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**A Study on the Growing Tendency of Students Involved
in the Submersion Program in Georgian Schools and
the Effectiveness of Its Implementation**

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a brief overview of the introduction of bilingual education in Georgian schools. The main focus of the paper is to study the issue of implementation and effectiveness of submersion classrooms. As a result of the qualitative research, the following main issues have been explored within this article: 1) What are the challenges, and how can Georgian language schools and sectors manage school language diversity? 2) What are the different approaches and challenges in Georgian language sectors in schools where the majority of students are non-Georgian or completely non-Georgian? The study examines the effectiveness and challenges of submersion classes from the perspective of teachers in target schools. The results of the qualitative research method are presented in the form of findings and tendencies, which gives us a clear picture of the challenges of submersion education for more in-depth on the example of Georgian public schools.

Keywords: *submersion education, affirmative action policy, bilingual education, teachers, minority students.*

There are different models/programs in the field of bilingual education. Programs are divided into weak and strong, depending on whether the linguistic and educational goals are language preservation and bilingualism or language loss and monolingualism (Baker 2006). The aim of implementing strong bilingual models of education is to master the majority language and bilingualism while preserving the mother tongue. Whereas, the goal of weak bilingual programs is linguistic assimilation and monolingualism. Submersion is a weak bilingual education program because a reducing context and monolingualism characterize it according to the principle of classifying bilingual education (Baker, 2006). Submersion is a form of education in which minority students attend schools where the majority language is used as the language of instruction and the minority language student studies with the majority students (Baker, 2006). The goal of submersion is to force immigrant or linguistic minority students to learn the majority language as quickly as possible (Baker, 2006). This goal is also

related to the political goal since linguistic assimilation is more beneficial to the state with inhabitants with different linguistic backgrounds. For example, linguistic diversity was often perceived as a threat to the unity of a country in the United States. In this sense, one language is associated with a single system of values, attitudes, or goals (Baker, 2006). In addition, one of the most critical determinants of submersion education can be considered the motivation of parents to force their children to quickly learn the language of the majority. This motivation originates from the belief of immigrant parents that quality education can only be obtained in the language of the majority and is therefore associated with career advancement and social integration (Tago & Ots, 2010).

It should be noted that the submersion education program does not provide any type of special educational support for language minority students in the teaching process, as it does for students with special educational needs, and the implementation of this program is accompanied by various challenges (Baker, 2006). In this sense, one of the most important issues in implementing a submersion program is parental involvement. Parental support is crucial to a student's academic achievement and plays a significant positive role, as evidenced by numerous studies (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Parental involvement is particularly important in supporting minority students' academic achievement when they are educated with a majority of students in a language that is different from their native language (Tago & Ots, 2010). Overall, increasing parental involvement in educational immersion is mainly problematic due to their unfamiliarity with the majority language or low level of language proficiency (Baker, 2006).

The issue of bilingual education in accordance with the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population in Georgia is currently very relevant. The present article aims to study the dynamics, needs, and challenges characteristic of Georgia's submersion bilingual education program. To understand the issue, it is important to review the measures taken by the state of Georgia in terms of promoting the social integration of ethnic minorities.

It should be noted that Georgia is characterized by ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity (Tolerance Centre of Ombudsman's Office of Georgia, 2008). According to the 2014 census of Georgia, about 12% of the population are minority ethnic groups, the most numerous being the Armenian- and Azerbaijani-speaking population (Census, 2014). The State of Georgia considers access to education as one of the crucial mechanisms for the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities and their integration into society, preserving the existing cultural and linguistic diversity and, at the same time, supporting the learning of the state language (National

Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration, 2009; Law on General Education, 2005). In accordance with the existing ethnic and linguistic diversity in Georgia, one of the main directions of the national concept of state tolerance and civic integration is to promote the integration of ethnic minorities through education (National Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration, 2009). This includes preschool, school, and higher education levels to learn the state language and preserve the mother tongue and culture (National Concept on Tolerance and Civic Integration, 2009). Various events have been held in Georgia since 2004 to support the teaching of the state language to ethnic minorities (Mekhuzla & Roche, 2009). Moreover, the legal framework for bilingual education has been amended, and various bilingual/multilingual education programs have been introduced in pilot schools (Mekhuzla and Roche, 2009). Despite the amendments, however, the problem of knowing the state language in Georgia remains acute among ethnic minority youth as well as among the generation of parents. Most parents of non-Georgian speaking students do not speak the state language well enough to provide academic support to the child in the learning process. The information provided by the Department of Statistics of Georgia on the language proficiency of Georgian citizens allows us to express this assumption, which indicates that 91.7% of the 3,713,804 citizens of Georgia speak Georgian fluently, while the remaining 8.3% do not speak Georgian at all, or do not indicate it at all. The majority (about 95%) of the population who speak Georgian fluently indicate Georgian as their mother tongue (Census 2014). In light of the evidence, it is likely that parents of ethnic minority students are less able to participate and help their children in the learning process.

Cultural diversity and intercultural sensitivity in submersion education

In addition to parental involvement in the teaching process in a diverse classroom environment, including in the implementation of submersion education, one of the most important factors is the readiness of teachers in terms of identifying and developing subject and methodological knowledge as well as intercultural sensitivity (Valdes, 2004). Education researcher Guadalupe Valdes, who studies the process of teaching a second language in schools points out that teachers' intercultural competencies and expectations largely affect students' expectations in terms of their own abilities, which often determines the effectiveness of their learning (Valdes, 2004).

Also, education researcher Scutnab- Kanjas emphasizes the importance of intercultural competencies in the implementation of submersion education, noting that models of reductive

bilingual education, as submersion model, use minority culture as a handicap adjusted by assimilation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1989). Skutnabb-Kangas points out that it is important for a student's "native language, culture and social background" to be perceived by the school as a positive starting point (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1989). Skutnabb-Kangas also emphasizes that it may cost the country a great deal of money to integrate minorities; although the costs incurred are fully covered by the benefits and wealth that society derives from cultural diversity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995).

In accordance with the national goals of education in Georgia, it is important for the school to develop the skills and competencies defined by the national curriculum.

According to the national curriculum, "During the teaching of subjects, school projects, sports, arts and club activities (involving students, teachers, parents) the school should promote: a) establishing respect, tolerance, and equality between students, parents, and teachers regardless their social, ethnic, religious, linguistic and worldview affiliation" (National Curriculum, Article 18). According to this document, the teacher should support the process of integration of students in the school space (National Curriculum, Article 18). And for teaching in a diverse environment, the teacher himself needs to have a high intercultural sensitivity, which is mandatory for all categories of teachers according to the teacher professional standard (Teacher Professional Standard, 2008).

The survey was conducted in Georgia in 2014 to assess teachers' intercultural sensitivity, skills, and readiness to work in a diverse classroom environment. The survey showed that teachers viewed various issues in the classroom primarily from their own cultural perspective and showed low levels of respect for different cultures (Tabatadze, 2015a).

To measure intercultural sensitivity in schools and to understand its characteristics, we can consider 'Bennett's model for developing intercultural sensitivity. Bennett classifies six levels in the development of intercultural sensitivity, divided into two main phases: I. Ethnocentric phase, which includes 1. Denial 2. Defense 3. Minimization II. Ethnorelative phase, which includes 4. Acceptance 5. Adaptation 6. Integration (Bennett & Bennett, 2001). A person in the first phase of the Bennett model is characterized by low intercultural sensitivity, while a person in the ethnorelative phase is characterized by a high receptivity ability. According to the analysis of this model, the higher level a person belongs to, the more intensive is his intercultural sensitivity, which is especially important for coexistence and cooperation in a diverse environment (Bennett & Bennett, 2001) In Georgia, in 2014, the Center for Civic Integration and Interethnic Relations conducted another research in this field, which studied the

intercultural aspects of teacher education programs in higher education institutions. In the framework of the study, a survey was conducted with both undergraduate and graduate students and compared their results. Overall, the study found that undergraduate education program students have higher levels of intercultural sensitivity than undergraduate students in the same program. However, the highest step observed according to the research results is the acceptance of differences, the fourth step of the Bennett model (Gorgadze & Tabatadze, 2014; Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2018). As the reviewed studies show, teachers' intercultural readiness is essential for teaching in a diverse classroom environment. In this article, too, one of the important focuses will be to study the willingness of teachers to teach an audience of students represented in ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity in submersion classrooms.

Development of bilingual education in Georgia Earlier in this article, I discussed the needs and context of bilingual education in Georgia; however, to understand the issue, it is crucial to consider the stages of development of bilingual education in Georgia, which will be briefly presented in this subsection.

Currently, there are 208 non-Georgian public schools out of 2,085 public schools in Georgia according to the information provided by MoeS. Georgian citizens allowed to receive full general education in their native language. The state funds the education in minority languages. Armenian and Azerbaijani minority groups receive general education in their native language.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state language issue has become a very urgent problem in Georgia. At the same time, several important ethnic issues became the subject of discussion. Russian was the language of communication for all ethnic groups living in Georgia during the Soviet period (Tabatadze, 2010). Consequently, knowledge of Georgian language was not a priority for the representatives of national minorities. School education was conducted in the mother tongue of ethnic minorities, and in higher education institutions, the language of instruction was Georgian, although there were Russian-speaking sectors, therefore, lack of knowledge of Georgian was not an obstacle to career growth for ethnic minorities. For this reason, ethnic minorities spoke Georgian only at a low level or could not speak it at all (Mekhuzla & Roche, 2009). After gaining independence, Georgia adopted a liberal approach to ethnic groups and granted Georgian citizenship to all. Following this decision, promoting the integration of ethnic minorities has become an essential task for the state of Georgia (Tabatadze, 2010).

The education system and the existence of appropriate approaches play an important role

in the integrational process of national minorities into the Georgian-speaking community. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) considers learning the state language as a necessary and important factor for integrating national minorities while maintaining their own linguistic and cultural identity (CIPDD, 2009). MoES names multilingual education as the primary tool to achieve this goal, which includes the introduction of approaches and models of education that will enhance the motivation and learning of the state language, as well as support the preservation and protection of national minority languages and cultures (CIPDD, 2009).

The basis for implementing bilingual/multilingual education is the Law of Georgia on General Education. According to Article 4 (3) of the Law on General Education of Georgia, "the language of instruction in general education institutions is Georgian, and in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia - Georgian and Abkhazian", but according to the third paragraph of the same article, "Georgian citizens for whom the Georgian language is not a native language have the right to receive a full general education in their native language, in accordance with the National Curriculum, in accordance with the rules established by law." This law protects the rights of national minorities to receive general education in their mother tongue and thus helps to preserve their language and culture. However, at the same time, the state status of the Georgian language has been strengthened. For example, according to Article 98 of the Law on Public Service, insufficient knowledge of the state language may be the reason for the dismissal of a civil servant. In addition, in any public institution, proceedings and court processes in Georgia are conducted in the state language (Law on Public Service, 2015). In addition, Georgian as a state language is taught as a subject in public schools, as an important intervention for the integration and professional success of national minorities in society (CIPDD, 2009).

In 2005, the European Framework Convention was ratified by the Parliament of Georgia. This Framework Convention guarantees the protection of national minorities and their full integration by providing the right to education in minority languages and education systems (CIPDD, 2009).

In 2008, with the financial support of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, a policy document entitled "Integration of National Minorities through Multilingual Education" was developed. A strategy for implementing this document was planned for 2009-2014. Based on this action plan, in 2009 the Government of Georgia developed the "National Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration". The document focused on the following areas for improving the education of national minorities: preschool education, general education, higher

education, raising the level of knowledge of the state language among minorities, and ensuring access to vocational education (Mekhuzla & Roche, 2009).

In August 2010, the MoES approved the Regulation of the Multilingual Education Programs. This regulation is an essential base for access to quality education for minorities and for implementing bilingual education. The document allowed non-Georgian language schools in Georgia to develop local needs-oriented multilingual education programs and submit them for approval. Schools started developing programs with the support of various NGOs and developed several types of multilingual education programs. The school's multilingual education program included using two or more languages for classroom instruction and the acquisition of relevant topics in two languages (Armenian / Azerbaijani and Georgian) (Grigule, 2010).

The implementation of the above-mentioned legislative changes and important initiatives and the combination of measures taken by various international and local non-governmental organizations have enabled the MoES to implement bilingual education programs in non-Georgian schools since 2010. The MoES allowed schools to choose / or design the appropriate educational program for them, as well as presented several bilingual programs, which could be selected and implemented by non-Georgian language schools within the program. These programs are Native Language Support Multilingual Education Program, Transitive Multilingual Education Program, Developing Multilingual Education Program, State Language Support Multilingual Education Program, Dual Language Immersion Multilingual Education Program, Mixed Multilingual Education Program (Tabatadze, 2015b). The selection and implementation of these programs was more or less efficient, which was reflected in further research (Tabatadze 2015b). Currently, non-Georgian language schools have a Georgian language support program, which involves teaching Georgian as a second language with five weekly lesson hours (Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, 2021).

In 2011, the MoES launched more effective measurements to implement bilingual education, which was reflected in implementing the program "Georgian Language for Future Success" (www.mes.gov.ge). The program aimed to promote the process of learning Georgian language.

Moreover, in 2012, amendments to the General Education Law of Georgia defined and established the professional standard for multilingual primary school teachers (Article 21/3), which created the basis for establishing a multilingual teacher preparatory bachelor program. This program was implemented for the first time in 2015 at the Faculty of Psychology and

Education of Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University. The goal of the Multilingual Education Teacher Preparatory Program is to train highly qualified staff for the elementary school level following the Multilingual Teacher Professional Standard (Multilingual Education Program, 2015).

One of the most successful initiatives of the above-mentioned legislative initiatives, changes, and practical measures related to multilingual education was also the affirmative action policy/quota system introduced in 2010, which determines the quota for non-Georgian students enrolled in the universities. This means passing only one exam on the Unified National Examination, the General Skills Exam. This exam is conducted in the native language (Azerbaijani or Armenian) of students. Students enrolled in universities within the framework of the affirmative action policy study the Georgian language intensively for one year. After the completion of the One Year Georgian Language Program, students are given the opportunity to continue their studies in the desired bachelor's program according to their choice. Affirmative action policy research confirms that the number of enrolled students in the Georgian Language One Year Program has been increasing from 2010 to the year (Tabatadze, Gorgadze & Gabunia, 2020).

Implementing the affirmative action policy for non-Georgian-speaking population and the opportunity to continue their education in Georgian HEIs has aroused more interest in learning the state language. This interest was reflected in the significant number of students wishing to continue their studies in Georgian HEIs (2010 - 247 ethnic minority students, 2019 - 1329 students) (Tabatadze, Gorgadze & Gabunia, 2020). In addition, according to the statistics of 2017-2019, the dynamics of the transition of students from non-Georgian schools to Georgian schools is clearly observed (Gorgadze, 2019). More specifically, according to the Education Management Information Center in 2017- 2019, 791 students transferred from non- Georgian language schools and sectors (Gorgadze, 2019). Most students transferred from Russian schools and sectors (417 students in total). The reason for this is the country's current political attitudes, and the MoES initiative, which is related to the change in the procedure for dividing the state grants for higher education (Gorgadze, 2019). According to this change, from 2017, the elective subjects for the Unified National Examinations will no longer be conducted in Russian, which puts Russian school/sector graduates at a disadvantage situation (Gorgadze, 2019). The rate of transfer of students from Armenian schools and sectors to Georgian schools is very low. However, the transfer rate of students from Azerbaijani schools to Georgian schools is also high in the lower grades. It decreases at the upper level of education due to the high

motivation to receive education in Georgian, which is considered an important prospect for integration into Georgian society (Gorgadze, 2019). As can be seen from the reviewed studies and the overview of the historical context of bilingual education, observing the dynamics of the implementation of submersion education and studying its effectiveness is an important issue for the field of education. Therefore, I decided to look deeper into this issue and plan relevant research. While working on the article, I requested information from the MoES and Educational Resource Centers about schools, the language of instruction, and distribution of students in Georgia and data provided by the National Department of Statistics.

Research Methodology

For research planning and relevant sampling of target schools, it is important to review the context of state language proficiency by Georgian ethnic minorities and their interests to learn the state language.

According to the 2014 census, 91.7% of Georgia's population is fluent in Georgian, for the majority of them (95.4%) Georgian is also their native language, only 1.3% who are fluent in Georgian are native Azerbaijanis (6, 7% of the population is ethnically Azeri) and 1.7% are Armenian speakers (out of 4.5% of the total population). The remaining percentage according to language proficiency is distributed among the representatives of Abkhazian, Russian, Ossetian, and other languages). There are several ethnic minority villages and regional centers in Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and partially in the regions of Kakheti, which are densely populated by ethnic minorities. In line with ethnic settlement, non-Georgian- language schools and sectors can be found in these regions alongside Georgian-language schools. Most non-Georgian-speaking students have the opportunity to receive a full general education conducted in their native language in a school located nearby. However, according to the information provided by the MoES and resource centers, the number of students in Georgian schools and sectors for whom Georgian is not a native language is highest in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. Because of this fact, we have selected the two regions mentioned above as the target areas of our research, as it is important to identify the motivating factors, why ethnic minorities choose Georgian-language school or Georgian sector, while they have access in nearby schools to full general education in the native language. As part of the research for this article, we also examined information provided by the Educational Resource Centers and the Ministry of Education on the distribution of students in schools in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions by native language. It should also be noted that we do not take responsibility for the validity of

the data collection methodology on students' linguistic affiliation and rely entirely on the information provided by the educational resource centers. According to the general data of the students of Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti schools, the picture of non-Georgian students enrolled in the Georgian sector or in the Georgian schools is shown in the table below.

Number of Regions	Number of Municipalities	Number of Georgian language schools/sectors where non-Georgian language students also study	Percentage of non-Georgian speaking students / 2016-2017 academic year	Percentage of non-Georgian speaking students /2020-2021 academic year
2	12	119	38,48%	41,17%

Table 1. Reflects the distribution of Georgian and non-Georgian students in Georgian schools and Georgian sectors in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. Source: Educational Resource Centers

It should be noted that from 2016-2017 academic year, the number of non-Georgian students in Georgian sectors / schools did not increase much compared to the data of the 2020-2021 academic year, the data increased by only 2.69%, but for both regions, the general number of non-Georgian students wishing to study Georgian in Georgian schools is relatively high (41,17%). It should be noted that from the 2016-2017 academic year, the number of non-Georgian students in Georgian sectors/schools did not increase much compared to the data of the 2020-2021 academic year, the data increased by only 2.69%, but for both regions, the general number of non-Georgian students wishing to study Georgian in Georgian schools is relatively high (41,17%). Furthermore, the analysis of statistical data of each school from the target regions identified specific schools in which the number of non-Georgian-speaking students wishing to receive education in the Georgian language is increasing year by year. For example, we can name the case of Kvemo Kartli region, Marneuli municipality. In particular, Marneuli municipality has the highest percentage of non-Georgian- speaking students in Georgian schools and sectors. The number of non-Georgian language students in Georgian schools was 66% in 2016, and by 2021 this number increased to 68%. The table below shows a picture of the distribution of non-Georgian and Georgian-speaking students in Georgian-language schools and sectors in the Marneuli region.

Year	Georgian language schools / Georgian sector, where non-Georgian language students also study	Total number of students	Non-Georgian speaking students Percentage	Georgian speaking students Percentage
2016	7	3119	66%	34 %
2020	7	3693	68%	32 %

Table N2. Shows the number of students in Georgian-language schools/sectors in Marneuli Municipality in 2016-2020 by differentiating students' native language. Source: Marneuli Educational Resource Center

The example of Marneuli municipality is similar to the situation in all municipalities of Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. However, the exception is two Georgian schools in the Kakheti region (Badiauri and Gombori schools) that have both Georgian and non-Georgian students. The tendency to admit non-Georgian students has decreased from 2016 to 2021 in these two schools. This decrease differs from the growing tendencies in the target regions (In 2016, the total number of non-Georgian language students in both schools was 62.2%, and by 2020 the total number in both schools has decreased to a total of 55%). It would be interesting to study such different tendencies and drastic changes from the region on the example of specific schools, especially when there is an increased number of students entering Georgian schools in Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions.

Due to the increased demand for enrollment of non-Georgian language students in Georgian schools in the target regions, questions arise about the quality of education in non-Georgian language schools. As I mentioned above, in non-Georgian schools, students learn Georgian as a subject "Georgian as a second language", which is devoted to 5 contact hours per week in addition to receiving education in their mother tongue (hourly schedule, Ministry of Education 2018-2019), however many students and parents still choose the Georgian school or sector, which makes it very important to study the effectiveness of submersion education in the target regions. Accordingly, a qualitative study was planned and conducted to research the issue in depth.

For the study, I selected two schools in Marneuli Municipality (Saimerlo Public School and Marneuli 2end Public School) and two in Gardabani Municipality (Gardabani First Kesalo Public School). The sampling is based on data from the National Department of Statistics, and these municipalities are characterized by densely populated ethnic non-Georgians. In particular,

one Georgian-language school was selected from two schools in Marneuli, where the number of non-Georgian students exceeded a quarter (25%) of the number of students, and the second target school was a school with a Georgian sector mostly with non-Georgian students only. According to the same principle, one Georgian-language school was selected from two schools in Gardabani district, where the number of non-Georgian-speaking students exceeded a quarter (25%), and the second target school was a school with a Georgian language sector, with non-Georgian-speaking students only. A qualitative research method was chosen for the research, as the aim was to explore the issue deeper and find ways to solve the problem. Accordingly, focus groups were held with school teachers, a total of 4 focus groups, the number of participants in each focus group was seven teachers. Focus groups were conducted with teachers of elementary and basic grades (grades 1-9). Participants were selected on a random sampling basis. Gender balance was not maintained at the time of sampling, with mostly female teachers participating in focus groups. The research tool was a pre-designed protocol for the focus group.

In the framework of the research, I analyzed the effectiveness of the submersion education program in Georgia and the challenges in the teaching process, the motivation of students to learn the Georgian language, and the involvement of parents in the learning process. The research hypothesis was as follows: The effectiveness of the ongoing submersion program in Georgian language schools in ethnic minority areas (Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti region) is low. The research aims to study the efficiency, challenges, and learning needs of Georgian and non-Georgian students in submersion classrooms. According to the purpose of the research, I will answer the following research questions within the article: 1) What are the challenges and how can Georgian language schools and sectors manage school language diversity? 2) What are the different approaches and challenges in Georgian language sectors in schools where the majority of students are non-Georgian or completely non-Georgian?

Analysis of qualitative research results and findings

The following tendencies were identified through the teacher focus group, which I will review more detailed below:

1. Teachers use less modern teaching approaches in the teaching process, develop a labeling attitude towards non-Georgian language students, they 'don't possess management skills of diverse classroom and show low intercultural competencies;
2. The degree of social integration of non-Georgian language students in Georgian schools is relatively low, which is different in the case of students in Georgian sectors;

In Georgian schools, the motivation of non-Georgian-speaking students to learn the state language for further study is low. Unlike the Georgian sectors, Georgian schools are currently unprepared for the growing number of non-Georgian speaking students wishing to study in Georgian.

1) Teachers use less modern teaching approaches in the teaching process, develop a labeling attitude towards non-Georgian language students, they 'don't possess management skills of diverse classroom and show low intercultural competencies - The study showed that the teachers of the target school rarely and non-intensively apply modern teaching methods adapted to the diverse classroom environment in the teaching process. In the teaching process, teachers mainly use the following methods, approaches, or strategies: lecture method, working in pairs (pairing a Georgian-speaking student with a non-Georgian-speaking one), visualizing (mostly drawing on the board a subject that a non-Georgian-speaking student cannot understand). It is important to appreciate the fact that most of the teachers from the surveyed schools are trying to mobilize additional resources for non-Georgian-speaking students to make it easier for them to overcome the language barrier while mastering the subject. In particular, teachers often draw on the board, make visual cards and try to use them to explain new words to children. Most of the teachers produce a dictionary for non-Georgian students, where Georgian lexical items (mostly everyday words) are translated into the language of ethnic minorities. Teachers noted that they let help students who understand both languages relatively well in the process of translation. Students who understand the Georgian language relatively well are also actively involved in working in pairs and try to translate the instructions for non-Georgian students who have difficulty understanding Georgian. It should be noted that the explanation of subject terminology and its translation remains a rather difficult and unresolved problem for the teaching process, because the meaning of terminology in even "supporter/translator" students do not know in both languages. It is also important to emphasize the fact that teachers also fail to verify the authenticity of the vocabulary translated with the help of students.

It should be noted that a few teachers pointed out the practice of using films as an additional resource in the learning process, but, as it was revealed during the focus group interview, teachers only recommend that students watch films or cartoons that they chose and provide; although the practice of watching and reviewing films together rarely takes place. Teachers point out that they have to do complicated and time-consuming curriculum activities, as well as logistical problems, so they cannot implement the practice of discussing movies/videos

together. Teachers point out the lack of technical support as well as a lack of visual material, such as posters, cards, three-dimensional models, and others, as the most important impediments to the teaching process. Due to the fact that the perception of students at the lower stage of education is specific, it is very important to explain the concepts along with the introduction of significant (Gamkrelidze, 2008).

Consequently, equipping classrooms with such visual resources is an important obstacle, especially in submersion classrooms, when teachers need more visibility in the process of subject and language teaching. In addition to textbooks, the main resource available in small numbers in schools is simple, thematic posters, most of which are created by the teachers themselves.

Research has shown that in addition to posters, teachers themselves create midterm quizzes, assessment rubrics, and various questionnaires for students. The practice of creating such materials is also an important positive approach on the part of teachers.

According to the focus group participants, they have been trained in modern teaching approaches, but in some cases, the technique/approach described by the teacher may not be used purposefully and effectively. For example, as mentioned above, teachers use the method of working in pairs at the lesson; however, the method described by most of them, does not differ much from the method of the independent working process of the student, because teacher involvement in this process is minimal, they did not monitor and manage the work of paired Georgian and non-Georgian students. The teacher is not able to effectively manage the class in this process and it remains unclear to him/her how equally students involve in the process of working in pairs. Furthermore, some teachers say that they use this method only to somehow involve non-Georgian students in learning activities.

The interviewed teachers agree on the benefits of using group work techniques in a diverse classroom, although they indicate that they do not apply it often, as group work causes noise in the classroom, and also fails to involve Georgian and non-Georgian students equally. This attitude of teachers once again indicates the inefficiency of diverse classroom management. The focus groups also showed that teachers find it difficult to maintain balance and work on the principle of differentiated teaching so that, on the one hand, the lesson does not become too simple and boring for Georgian students, and, on the other hand, they need to devote much more time for non-Georgian students to explain topics.

Questions related to diverse classroom management during the focus group revealed teachers' preconceived notions about low expectations from non-Georgian students (labeling). It should be noted that this attitude is common to most Georgian school teachers, although

similar attitudes are almost never shown with Georgian sector teachers. Presumably, this is due to the linguistically homogeneous composition of students in the Georgian sector (most of them are non-Georgian). In line with low expectations, some teachers from Georgian schools are in favor of dividing the class into "strong" and "weak" groups in all subjects according to 'students' academic achievements and think that this approach will lead to more success with successful students and they will no longer be "oppressed" and with "weak students" they will be able to teach them with simplified learning materials, adapted to their needs.

The teachers noted that from the new academic year (2021-2022) they are involved in the implementation process of the "new school" model and suggest that learning with this model will be difficult to overcome for non-Georgian students. During the research, it was clearly revealed that the main reason for not using diverse, modern teaching approaches in the teaching process in Georgian schools, is the attitudes of teachers toward the non-Georgian students emphasizing their different levels of Georgian language proficiency.

"If they do not know Georgian, it is a problem that needs to be solved. We cannot solve this. That's why we cannot accomplish many educational activities", says one of the teachers.

As mentioned above, research has shown that teachers are unfamiliar with the principles of diverse classroom management and therefore they do not perceive diversity in the classroom as a resource; Moreover, class diversity (cultural, linguistic, or religious) is often overlooked. This tendency was observed in the attitudes of almost all teachers in the target schools.

"No one discriminates them. We do not talk about their differences at all, we do not point it out whether you are Georgian, Azerbaijani, Muslim or Christian "-says a teacher. Teachers often misunderstand cultural and ethnic differences and the importance of managing classroom diversity and try their best to avoid talking about the issues related to ethnic, religious, and cultural differences or discussing historical facts and situations related to the historical homeland of Georgia's ethnic minorities.

"I find it very difficult to explain history. What can I do with the facts? sometimes I simply skip these historical facts, sometimes I don't go deeper, so that somehow not to offend non-Georgian students" (history teacher).

It is truly noteworthy that the teachers of all four target schools during the focus groups explained that they had no training or workshop on teaching in a diverse classroom environment and on intercultural education approaches. Only the teachers of the school subject "Civic Education" were named to have attended such target training organized by the Ministry of Education or the Teachers' House.

2) The degree of social integration of non-Georgian language students in Georgian schools is relatively low, which is different in the case of students in Georgian sectors -

A focus group conducted with teachers showed that the degree of social integration of non-Georgian students in Georgian schools is quite low, especially at lower stages of education. Teachers point out that the growing number of non-Georgian-speaking students in primary classes has led to their group gatherings during breaks communicating in their mother tongue and showing a low interest in interacting with Georgian students. This fact further hinders their linguistic/academic advancement and social integration at the elementary level. It should be noted that no additional measures are taken by the school/teachers for their social integration. However, as the teachers point out, the issue of their integration with Georgian-speaking students at the upper grades (basic level) is more or less improving, as non-Georgian students already have some communicative skills in Georgian and no longer find it difficult to speak to Georgian classmates. It should be noted that this process itself takes place without special intervention from the school representatives, which is generally typical for a submersion education program. Also, the research showed that only a small part of Georgian-speaking students try to get acquainted with the language and culture of their non-Georgian-speaking classmates. Teachers noted that only a few number Georgian students have learned the minority language at the communication level.

Moreover, interviews with teachers revealed that teaching materials, additional resources, or learning activities do not reflect ethnic and cultural differences in the classroom and are not aimed at increasing the social integration of all students in the classroom. Teachers do not see the need and do not encourage students to present their own religious and cultural customs. It should be noted that in the target schools, along with Georgian students learn ethnic Azerbaijani mostly. Teachers point to the sharing information of the Azerbaijani national holiday, Nowruz Bayram. Most of the teachers emphasize that they congratulate the Azerbaijani students Nowruz Bayram, just as the Georgian students congratulate them on this holiday. However, the teacher of the subjects "civic education" and "art" point out that students are given the opportunity to prepare a presentation on Azerbaijani culture and their religion and according to the teachers this approach encouraged non-Georgian speaking students to introduce their culture and their identity enthusiastically. This approach showed that Georgian-speaking students were also involved in the lesson with great interest, asking questions about the culture and traditions of non-Georgian-speaking classmates, and the lesson was really interactive. However, despite this positive approach and its effectiveness, similar types of approaches are

rare in Georgian target schools.

The exchange of information on cultures for 'students' social integration is a more proven experience for the Georgian sector, unlike the Georgian submersion schools. They more often focus on sharing information about the culture and religious traditions of non-Georgian students, but the teachers themselves note that this is due to the more or less linguistically and ethnically homogeneous composition of the students in the Georgian sector.

Overall, research has shown that each school allows ethnically non-Georgian students to engage in school activities and events, but the participation in extracurricular, educational activities demonstrates mostly sharing of the dominant culture. Teachers point out that they do not restrict to introduce the culture of minorities, however, they rarely name specific examples or cases when organizing and encouraging cultural diversity activities.

3) Different levels of language proficiency in the Georgian schools hinder both Georgian and Georgian language students from achieving academic success - All the teachers participating in the research note that the low or zero level of language proficiency in Georgian minority students is the biggest obstacle in the teaching process for both ethnically non-Georgian students and Georgian students. In the course of the study, teachers identified their special challenge while teaching: teaching the students transferred from non-Georgian schools in Georgian schools and/or sectors at the upper level of school. The students enter the Georgian school only at the basic level of the Georgian language. Teachers point out that it is not good that the school does not have the right to refuse to admit students who do not have a good level of Georgian language proficiency at the upper level of the school.

During the focus group interviews, the teachers noted that the students enter the Georgian school from the very first grade learn the language much easier and, consequently, they understand and learn the subjects too. However, according to the teachers, such students are only a few. Research has shown that in Georgian submersion schools students are admitted to both primary and upper grades without prior assessment of instructional language competence.

The teachers noted that non-Georgian students find it very difficult the comprehension of the reading or to complete the tasks in accordance with the given condition, and they try to simplify the content of the lesson as much as possible so that the non-Georgian student understands the issue. It should be noted that such a simplification process becomes quite boring for Georgian-speaking students and often leads to a decrease in their involvement and interest during the lesson. The fact once again indicates that teachers are not able to balance the

activities of the lesson process in such a way that it is interesting and useful for both Georgian and non-Georgian students, therefore, they are not ready for differentiated teaching. This issue is especially sharply expressed in Georgian schools, in contrast to the Georgian sectors.

4) In Georgian schools, the motivation of non-Georgian-speaking students to learn the state language for further study is low - The interviews revealed a tendency in Georgian schools that non-Georgian-speaking students are not highly motivated to continue their education in higher educational institutions or vocational schools. Teachers indicate that each student is more or less motivated to learn Georgian, although their motivation does not go beyond their daily communicational needs. Students mostly drop out of school after completing a basic level course. According to information provided by teachers, only a few of them try to get vocational education. The main motivation of non-Georgian language students to learn in a Georgian school is based on the desire to learn the state language at a communicative level. They need language skills to communicate with the Georgian-speaking community and to establish business-type relationships. It is noteworthy that teachers see the motivation of students to learn in Georgian schools from their own, experience-based perspective, but further research can be based to assess the motivation and effectiveness of learning in Georgian schools from the perspective of students.

When asked why the non-Georgian population chooses to learn in a Georgian school only for the purpose of learning language at the communication level when they can receive education in their native language at a nearby school and at the same time learn Georgian, teachers name two main reasons: 1) The quality of teaching the Georgian language in non-Georgian language schools is low and the student cannot speak Georgian well after graduation. 2) Parents choose a Georgian school to create a "Georgian environment", just learning the language at the lesson is not enough for them, they want the children to be completely in a Georgian-speaking environment, to have more closed relationships with Georgian children.

The assumptions made by teachers regarding the choice of Georgian-language school or sector by students and parents indicate the motivation of them to integrate more into Georgian society, although as discussed above, the degree of social integration of non-Georgian-speaking students in school is still low.

The study participants emphasized that the low level of motivation to learn is due to the low level of parental involvement in the educational process and their low expectations, which also do not exceed the requirements for learning the state language. However, the situation is

different in the Georgian sectors. For example, the teachers of the second public school in Marneuli noted the high motivation of students to continue their education in Georgian HEIs (The exact statistics of students enrolled in HEIs from this school are not available at this stage). However, as part of my research, I found that these students still enjoy the benefits of the affirmative action policy of Georgia. This policy envisages that ethnic minority students should pass only one entrance exam ("The General Skills Exam") in their native language and then they should be additionally studied in the one-year Georgian language Preparatory program at the university. The situation is about the same in the Georgian sector of the Kesalo public school in Gardabani, where teaching is only at the basic level, while in the 10th-grade students return to the Azerbaijani sectors or move to one of the Georgian schools in the central Gardabani district. Teachers at Kesalo School also note that most of their students choose the offer of affirmative action policy to get a higher education, as they do not have enough language and subject knowledge to pass university entrance exams on a competitive basis with Georgian-speaking students. This fact points out that ethnic minorities in the Georgian school or Georgian sectors cannot learn the state language well enough to pass the exams in the subjects required for the Unified National Examinations. This indicates that the human and financial resources provided by the state-funded public school have not been utilized effectively, and the application of affirmative action policy further increases the financial costs to the state for financing the Georgian Language Preparatory programs at several universities.

5) Parental involvement of non-Georgian speaking students in the learning process and their expectations of their children are low - Most of the teachers participating in the study agree on the common and one of the most important challenges for students related to submersion education and related to the low degree of parental involvement in the learning process. Research has shown that attitudes of the parents and the minimum level of their involvement in the learning process have a direct impact on the motivation of students to learn. Lack of knowledge of state language is mentioned as the reason for the low degree of parental involvement. Teachers of Georgian-language schools compare the involvement of Georgian-speaking and non-Georgian-speaking parents in the learning process. Teachers directly link the higher degree of involvement of ethnic Georgian parents to the success of their children. They also point out that those rare exceptions, a non-Georgian successful student are always supported by the parent. Non-Georgian-speaking parents use a variety of support mechanisms to help their child in the learning process and have high expectations, but the number of those

parents and students is very low. The children of such parents are distinguished by higher academic success than other non-Georgian speaking children whose parents are almost not involved in the learning process. While discussing the issue of parental involvement, also another problematic issue was identified, which is characteristic of submersion education, and we talked about it above in the context of lesson inefficiency for Georgian students. According to the teachers, the annual increase in the number of non-Georgian- speaking students in the classroom forces the Georgian parents to take the child to another, more distant Georgian schools, where most of the students are Georgian, or to apply for additional educational support, such as lessons with subject tutors. This supportive mechanism of education is an even greater financial expense for the parents. According to the study, no special efforts and support were made by teachers and school administrations to increase the degree of parental involvement of students. Teachers point out that they find it difficult to communicate with parents because of both the language factor as well as the interests of the parents and their low expectations of the children.

6) The Georgian schools are currently unprepared for the growing number of non-Georgian speaking students wishing to study in Georgian - During the interviews, teachers of Georgian-language schools confirmed that the tendency to admit non-Georgian-speaking students to submersion classrooms has increased significantly. As the school teachers point out, the school is unprepared for this in terms of lack of teaching experience in submersion classrooms, as well as material resources or other additional learning support. In addition, teachers point out that the total number of students admitted to the school is mostly filled by non- Georgian-speaking students, while Georgian- speaking students living near the school can no longer register at their school and have to travel long distances to other schools. At the same time, non-Georgian language students also go to the Georgian school from a distance, even if there is an Azerbaijani language school near their place of residence. Teachers point out that despite organizing many sessions of training in different areas, which are offered by the Teacher Professional Development Center and by the Ministry of Education, they cannot cope with the current problems of the submersion classroom. They have difficulty managing classroom diversity and fail to achieve the goal set for each lesson perfectly. According to the interviewed teachers, they need systemic support in case they have to work with non-Georgian and Georgian- speaking students in the same classroom environment on a daily basis. If supported appropriately, they include providing teaching resources, mobilizing

teaching assistants, and organizing appropriate training sessions for all teachers. This issue is not so problematic and is distinctive for students and teachers in the Georgian sectors as the language composition of their students is more or less homogeneous and they are at somewhat the same level.

Conclusion

The findings of the study can be interesting for education researchers and decision-makers, although the results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire population due to sampling limits. The difficulties and challenges identified in the article should be taken into account to improve the quality of teaching in submersion schools. It is important that each posed problem should be explored in more depth and in a representative selection to plan strategies for solving these problems purposefully.

One of the problems identified is the lack of teacher preparation for teaching a diverse classroom, which is one of the significant barriers to implementing a submersion program. Low intercultural sensitivity of the teachers, manifested in the form of preconceived negative expectations of students and minimization of cultural differences, contradicts the national curriculum and teacher professional standard, requiring teachers to be supportive of the school integration process and highly intercultural. It is important to take effective measures in this direction.

According to the research and literature review, student parental involvement and low educational expectations for their children are also serious barriers to learning, directly affecting the quality of academic success of students. When it comes to Georgia, as in the case of submersion education in general, the low level of parental involvement in the educational process is due to their lack of knowledge of the state language, which is a significant factor. Thus, it is important to plan activities to improve parental knowledge in this area and to provide relevant information in a language they understand.

The findings of the study discussed in the article allow us to say that in the submersion schools can the non-Georgian students neither achieve academic success nor learn Georgian fluently. At the same time, the quality of education of their Georgian-speaking classmates also decreases significantly, due to the fact that the simplified curriculum for non-Georgian-speaking students leads to low interest and less involvement in the learning process. The mentioned reasons lead to mutual loss: 1) At the end of the study we get a non-Georgian graduate with low competence in the Georgian language and other subjects, who still need to

enjoy the benefits of the quota system/affirmative action policy announced by the state and cannot compete with the Georgian language graduates. These students at the same time lost the chance to significantly develop language competencies in their native language and to receive an appropriate education; 2) We shall also get the Georgian-speaking students with low academic achievement who need support with additional human and financial resources to receive a comprehensive general education.

The hypothesis developed herein, saying that quality of education in submersion classes in Georgian public schools is low was confirmed in light of the results presented in the article. This issue needs to be further explored in order to plan effective responses to the findings, changes, and trends, taking into account the needs and motivations of ethnic minorities who teach their children Georgian as the state language, as well as the needs of the Georgian-speaking population and ensuring a quality school education for all citizens.

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