Culture

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Multiculturalism and Aspects of Intercultural education in Georgia

This article will argue that an important prerequisite for the successful development of Georgia is the harmonious coexistence of different cultural representatives, this will be possible if the intercultural education will be fostered. Educational systems and institutions are socially responsible for the creation of such teaching process which will prepare persons to be tolerant towards people of different nationalities and to increase their value of differences. An intercultural education is the obligatory precondition to achieve these goals.

This paper analyzes the legislative and on-the-ground situation of intercultural education in Georgia. The main research questions are what progress has Georgia made in this direction and what are the main challenges?

The research is partially based on secondary source analysis: articles of various researchers, reports of different non-governmental organizations which work to enhance multiculturalism and intercultural education on Georgia, and the analysis of various books.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Intercultural Education, Multiculturalism Policy Index, Minorities, Cultural Diversity.

Interest towards cultural diversity is increasing actively. Cultural diversity is one of the main features of the modern world. Today, it is practically impossible to find a country where there is not even one cultural minority. Just a glance at the international system is enough to see that the majority of modern states are culturally heterogeneous. Mankind has never been homogenous, but today the process of globalization process has closely linked different parts of the world and diversity has become more evident. As a result of globalization and international migration, multiculturalism has become a dominant theory in the last decades in many Western countries.

For some people multiculturalism has a highly positive meaning: an attractive diversity of ways of life, mutual respect among citizens from different backgrounds, free expression, culinary variety… etc. For others it suggests social fragmentation and non-egalitarian privileges for certain groups. Is multiculturalism positive or negative? These are the questions which have risen in recent years among some political leaders and academic circles.

Multiculturalism observes and approves the presence of multiple cultures within a single society and supports public recognition of those cultures.

Education is a fundamental thing in addressing cultural differences. The main objectives of intercultural education are the following: enhancing the efficiency of intercultural relations; increasing tolerance and acceptance towards those who are different; training people to make them perceive, accept and respect diversity.

Intercultural education is a global necessity. The values derived from intercultural education (tolerance, freedom, acceptance of differences, understanding of diversity, pluralism, cooperation) are built into the personalities of the educated subjects through consistent efforts. Intercultural education promotes solidarity of the local community with the international community.

The education system should ensure that a person will be able to live in diverse world. That is the reason why the importance of intercultural education is clearly seen in a number of declarations, resolutions or documents that create a legislative basis for the development of multicultural society.

From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism, Grand Debates

The era of multiculturalism and multiculturalist policies began in the 1960s and 1970s when the world felt the impact of globalization in the wake of increased migration from developing countries to the developed societies of North America, Western Europe and Australia. Unlike previous waves of immigrants, the new arrivals were thought to be too "different" to be easily assimilated.

The valuing of cultural diversity in balance with equality of opportunity and mutual tolerance are some of the central themes of multiculturalism. In pursuit of these goals, new policies were introduced, first in Canada and Australia in the early 1970s, and then in many other countries.

It was generally accepted that due to multiculturalism, the practices different cultures could exist together peacefully. Multiculturalism as a concept has been shared by many countries around the world as one of the best ways for civil consolidation and integration. Multiculturalism attempts to promote the recognition and respect of other ethnic and cultural groups in a particular state. It implies an active support for cultural differences and contradicts enmity and denial against them. The widespread metaphor of multiculturalism is the so-called "salad bowl" according to which the salad ingredients are mixed with one another but they keep their unique qualities, the same is implied to society where each culture retains its different qualities and create one heterogeneous society.

Multiculturalism policies includes the following measures: Recognition of dual citizenship; special measures to increase minority participation in educational and economic institutions; programs that promote minority participation and representation in local and state politics; flexible working hours for minorities to celebrate their religious holidays; protection of minority rights to enable them to wear traditional or religious clothes in schools, workplaces or other places of public gathering; providing means for minorities which will enable them to get education on their mother tongue; existence of bilingual educational programs in schools; state funding for translation of minority languages; state funding of minority cultural festivals; conducting of trainings on cultural diversity in public services.

Over the past few years, an alternative approach to the management of cultural diversity has been emerging – interculturalism. The relationship between two policy approaches multiculturalism and interculturalism has been a matter of intense debate in recent years.

Multiculturalism has always had its critics, and these have become more numerous and vocal over the years. In part the critics have been alarmed by a number of cases in which multiculturalism has been blamed: for example, the murder of the Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh or the London bombings of 7 July 2005. Such events have often been said to demonstrate the "failure of multiculturalism".

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there has been an increasing critique of multicultural policies around the world. In much of the western world, and particularly in Europe, there was a widespread perception that multiculturalism has 'failed'. Some academics and politicians have concluded that the "multicultural experiment" has failed and have called on governments to adopt new programs and policies that enforce integration and cohesion. Some European political leaders have taken such criticism even further in their speeches. Speaking to a meeting of young members of her Christian Democratic Union party, Merkel said the idea of people from different cultural backgrounds living happily "side by side" did not work. "This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed," declared the German Chancellor. She was followed by her cabinet minister's pronouncement that "multiculturalism is dead". A few months later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy echoed his German counterpart, declaring that multiculturalism has been a "failure". Then, in February 2011, speaking at a security conference in Munich, British Prime Minister David Cameron made a high-profile speech linking the failure of "state multiculturalism" to the rise of Islamic extremism and terrorism: "Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism," he explained, "we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream". Mr. Cameron said the multiculturalism policy - one espoused by the British government since the 1960s, based on the principle of the right of all groups in Britain to live by their traditional values - had failed to promote a sense of common identity centered on values of human rights, democracy, social integration and equality before the law.

However, the critique of multiculturalism as an approach existed a while before we saw it in the media and in various policy formulations. The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, Living Together as Equals in Dignity of the Council of Europe argues that interculturalism should be the preferred model for Europe because multiculturalism has failed.

As the White Paper reports multiculturalism is no longer fit for the purpose and needs to be replaced with a form of interculturalism. Similar views were expressed in the UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue. This report facilitated the creation of the Intercultural Cities programme, which supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing

comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively and realize the diversity advantage.

Kymlicka writes that if the Council of Europe White Paper's statement is right about the fact that interculturalism can save us from moral relativism which according to Paper defends multiculturalism, then it means that during twenty or more years, main political elites have been indifferent to the fundamental principles of human rights and liberal democracy. In the form of multiculturalism they recognized policy which was against above-mentioned principles (Kymlicka 2014).

Debates have gone even further in academic circles. One of the prominent defenders of interculturalism, Zapata-Barrero (2017), who depicts interculturalism not as substitutive of but as "complementary" to multiculturalism. He even argues that a fully developed "recognition of rights" (which he attributes to multiculturalism) is necessary for interculturalism's "contact"-orientation to take off. In Zapata-Barrero's view, interculturalism arises in a "post-multicultural" moment of anti-multiculturalist backlash, financial crisis (favoring low-cost, "mainstreaming" policy solutions to diversity), and "super diversity" with its multiple identity and post-race issues, where diversity is even eroding the notion of a homogeneous "majority". More concretely, interculturalism figures for him as "mediator" between, on the one side, an increasingly discarded multiculturalism and, on the other side, duty-focused civic integration policies, whose impulse of limits to tolerance and of finding a common ground is taken on board by his (and all other versions of) interculturalism (Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

The literature on interculturalism focuses on three main issues:

- Positive Interaction – This implies not only interpersonal contact, but result-oriented approach which will eliminate stereotypes. In other words, this approach implies interpersonal relationship;

- Antidiscrimination as a fundamental element of intercultural citizenship – This implies to legal frameworks, which give foreigners the right to vote and naturalization policy;

- Diversity as an advantage.

Interculturalism supporters claim that their advantage is to see diversity as an advantage. But multiculturalism also encourages diversity. Multiculturalism goes deeper than diversity by focusing on inclusiveness, understanding, and respect, and also by looking at unequal power in society. As Baker also noted "Multiculturalism encourages diversity and is usually associated with the view that we are tolerant, non-discriminatory, and respectful of others" (Baker, 2012. p.26).

The Role and Objective of Intercultural Education

Research from the Multiculturalism Policy Index which monitors the evolution of multiculturalism in twenty first century Western democracies – also indicates that the majority of these countries show stable strengthening and expansion of multicultural policies from 1980 to 2000 to 2010. The index clearly shows the success stories of those Western democracies which more or less pursued the policies of Multiculturalism. The index uses eight indicators to measure the level of multiculturalism policy in the countries over three decades. Scores are based on an evaluation of eight aspects of multiculturalism policies: legislative affirmation, school curriculum, media representation, exemptions from dress codes, allowing dual citizenship, funding of ethnic organizations, minority-language education and affirmative action.

The Multiculturalism Policy Index shows that intercultural education is the crucial element to measure the concrete development of the level of multiculturalism in a country. Two indicators out of eight, measuring the level of multiculturalism in a country are dedicated to educational themes, like school curriculum and minority-language education.

In 1948 the United Nations Organization adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26.2 of the declaration directly deals with the issues related to intercultural education and values. In the article we read: "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" (UN 1948, Article 26.2). It can be said that the declaration is the fundamental document on intercultural education.

Since then the number of important international documents have been adopted to protect the rights of national minorities. Treaties, conventions and covenants are essential parts of the international legal framework as they are binding for the contracting parties and produce legal obligations. Many of them draw on the two basic principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which state that education should be directed to the full development of the individual and to the promotion of understanding and peace. Some also establish complementary concepts that are equally relevant to Intercultural Education.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) adds a central provision concerning the social empowerment of the individual through education. It states that: "education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society".

The complex cultural responsibilities of education are addressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that: "the education of the child shall be directed to … the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own" (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).

It is also important to mention the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) reinforces the idea already included in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural UNESCO Diversity (2001) that cultural diversity must be considered as a "common heritage of humanity" and its "defense as an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity". It also states that "cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms…are guaranteed", which is to be achieved through the encouragement and promotion of "understanding of the importance of the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions through educational programs (UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005).

In 1995 the Council of Europe adopted the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. Georgia ratified this convention in 2005 and since then has taken obligation before the international community to protect the rights of national minorities. The aim of this convention is to promote the creation of such conditions which will enable national minorities to develop their own culture and identity.

Georgia is a member of various international organizations that deal with problems of intercultural education. As a member country, Georgia supports and adheres to decisions and policies of these organizations.

Since 2005 Georgia has made progress towards the implementing intercultural education. The Action Plans of Georgia includes the following measures: Improvement of national curriculum and textbooks, enhancement of teachers' qualification in Non-Georgian schools and other improvements.

Aspects of Intercultural Education in Georgia

Georgia is a multiethnic state and the integration of ethnic minorities in social life is of special importance. The level of integration is a kind of measure for whether Georgia will be able or not to establish a state which will be based on the principles of engagement, participation and pluralism.

The importance of intercultural education is clearly underlined in the Georgian Law on General Education. Article 4 of the Georgian Law on General Education states that 'teaching language in general education institutions is Georgian and in the Autonomic Republic of Abkhazia – Georgian or Abkhazian.' The same article (Article 4.3) states that 'the citizens of Georgia, to which Georgian is not a native language, have the right to receive full general education in their native language, in accordance with the national curriculum, and the legislation'.

Poor command of the state language by ethnic minorities, especially in compactly settled ethnic groups living in Kvemo Kartli and Javakheti, represents a most acute problem with respect to civil integration. This problem prevents ethnic minorities from participating in political and public life and decreases chances of their economic and professional success.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has started projects that help national minorities to improve their knowledge of Georgian language. These projects were implemented with the help of the Office of the High Commissioner on OSCE National Minorities. Knowledge of the state language but at the same time protection of a groups' linguistic and cultural identity is necessary for the integration of national minorities.

Multilingual education helps people to become more tolerant towards other cultures. It also teaches them to coexist constructively with other ethnic groups. Such type of education gives ethnic minorities a chance not to change cultural orientation and to maintain their native language.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science launched a pilot program for multilingual education, which was targeted for the relevant regions. There were 40 schools involved in the program. With the joint local and international efforts, several models of bilingual education have been developed.

The program had many weaknesses. This fact was mentioned during the interviews of the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

The main challenge of the program was that most teachers did not have the knowledge of Georgian language even at an A2 level. The language courses which were selected for the teachers were ineffective in improving their linguistic skills, because the length of the courses was too short. Consequently, as a result of the program's lack of time and financial resources the result was only partly reached.

Another important problem that has been revealed in the bilingual education system

was the issue of bilingual textbooks. The translation of textbooks into minority languages started in 2005. These manuals were translated for I-IV classes and did not spread to higher grades.

The textbooks and manuals that are used in schools are drawn up in Armenia and Azerbaijan which in the future makes problems for ethnic minority youths because these books are not drawn up according to the program which is necessary to pass the University entry exams.

One more important step towards intercultural education was launching the "1+4 program". In 2009, the Ministry of Education introduced a quota system in order to help ethnic minority students continue their post-secondary education in Georgian universities. Armenian and Azeri students each are allocated 5 percent of all academic placements, and Ossetians and Abkhazians get 1 percent each.

In the first three years, the number of ethnic minority students enrolled in this program tripled from 301 students in 2010, to 928 in 2013. However, there are more allocated places than actual students. For example, in 2010 only a bit more than 11 percent of all 2602 places were used, and in 2013 this number was 24 percent (928 out of 3900).

Minority students in universities in Georgia

— Minority students enrolled in universities   — Allocated places
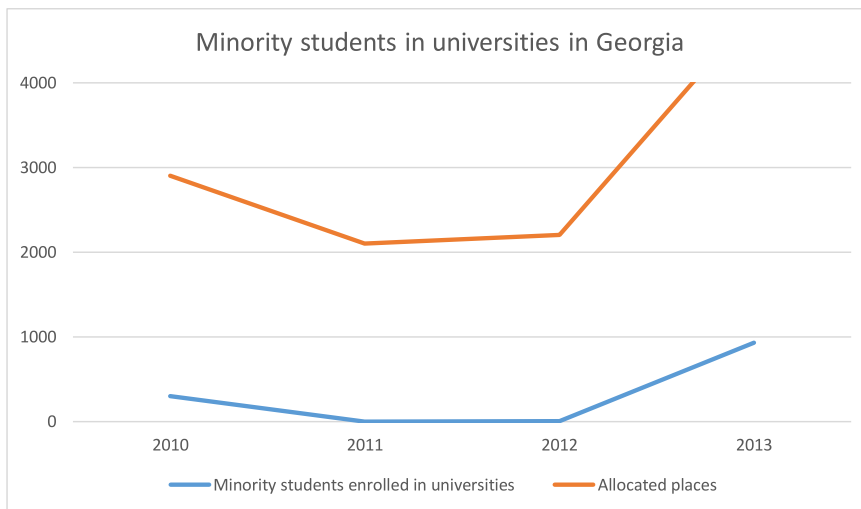
Source: Tabatadze and Gorgadze report Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Quota System in Georgia 2013. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555611.pdf

These students can get into university passing just a General Skills exam in their mother tongue, but they then have to spend an extra year learning Georgian language before they can start their selected study programs.

Within the framework of the intercultural education policy, the state continues to have non-Georgian language schools and non-Georgian language sectors. According to the latest data, 213 non-Georgian public schools and 77 non-Georgian language sectors are on the list. Out of the 217 non-Georgian public schools, most of the 117 Armenian schools represent 85 Azeri and 11 Russian speakers. From 77 non-Georgian sector, 31 are Georgian-Russian, 28 Georgian-Azeri, 8 Georgian-Armenian, 7 Georgian-Armenian-Russian and 3 Georgian-Armenian-Azeri sectors (Catalog).

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to analyze the legislative and factual situation of intercultural education in Georgia and show the progress and challenges in this direction.

This research shows that the question of intercultural education is of special importance for Georgia which is clearly seen in the recent activity and programs of the Government of Georgia. The policy pursued by the Government of Georgia is in conjunction with the general concept of multiculturalism. From the 2000s, intercultural education policy has become more consistent. Georgia recognizes the declarations and documents adopted by the Council of Europe concerning intercultural education.

At the same time, it should be noted that there are still many challenges. The main challenge still remains the lack of knowledge of Georgian among minorities.

Active and coordinated work of not only the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia but also all educational system structures is needed to bring more results in support of intercultural education.

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