultural) are identified as a threat to the preservation of their identity by the numerically small ethnic groups. Assyrians and Udis, as well as the Batsb (a linguistic minority) living in Georgia are facing this issue most problematically as their communities in Georgia are the smallest and are diminishing. The younger generations are not able to speak in their native language.

In 2015, there were a number of positive developments in this direction. In particular, Decree 118 by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, signed on September 9 of 2015, introduced the teaching of the native languages of small minority groups in Georgia in the national general education curricula. These were to be elective subjects of study. A follow-up legal act of the Minister of Education and Science enlisted those minority languages and the applicable schools for this purpose:

1. The Ossetian language – in 3 public schools (villages of Fona, Tsitskanaantseri, Areshferani)
2. The Kurdish (Kurmanji) language – in 1 public school (Tbilisi Public School #79)
3. The Assyrian language – in 1 public school (village of Dzveli Kanda)
4. The Avar language – in 3 public schools (villages of Saruso, Chantliskure, Tivi)
5. The Udi language – in 1 public school (village of Zinobiani)
6. The Chechen language is also planned to be introduced as an elective subject from September 2016 in up to 5 villages.

The process leading up to the issuance of this Decree was primarily driven by the Council of National Minorities under the Public Defender's Office and by minority NGOs. However, textbooks as well as qualified teachers, here also, still remain a challenge. Although, the Ministry has approved standards of those languages, in practice the schools are using textbooks imported outside

of the country and thus, it is unclear how they follow the existing standards. The same is relevant about the teachers; there is no mechanism elaborated for the assessment of how qualified they are. However, the positive development of the reintroduction of these languages in the school curriculum is very much appreciated by the locals.

State policies

In the immediate post-independence period, the governments of Georgia did not have any vision, even will or resources to work towards policies for ethnic minority education. Zviad Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic policy also somewhat affected this. For example, the poor multicultural performance of the education system and the intolerant passages in the textbooks discussed above are traces of the policies of that time.

Eduard Shevardnadze's period resembled a stasis: nationalistic sentiments had dropped, while no further steps for civic integration including an education policy was at sight. It was only after 2004 when the government started to take into account the problems and challenges which ethnic minorities had specifically in education. However, the major reform started in 2007-2008 when the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities engaged actively. The first ever multilingual education attempts were also tested in this period.

A brief assessment of former programs

Beside bilingual education (its aspects have been already explored above), the MoES, through the NCTPD has implemented 2 targeted comprehensive programs which aimed at capacity building of the Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Kakheti regions schools in teaching the Georgian language. Meanwhile there are some *ad-hoc* style programs implemented by the Ministry itself aimed at supporting civic integration and networking between minority and Georgian teachers and students (e.g. "Multicultural Summer School for Ethnic Minorities", "Support of School Initiatives").

"Teach Georgian as a Second Language"

A program designed and implemented by the NCTPD was initiated in 2009 with ambitious objectives – to promote the knowledge of the Georgian language among ethnic minority populations, to support local teachers in professional development and in teaching the Georgian language as well as to facilitate the civic integration process. (National Center for Teacher Professional Development 2014)

The main concept of the program was to recruit highly professional teachers of the Georgian language and insert them into non-Georgian language schools/sectors where they would deliver not only courses of the Georgian language but also mentor the local teachers in teaching. It is worth mentioning that these teachers earned a salary for the instructional hours as well as an additional 1,000 Georgian lari paid through the program. This created some strains in the relations to the local teachers as they are paid 3 times less. In general, the program has been well funded from the state budget; in 2014 it was budgeted at 1,527,720.00 Lari.

One of the school directors mentioned during an interview that “bilingual education has worked the best in the places where teachers under this program have been placed”. Overall, judging by the achieved results, if we see positive developments in terms of knowledge of the state language, to some degree it can be attributed to this program. However, the data about the professional development of ethnic minority teachers reveals that in this dimension, the program has failed.

“Georgian Language for Future Success”

Yet another program elaborated by the NCTPD was launched in 2011. The main concept of the program was sending recent bachelor graduates for one academic year to *all* non-Georgian language schools to teach the language as well as organize extracurricular activities for the school students. The aim here also was to promote the Georgian language in the regions as well as to facilitate interethnic and intercultural dialogue among the communities. The graduates were motivated by the above-average salary as well as the possibility of funding of their MA degree by the NCTPD.

This program was larger in scope and covered nearly all schools in the target villages. The overall budget amounted to 3 million lari in 2014.

The assessments of the program, like in the previous one, are very different. In Akhalkalaki one of the teachers was quite skeptical about the implementation of this program. While a principal of the same school mentioned that their guest-teachers have assisted them in the teaching process of not only the Georgian language, but also other subjects.

The interviewed participants of the program positively assessed the programs and maintained that the younger generation of students have been much more cooperative and easy to interact with. An expert in minority issues mentioned that the teaching process, at some point, went the other way around; it was not

the minorities who studied the Georgian language, but the guest-teachers who developed skills in the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

However, judging by the results, the fact that the younger generation has better competences in the Georgian language can be attributed to this program, while the assessment of the success of the program in terms of facilitating intercultural dialogue and civic integration is a matter for an evaluation study of the entire program.

Future plans and capacity for improvements

In 2016, the NCTPD shifted its annual working structure. The two above-mentioned programs have been incorporated into a new targeted program titled “Non-Georgian teachers’ professional development program”.

Unlike the previous ones, it has a 3-year timeframe. According to the information provided by the NCTPD, the program aims at the “promotion of non-Georgian school/sector teachers’ professional development and improvement of teaching/learning in order to enhance the quality of instruction for the state language.” Furthermore, an integral part of the program has become the focus on “the preparation of local non-Georgian school teachers for the subject examination and teaching them the state language”. The annual budget for 2016 is 3 million Georgian lari.

The main novelty introduced within this program is that, the focus has shifted on the professional development component of the teacher in minority language schools. In view of the problems described above, this can be considered a positive development. The first program is kept almost as it used to be with the one difference of the title of those teachers rephrasing into “Consultant teachers of Georgian as a second language”. Another addition is that they will also be in charge of training the local teachers in the state language and assisting them in their professional development such as filling out self-assessment surveys and following the new teacher development scheme.

As for the second program, there have been more changes in the design. Assistant Teachers will be taken from the pool of the 1+4 program – graduates of the Georgian higher education institutions with an ethnic minority background. They will be assisting the local teachers in bilingual education as well as in professional development in accordance with their competences. Furthermore, regular Assistant Teachers will also be sent to these schools which will be specifically concentrating on the subjects of Georgian language, History, and Geography. Various subject-related and professional skill development

trainings are planned annually for the beneficiary teachers. (National Center for Teacher Professional Development 2016)

Overall, the programs aim to include at least 90 percent of the targeted teachers in the professional development scheme as well as to significantly increase the performance of the students in the Georgian language by 2019.

Some shortcomings of the programs at the initial stage are the following:

- Still too much emphasis is put on the promotion of the teaching of the state language, while the development of their native language is lagging behind.
- Teachers may not show interest in participation in these activities and events considering that motivation is still very low.
- The program ignores the ageing factors as well as the lack of specialists, that are serious problems for minority language schools; over 70-year-old teachers attending capacity development trainings would be hardly manageable.
- The introduction of the Assistant Teachers in Geography and History courses may be perceived as “supervision” by the local teachers and school administrations and could create some discontent.
- Considering the existence of relatively expensive activities in the program, it can be assumed that all the target schools will not become beneficiaries of the program. So, presumably, coverage will be reduced in comparison to the previous programs.

In financial terms, it could be argued that the overall budget allocated for the these programs has decreased which can be seen as a negative development.

Considering the other above-described burning issues in this direction, this suggested program could have been more comprehensive. Or yet other programs could be designed in order to address the educational needs of the ethnic minorities. It is still not clear how the MoES will be dealing with the issues related to the textbooks, how bilingual education will be reformed, what measures will be taken to increase the performance of the school administration in management, and what the small minority groups can expect in the future. Many hopes are put on the strategy document.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis suggested above, the following recommendations can be drawn for the main stakeholders of the education system.

For the MoEs:

- Finalize and adopt the Strategy/Concept document for the education of ethnic minorities.
- In this process, ensure the participation of representatives of ethnic minorities, the ERCs, and minority language school administration and teachers.
- Follow up on the adoption with appropriate action plans so that there are no delays in implementation.
- Start work to raise the quality of translation of the approved books by establishing a special commission with the task of quality assurance.
- Reform the methodology of bilingual textbooks. Many teachers have suggested that a methodologically more effective approach would have been the consecutive translation in both languages.
- International experience shows that the direct active participation (such as exchange programs, placement or twinning in the majority-populated region schools) have much more positive results than passive participation in trainings in learning foreign language skills, professional development and sharing best teaching practices, or the promotion of trust-building and civic integration process. ECMI Caucasus has implemented such type of a pilot project "Twinning of Teachers" which placed 10 Armenian teachers for one month in different schools of the Adjara region. The results have been promising.
- Elaborate special measures to deal with the ageing problem of the ethnic minority teachers, by promoting teaching positions among the graduates of the 1+4 program.
- Clearly define within the National Curricula the importance of textbooks with the messages of multicultural values.
- Introduce special criteria and requirements for approving a textbook ruling out any forms of ethnocentric and xenophobic passages cited even from well-respected authors that would make the minorities feel discriminated and excluded.
- Work all across Georgia towards raising tolerance and sensitiveness of teachers and develop a special module on this topic in the framework of the Teacher Professional Development Scheme.
- Elaborate special mechanisms for a renewal of the human resources of school administrations and include managerial experience and skills within the criteria and exams for the selection of the school principals.
- Monitor and evaluate the programs run by the NCTPD as well as by its internal units for quality assurance and achieving desired outcomes.

- Ensure that the representatives of the municipality ERCs are not abusing their authority and are taking into account the local environment and nature of social and cultural affairs.
- Allocate resources for developing and publishing textbooks and teachers' guidebooks for the small minority languages, so that they are in line with the approved standards.

For the NCTPD:

- Prioritize within its funding the challenges of the ethnic minority education system, including the development of the capacity of the school administrations and support school/teacher twinning projects.
- Elaborate teachers' certification exams in minority languages. The measure in the current program of raising the competences in the Georgian language and then passing the exams can be ineffective and after the completion of the 3-year program, the targeted teachers may still be left out of the professional development scheme.
- The Center needs to elaborate a mechanism for the evaluation of their programs – an internal as well as an external (that can be outsourced) evaluating the input of enormous financial resources spent on education and identifying whether the programs are being developed in the proper directions for achieving the desired results.
- Closely work with the pool of the 1+4 program graduates and use these human resources for the further advancement of its programs.
- Actively consult with teachers and school administrations while in the process of designing any program in order to avoid top-down driven processes and ensuring that the minorities do have ownership of any program.
- Develop a separate training module for the teachers of the numerically small ethnic minority languages to make sure that the courses they deliver are in line with the adopted standards. Work for their further development.

Other stakeholders:

- Municipality ERCs have to be actively involved in the process of elaboration and implementation of the new policies as well as the programs of the NCTPD. They need to act as entities making recommendations from the "ground".
- ERCs have the capacity of engagement and collaboration with the local civil society organizations in terms of raising the civic awareness of the school students.

- Minority school administrations should enjoy their right of administrative and financial autonomy. Its institutions and self-governing bodies need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as well.
- Minority language school administrations, within their financial capacity, should also organize extracurricular activities aimed at promoting civic integration and sharing best practices among each other.
- Informational campaigns need to be conducted for the local populations and parents in order to raise awareness among them of their rights and responsibilities within the board of trustees and ensure that schools are administered by an effective team of managers while all the resources available from the state budget are used for the good of the schools and the advancement of the quality of teaching.
- NGOs need to be involved in the monitoring process of the state strategical documents as well as the programs. NGOs, especially those from minority communities, need to be open for cooperation with the Ministry and its entities for consultations and recommendations.
- NGOs need to work more with the community in order to raise awareness among them of their rights and how to uphold those rights.
- NGOs need to be activated in the field of education of ethnic minorities at least in non-formal approaches in cooperation with the school administrations

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