

An Assessment of the Educational Needs of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia from an Education Policy Perspective

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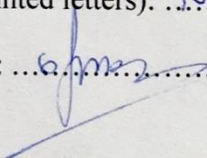
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Declaration

I, the undersigned Nino Kadagishvili..... hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language. This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

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This thesis is dedicated to all teachers and assistant teachers who teach the state language in non-Georgian language schools in ethnic minority regions in Georgia.

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Abstract

Since regaining independence in 1991 Georgia has made a significant progress in reforming its education system. The country undertook several reforms, transformed the post-Soviet education system and created a new structure which would be in line with existing demands and be competitive in the international arena (MES, Education Strategy 2017-2021-Report 2018). However, a minority education remains as the biggest challenge for the state.

While statistics and researches about ethnic minorities exist, little is studied about their educational needs in Georgia. The study attempts to fill this gap, identify main educational needs and examine causes that hinder ethnic minority groups' motivation to get engaged actively into school and higher education.

This thesis focuses on the largest minority groups in Georgia, ethnic Azeris and ethnic Armenians. I used a qualitative research with main stakeholders and analyzed minority education policies for better identification of educational needs for ethnic minorities. By studying the issue two main specific problems are identified, access to education and the quality of that education. In order to overcome the problems, the study proposes several policy recommendations to the policymakers in Georgian education system. The recommendations focus on key problem areas and advocate them to design effective bilingual education policy for non-Georgian language schools, promote the development of a native language teaching policy and revise the affirmative action policy and become more valuable in higher education system.

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List of Abbreviations

MES-Ministry of Education Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia;

TPDC-National Center for Teacher Professional Development;

NAEC-National Examination Center of Georgia;

PISA- Program for International Student Assessment;

OECD- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development;

UNICEF- United Nations International Children's Emergency;

ECMI- European Center for Minority Issues;

UN- United Nations;

ECRI-European Commission against Racism and Intolerance;

Introduction

Georgia has made a considerable progress in reforming education system after collapsing the Soviet Union and has developed several reforms for creating high quality education system which would be accessible for all individuals across the country. Despite many positive changes there are still many challenges, especially in minority education. In particular, the quality of teaching and access to education keep on a challenge in the regions where ethnic minorities are settled (MES 2019). The PISA International Assessment Results of 2015 (OECD 2015), results of school completion exams and national unified exams (NAEC 2018) have identified that non-Georgian language schools' students have low performance in studying, low academic literacy and the main cause of these result is primarily the bad command of a state language. Besides, lack of qualified teachers, quality of textbooks, and lack of motivation of studying are the problems that affect the minority education in Georgia.

Since settling in Georgia, the language barrier always existed in ethnic minority groups, but it transformed into the complex problem after the Soviet Union era. Generally, the situation in all post-Soviet Union member countries was even more complicated in this regard. When Georgia was a member of the USSR, Russian was a communication language among ethnic minorities living in Georgia. They knew their mother tongue and Russian, even studied at Russian-language schools and they did not have any motivation to learn Georgian. Moreover, formal institutions in the country used Russian and all citizens including ethnic Georgians.

After regaining independence in 1991, Georgia constituted Georgian as a state language, and formal institutions started using Georgian. Simultaneously, schools in ethnic minority regions started teaching in their mother languages, and a subject-Georgian language and literature became a mandatory component in their curriculum. However, due to the deteriorated situation, weakened educational system and formal institutions, the schools could not provide

proper quality of education. It had a negative effect on ethnic minorities' motivation to study Georgian for their future perspective. As a result, the country had groups of citizens, who could not communicate any language other than their mother tongue. They were politically and socially inactive, could not get any benefits from the state as a citizen could receive in a country. As a result, they isolated in their regions and most of them self-employed in agriculture sector. Furthermore, for better future perspectives part of ethnic minorities left the country and went to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia.

Since 2003, after the Rose Revolution, the ethnic minority issue was prioritized by the government and the educational policy was one of the top issues. The newly elected president Saakashvili completely changed the state policy regarding the ethnic minorities. He was the first leader of post-communist Georgia who explicitly appealed to Georgia's alienated ethnic minorities and promised them a state for all its citizens (Sabanadze 2010). This approach made certain steps towards civil integration of ethnic minorities through developing educational and cultural programs, road systems, and infrastructure in their regions. The changed discourse from the government officials impacted on ethnic minorities' attitude towards Georgian (Open Society Foundation – Georgia 2017). Interest started increased in ethnic minority groups to learn Georgian and enhance engagement in country's social life.

In terms of education policies, the Georgian government designed programs that referred to improve the state language proficiencies in ethnic minority regions. To be more specific, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport of Georgia (MES) sent Georgian language teachers to the ethnic minority communities. They were living in the host families with Azeris and Armenians and teaching Georgian to pupils, students, community leaders, local teachers, and other influential individuals. Simultaneously, the Ministry transformed national curriculum and parts of the textbooks were translated into Azeri and Armenian. This supply-side approach had particularly positive effect on ethnic minority youth. The state gave them

opportunities to develop their language proficiencies for their future success. According to the prior information, due to the policy changes, more and more students were engaged into social life actively through various activities organized by the Ministry, local educational resource centers, and universities (ECMI 2009, Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016).

In spite of positive changes, currently, access to education and quality of education in minority groups are not sufficient yet (Open Society Foundation – Georgia 2017). It can be assumed that the problem is in the designing and the implementation of the policies. While designing and implementing policies, policymakers do not take into account individual needs of the minority groups, including cultural attitudes, religious and other related aspects. As a result, the positive outcome becomes difficult to achieve properly.

This thesis aims to identify educational needs among ethnic minority groups in Georgia by analyzing minority education policies, challenges in non-Georgian language schools and higher education institutions. The study focuses on the largest group of minorities in Georgia, ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenian. The paper consists of four sections. The first part briefly reviews an academic literature in this regard and discusses about key challenges in term of minority education. The second part analyzes school education policies developed by the Georgian governments since 1991 and identifies main challenges. The key findings are based on focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and prior information accumulated from state documents, national and international reports and articles.

The second chapter analyzes an affirmative action policy in terms of higher education through various reliable reports, the government strategy documents, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Finally, based on research the paper concludes key findings and proposes policy recommendations to the policymakers who work on designing educational policy for ethnic minority groups in Georgia.

This thesis is country-specific research and contributes to fill the gap in term of the ethnic minority education. Noticeably, the research revealed that due to the frequent changes in education management in the country, there is a scarcity of institutional memory about the previous policies; accordingly, some finding in the thesis are based on the reports that consist of description parts of the state policies.

Brief Review of Ethnic Minority Groups Living in Georgia

Georgia is a multinational and multilingual state and home to up to 26 ethnic groups, where Georgians are predominant ethnic group. According to the National Statistic Office of Georgia, about 14% of the Georgian population is ethnic minorities and issues related to these groups are of special concern. A huge number of minorities lives in specific regions of the country, mostly near the state borders. In particular, regions Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti are inhabited by ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenians who are the largest minority groups in the country. In Kvemo Kartli the largest part of the population are ethnic Azeri, about 6.3% of the total Georgian population, in the districts of Marneuli, Dmanisi, Gardabani and Bolnisi (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2016). This region has a mutual border with Azerbaijan and Armenia, while, in Samtskhe-Javakheti, the considerable amount of the population are Armenians (4.5% of the total population of the country) in two districts, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. This region is near the border of Armenia. Also, a significant number of ethnic Armenians live in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. Besides, Kakheti is the region where ethnic Azeris are settled in various districts, such as Sagarejo and Lagodekhi.

In terms of smaller minorities, ethnic Ossetians, Russians are the most significant who make up 1.1% of the total population. The other minorities are Greeks, Kists, Ukrainians, Yazidis who are dispersing in various regions of Georgia. Table 1 displays the percentage of disperses of ethnic groups in the country.

Table 1 Population of Georgia*Source: www.geostat.ge Source: www.geostat.ge*

| Population of Georgia | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Nationality | Total amount(thousands) | Percentage (%) |
| Georgian | 3 224,6 | 86.8 |
| Azeri | 233,0 | 6.3 |
| Armenian | 168,1 | 4.5 |
| Russian | 26,5 | 0.7 |
| Ossetian | 14,4 | 0.4 |
| Yazidi | 12,2 | 0.3 |
| Kist | 5,7 | 0.2 |
| Greek | 5,5 | 0.1 |
| Others | 152.8 | 0.6 |

The national minority groups living in Georgia have different historical backgrounds and differ in terms of number, level of integration into majority society, traditions, beliefs, and religions. Massive ethnic migration in Georgia started in the 19th century and continued in the 20th century. The migrations mostly happened from neighbor countries and it was caused by the local bloody conflicts, civil wars and deteriorated political situations. Other neighbors, like Russia had specific demographic policies during this period, so a large amount of the ethnic groups found a safe shelter in Georgia. Most of these people speak only on their mother languages and do not know Georgian.

The State of Ethnic Minority Education in Georgia

Communication with the citizens enables an individual to influence his/her environment. If an individual live in a country with speakers of many different languages, she/he must share at least one language with the others, for a democratic process to be possible. Knowing majority language is one of the main tools to get all benefits that citizens can have in any country. The main instrument for sharing power and resources of the country where you live is to know the language and have an education (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988).

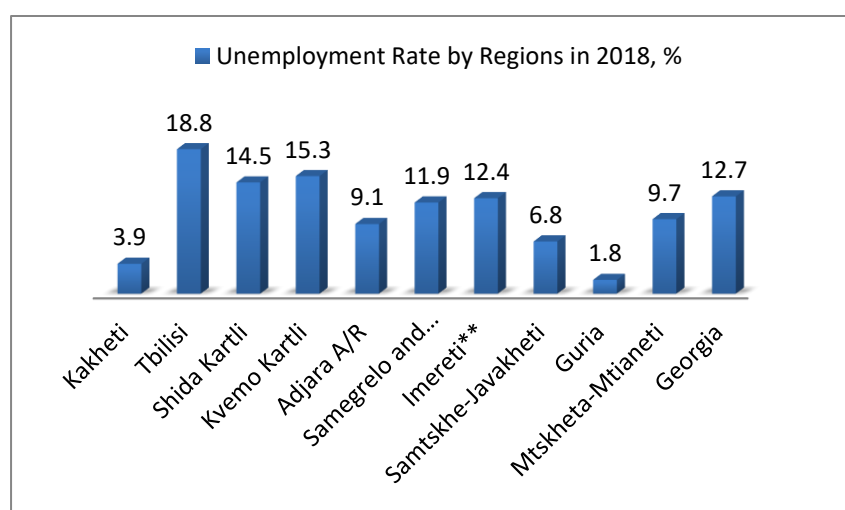
UN “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, which was adopted on 20 November 1989 defines that “States parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity” (UN 1989, Article 28). Since 1994 Georgia is a state part of this Convention, which means that all children, living in Georgia, regardless of their ethnicity, or religious differences should be provided quality education by the government. According to the Constitution of Georgia the state language is Georgian (in Abkhazia the status of state language is also granted to Abkhazian thus, there are two state languages in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) (Parliament of Georgia 1995). At the same time, the Article 4 of the Law of General Education ethnic minorities have the right to learn school education in their native languages, while, teaching language in higher educational institutions is Georgian.

Throughout the years, a language barrier has become a main drawback for ethnic minorities living in Georgia. They cannot develop their future career or integrate in the society where they were born and live for years (Mekhuzla and Rosche 2009). It has isolated and blocked them in a shell. Compared with ethnic Georgians they are less informed about the political, economic, or social issues in the country. They are less likely to be employed in public sector because of a lack of the state language competencies. (Public Defender's Office of Georgia

2017). It can be assumed that these factors are causes of a high unemployment rate among ethnic minorities. National Statistic Office of Georgia does not measure an unemployment rate among ethnic minorities, but if we see the data about the unemployment rate in the country it can be clearly seen that the percentage is considerably high in KvemoKartli Region, where a large number of ethnic minority groups live. *Figure 2* demonstrates the data mentioned –above. Regarding Samtskhe-Javakheti the rate is relatively low because a large number of its population is self-employed in agriculture sector. Meanwhile, it should be noted that for years, ethnic minority regions are the leading producers of agricultural products in the country.

Figure 1 Unemployment Rate by Regions in 2018, %

Source: www.geostat.ge



Concerning the educational studies about the topic, there is a noticeable scarcity regarding a scholarly literature about the role of education in ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus region (Cowen, Wheatley 2009, Tabatadze 2017). The non-governmental organizations and civil society units within the country focus on ethnic minority issues, although, their working area consist of topics, such as human rights, integration problems, not the education accessibility, or education quality in ethnic minority regions.

Before analyzing the issue, it might be useful to clarify the concept of ethnic/national minority and their typical components. Different disciplines study ethnic minority issues. So, there are many variations of the term. In social sciences, "minority" does not have only the quantitative characteristics, but the group of people who does not belongs to any of the power categories of the given society. Ethnic minority is usually defined in contradiction to major groups with whom they coexist in political systems, as groups which experienced systematic domination because of their numerical inferiority and a host of historical and sociological factors(Sarjoon 2016).

The conceptualization of national minority also needs the understanding of ethnic group. Scholars define ethnic group concept in a different way. Smith (1991) describes it as “a type of cultural collectivity, one that emphasized the role of myths of descents and historical memories, and that is recognized by one or more cultural differences like religion, customs, language, or Institutions” (Smith 1991).According to Harff and Gurr(Harff 2004) ethnic groups are “psychological communities” “whose members share a persisting sense of common interest and identity that is based on some combination of shared historical experience and valued cultural traits, beliefs, language, way of life, a common homeland (p. 14)”. They are often called “identity groups”. Existence of ethnic minority groups in the country creates multicultural society. As Weber and Durkheim (Rex 1996) wrote it really presupposes the evolution of modern type of society. Ethnicity is structured by particular features such as religious, values; culture (Rex 1996). Thereby, these features separate people from each other and sometimes it causes clashes of values.

Minority education policy is a challenge of any country, especially in young democratic state such as Georgia. As scholarShalvaTabatadze discusses that minority educational policy can be divided into three main paradigms, assimilationist, isolationism, pluralistic–integrative education paradigms. The first educational paradigm includes the education of ethnic

minorities in the dominant mainstream language and culture and focuses on fully separating the individual from the native culture and encouraging assimilation in the dominant culture (Tabatadze 2017). This approach does not provide a chance to obtain any type of education in the native language of ethnic minorities, or to retain the mother language, culture and traditions. The Georgian education system allows for the assimilationist educational paradigm in the places of Georgia, where ethnic minorities are not concentrated. In Georgia, the education system consent to the assimilationist educational paradigm. It is developed so that the instruction is not focused on minority students needs and accordingly their academic performance is dramatically low, compared with their Georgian fellows (UNICEF 2014). The research by UNICEF indicated that the children who do not speak in Georgian in their families have low academic performance compared with the fellows who have Georgian language environment in their families(UNICEF 2014). The results of school completion exams can prove this evidence. The percentage of those minority students who could not pass minimal level of school completion exams in various subjects fluctuates from 8% to 29%(MES, Public Information 2019).The same rate is about 1.5 to 4.5 among ethnic Georgian students.

The second paradigm is isolationism, which involves education only in ethnic minorities' mother language and leads to the voluntary isolation of the minorities from the dominant mainstream(Odzeli 2008). The Georgian education system allows for this paradigm as well. There are non-Georgian language schools in ethnic minority regions, which means that students are able to have access to school education in their mother language. Moreover, in Georgian education system, non-Georgian language schools have two types of teaching sectors. First is non-Georgian language sector, where all subjects are taught in native languages and Georgian literature and grammar is one of the mandatory subjects. Second teaching type is Georgian language sector. The difference between these sectors is that

students of Georgian language sector study the state language intensively. However, they still face problems related to low performance, a lack of motivation to study, also the isolation and low level of integration into the Georgian society.

The last paradigm is the pluralistic–integrative education paradigm, which provides a model for making individuals capable in two, or more languages and cultures (Tabatadze 2017). This paradigm discards the assimilationist paradigm and tries to protect and develop the mother language, culture and traditions and at the same time to introduce mainstream language and culture. Georgian educational system currently provides education opportunities for ethnic minority students only within the assimilationist and isolationist paradigms.

Methodology

This study identified the educational needs of ethnic minority students living in Georgia, by analyzing current challenges in terms of school and higher education. In order to highlight and analyze these needs, the thesis employed a qualitative research. The research carried out in two directions. Firstly, prior information was collected by analyzing state strategies and policy documents, legal acts and annual monitoring reports by national NGOs and various international organizations. Furthermore, for analyzing precise and the newest statistics, Public Information was requested from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia, under the Georgian Law on Public Information (Government of Georgia 2013). A considerable number of the data were used from the National Statistic Office of Georgia's website.

As a second direction the study conducted in-depth interviews with practitioners, experts and focus group discussions with students and local teachers. To be more specific, for gaining

better understanding of the educational needs among ethnic minorities, in-depth interviews were conducted with an expert working on the ethnic minority issues in the Ministry. Besides, in-depth interview was conducted with an expert from a reliable non-governmental organization, which works for ethnic minority issues for many years. What is more, from the practitioners' perspective two school principals were selected from both ethnic groups. Furthermore, a head one of the local educational resource centers¹ was interviewed for better understanding in the local problems existing in minority groups.

Besides, in this content analysis, focus group discussions were used in this research. The target audience comprises of ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenian high school students and minority students from higher education institutions who took an opportunity and use affirmative action policy offered by the state. In total, three focus groups discussions were organized with high school students (six respondents), university students (four respondents) and local teachers (six respondents). It should be noted that teachers' focus group includes interviewees as ethnic minority teachers as well as ethnic Georgian colleagues who teach the state language in non-Georgian language schools. Also, one respondent was a representative of the program implemented by the Ministry.

Regarding the higher educational level, monitoring reports and focus group discussions with students were analyzed for assessing the current affirmative action policy and defining its lacunas. This research carried out in several directions, including analyzing the affirmative action policy, examining students' attitude towards a Georgian language preparatory program and their bachelor programs. The respondents come from various universities and various professions, including Business Administration, Informational Technologies, History and Communications.

¹Educational Resource centers are territorial body of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia. The main mission of the Centers is to assist schools in better implementation of their functions, providing information, resources, and relationships with different stakeholders, manuals or training providers, etc.

All these respondents were chosen by specific selection criteria: representation of ethnic minority groups, gender balance, willingness to continue studying (the high schools' students), diversity of faculties and universities (students from higher educational institutions), working experience, representatives of the governmental sector and the non-governmental sector. The diversity of the interviewees enables the research to collect valuable information for better analysis.

Chapter 1 –Past and Current Minority Education Policies for Non-Georgian Language Schools

According to the Article 2, Paragraph “n” of Georgia’s Law on General Education, school education is organized in three levels Primary, Basic, and Secondary (Parliament of Georgia 2005). Out of three above-mentioned levels, the most vulnerable state still remain on the basic and secondary education levels. There are two main challenges for minority groups in terms of school education- access to education and quality of education.

According to the public information requested from the MES and the data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, in 2018-2019 academic year, approximately 584.000 students are studying in 2084 schools across the country, from where 50.860 students are studying in 291 non-Georgian language schools (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2019, MES, Public Information 2019). Minority students are about 10% of the total student population and most non-Georgian language schools are in the villages and towns in the ethnic minority regions. The schools teach in native Azeri and Armenian. Few Russian language schools are also dispersed in the country, where students in those schools are not only Russians but from various ethnic groups, including Azeris and Armenians.

As national and international researches have revealed school education is one of the most challenging parts of the education system in Georgia (MES, Education Strategy 2017). There are systemic problems that have not been dealt with for years. The problems are much more severe in non-Georgian language schools (Janashia, Mosiashvili and Giorgadze 2017, OECD 2015). Apart from the lack of the state language proficiencies, teaching and learning methodologies are serious drawbacks. Non-Georgian language schools have been reminiscent of the Soviet education system and teachers’ qualification has not been subject to development. The complexity of the problems finally creates a huge gap between ethnic

minority students and education institutions and set different standards among Georgian citizens. The following sub-chapters describe, analyze and criticize state policies in terms of minority education, designed and implemented by various governments in Georgia.

1.1 Minority Educational Policies for Non-Georgian Language Schools

To begin with, since forming a new state after breaking up of the Soviet Union, various governments have developed policies in terms of improving access to education and quality of education among minority groups. Under the reform of minority education, the state designed a different model of a Voucher system for non-Georgian language schools, sent Georgian language teachers to the ethnic minority regions, translated textbooks. The implemented policies more or less improved command of the state language in minority students.

According to an expert from NGO sector, at a glance, access to education is technically provided in Georgia but the quality of education remains low. During the interviews, other respondents rather positively evaluated the processes in the minority education in recent years and distinguished some strong and weak sides. They also emphasized that the state reform has many lacunas, including inconsequentiality of the reforms. The monitoring reports of the Public Defender's Office and other international organization researches also share this opinion.

1.1.1 State Language Policy

Compared with other Post-Soviet countries, for instance, Baltic region countries, the Georgian governments enable ethnic minority groups to learn their mother languages at

schools, whereas in Georgia, the state has supported ethnic minority groups, formed non-Georgian language schools and enabled them to study all subjects in their native languages. As the Article 4 of the Law of General Education (Parliament of Georgia 2005) defines: “citizens of Georgia, for whom Georgian is not a native language, have the right to receive full school education in their native language, according to the National Curriculum, in accordance with the legislation. The teaching of the state language is mandatory for educational institutions”.

Regarding the supportive educational policies, throughout the years, Georgian governments have designed and developed various programs that supported learning the state language for minority students at schools. To be more precise, the Ministry, cooperated with its legal entity, National Center for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC) implemented special programs for non-Georgian language schools and sent Georgian language teachers to these schools. The first program was “Teach Georgian as a Second Language” (2009-2015) which implied to send experienced teachers in non-Georgian language schools for assisting students, and teachers to learn Georgian. Compared with Georgian colleagues working at school, they had additional funding for each teaching hour (TPDC 2019).

Furthermore, the Ministry implemented another program “Georgian Language for Future Success”. Under the program young native speaker Georgians assisted minority teachers, community members, principals and team leaders to study Georgian. They were also responsible to plan non-formal educational activities that helped minority groups to study the state language and promote civil integration. After finishing the program all participants were suggested to finance their Master degree by the state. It should be noted that apart from this offer, their duties were paid monthly too.

Since 2016, the MES has been carrying out the “Professional Development Program” for ethnic minority teachers and schools, which joins the programs implemented by the Ministry in the previous years, "Teach Georgian as a Second Language" and "Georgian Language for Future Success" (2011-2015) aimed at supporting of the state language teaching and civil integration of ethnic minorities living in Georgia (TPDC 2019). Under the program, three groups of teachers are dispatched to the non-Georgian language schools. In particular, “Georgian as second language teachers- consultants -240, assistant teachers -135, (TPDC 2019). The program is also provided with informational resources which are translated in Azerbaijani and Armenian. It includes materials about Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme Guide, teachers’ instruction, self-assessment questionnaire.

1.1.2 Bilingual Education policy

In terms of supporting the state language teaching, bilingual education was chosen by the state as a tool for improving language proficiencies on the one hand and on the other hand retaining and protecting native languages in non-Georgian language schools. Bilingual education at schools is the tool that really helps students to study languages so that it can be used in upper levels of education. This methodology was tested in other multinational countries across the world, such as Canada, Finland and Estonia and it has proven to be an effective means for managing diversity, both linguistic and cultural. In addition, this method has produced more motivated students with increased learning and social skills (Tabatadze 2015).

The first attempt to build up bilingual education was in 2010 when the government suggested to 40 pilot non-Georgian language schools to make up bilingual educational programs in accordance with their needs and the state would finance them. The schools made up the

programs, but the financial support was not sufficient to implement them. After two years, the Ministry decided to transform all non-Georgian language schools into bilingual schools. The teaching would be 30% in Georgian and 70% in minority languages. Schools could not teach with these methods because they did not have qualified teachers who had enough knowledge of the state language. Besides, the methodology of textbooks was badly arranged and could not gain the main aim to improve the quality education. As a result, the attempt to form bilingual education finally deteriorated the quality of education. Nearly all schools returned to the textbooks and teaching methods which they used in the Soviet Union era.

In spite of importance of the policy, bilingual education is not designed and implemented yet. As the Ministry representative emphasized during the in-depth interview, the state is working on establishing bilingual education for minority students in the nearest future(MES 2019). According to the Minister's Order N 32n, the state has already prioritized the development of academic literacy among ethnic minority students in the National curriculum(MES, Public Information 2019). This change implies that the minority students should be supported by the school to learn as their native language as well as Georgian and develop educational skills in both languages equally. According to the Public information, the Ministry has been developing an integral teaching model for bilingual education for non-Georgian language schools.

1.1.3 Voucher System for Non-Georgian Language Schools

In terms of supportive policies for ethnic minority education, the state designed a different model of a voucher system for non-Georgian language schools. The schools in Georgia are financed via the Voucher system by the state budget. The system was designed with the intent to provide equitable distribution and efficient utilization of financial and human resources(Simonia 2007). Georgian public and private schools annually receive the amount of

money based on their enrollment. The public schools are divided into town, village and mountainous schools, so the territorial and geographical location is the central criteria for school funding. The financial support received through the voucher refers to cover all the regular expenditures. For getting equal access to education for all citizens, the state has designed the policy, where non-Georgian language schools are one of the prioritized target groups. Since 2010 the government has defined an additional coefficient for non-Georgian language schools. These schools receive 1.13 % coefficient of standard voucher, moreover, non-Georgian language sectors receive 1.14% coefficient. At a glance it can be said that this system refers to achieve equality of funding and resources for all students in the country.

1.1.4 Textbooks and the National Curriculum Policy

With regards to teaching materials, textbooks and the national curriculum were identified as problematic parts in minority education by the research. The Law of General Education has approved list of subjects under the national curriculum as mandatory to be taught in all schools around the country: State language and literature; Mathematics, Foreign Languages, History and Geography of Georgia and other Social Science subjects; Natural Sciences, Physical, Informational Technologies and Aesthetic Education and Sport. Non-Georgian language schools use Armenian and Azeri as the main language of instruction, as accommodated by the Law on General Education (ECMI 2009). The textbooks are provided in ethnic minority languages in non-Georgian language schools.

To begin with, the national school education curriculum was prepared in 2004-2005 and was piloted in previously selected schools. In 2006–2007, the national curriculum was introduced in all Georgian schools across the country. It was finally adopted by non-Georgian language schools in 2009-2010. The textbooks based on the national curriculum were translated for non-Georgian language schools.

The MES revised the national curriculum in 2005 and adopted it in 2011. The introduction of the curriculum and new textbooks for grades 1–6 in non-Georgian language schools began in the 2012–2013 academic years and schools were provided with translated textbooks. As it was mentioned in previous sub-chapter, the approach from the government was changed and with this reason the textbooks became bilingual; 70% of the textbook content was in national minority languages, and 30% remained Georgian. The renewed curriculum and the textbooks were planned to be introduced in Grades 7–12 for the 2013–2014 school year but, the Ministry failed to translate and provide these textbooks to schools in that academic year (Tabatadze 2017). As a result, the non-Georgian language schools continued to use the old curriculum and textbooks in 2013 (Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civil Equality 2014). According to the Public Information, in 2018, the national curriculum and all textbooks for basic school level were translated in Azerbaijani and Armenian(MES, Public Information 2019).These textbooks will be used in teaching processfrom 2019-2020 academic years.

1.1.5 Teachers’ Qualification and Professional Development

Teachers play a crucial role in language acquisition and bilingual among ethnic minority students. Accordingly, teachers should be highly qualified and equipped with special skills to motivate students. So, teachers’ training is one of the most vital components of ethnic minority education reform. Bilingual education teachers should know modern teaching methods, have positive attitudes toward bilingual education and minority students, and be “pedagogue, linguist, innovator, intercultural communicator”(Benson 2004). For achieving above mentioned result the Ministry cooperating with TPDC has designed several programs and trainings that aim to develop professional standards and basic and secondary education subject standards. The implementer of those activities is TPDC, whileprogram monitoring

process is developed by the Ministry. The standards and regulations require teachers to pass certification exams before they start teaching at schools. These exams should be in their native languages.

In spite of the provision in the certification regulations, in this period, the National Center of Examination (NAEC) of the MES has not provided tests in ethnic minority languages (Tabatadze 2017). Since starting certification exams, the number of ethnic minority language teachers who registered for the certification exam is very low relative to the total number of minority-language teachers and most of them could not pass exams.

1.2 Analysis of School Education Policies

National and international researches, results of school completion exams and unified national exams are quite sufficient indicators in Georgia to evaluate the quality of school education. Their results clearly demonstrate that the quality in the non-Georgian language schools is considerably low compared with Georgian language schools (Janashia, Mosiashvili and Giorgadze 2017).

Although, an important factor in minority school results is the location of schools. To be more precise, the distinctive factors between non-Georgian and Georgian language schools can be language of teaching, qualification of teachers, communities' attitude towards education and territorial disperse of schools. Most of these features, except the language of teaching are problematic in those Georgian schools which are dispersed in mountainous regions, or villages. According to the PISA assessment, the level of academic literacy in the country is much better in bigger cities than in rural areas (Tsiklauri 2016). The causes of this outcome can be deficit of qualified teachers, insufficient educational resources; infrastructure etc. Noticeably, 90% of non-Georgian language schools are dispersed in the villages. This

factor enables us to assume that the outcome can be equal in both part of Georgian language and non-Georgian language schools.

Concerning the policy design and implementation, since 2003 the newly elected party started rapid reforms and needed the outcome as fast as possible. The Ministry designed programs and was sending assistant teachers in the minority regions every year. In the following years the results in unified national exams and school completion exams revealed that with its outcomes the program was successful in a very short period of time, compared with previous ones (NAEC 2018). However, the sustainable development cannot be achieved properly in a long run. In terms of policy analysis, during the research the focus group members and interviewees speak about the inconsequentiality of reforms. One of the challenges is constant changes of education management. Since regaining the independence, Georgian education system has had sixteen ministers who had their own views how to develop minority education. It can be concluded that the frequent changes in management have affected minority educational policies.

Another problematic issue for minority education is a lack of political willingness to prioritize the issue. Before Rose revolution the ethnic minority policy was faded by the government officials. Moreover, in the initial period of independence, some nationalism elements deteriorated the relationship between ethnic Georgians and other ethnic groups living in Georgia. Due to the political instability and domestic unrest the ethnic minority groups did not have motivation to learn the state language and who had enough financial circumstances left the country. Those who stayed in Georgia self-employed in agriculture sector and education became less priority issue for them. After the Rose revolution, minority motivation rose to learn the state language, but short period of time is not enough to overcome language barrier.

Today, current management in education system does not consider minority education as singular and one of the most sensitive issues. According to the educational strategy document the Ministry strives to provide equal access to education for all citizens across the country, including ethnic minorities. It does not design special policies for minority groups, only implementing individual programs for improving the language proficiencies. The results show that these actions are not enough to overcome inequality in education (MES, Education Strategy 2017). During the interview the expert from NGO sector discussed that the MES prefers to retain a negative status quo rather than developing real reforms in minority education, because it requires great efforts, resources and also contains many risks that can direct the management to end.

In terms of access to education in accordance with quality education, technically, the state supports ethnic minorities to study in their native languages at schools. Although, acquired knowledge and skills are not competitive in the labor force and sufficient for their future perspective. The assessment of existing state policy clearly shows that the government spends more money on non-Georgian language schools than in Georgian schools but without any positive outcomes. During the in-depth interview, the expert from NGO sector assessed this situation as “anomaly of the state policy” and for proving his opinion he described the state in Russian-language schools², where vast majority of students are from various ethnic minority groups, including Armenian, Azeri. Since the students choose Russian language schools it can be assumed that after enrolling students have intention to leave Georgia. Most of them are expected to go to Russia. It means that, the state budget is spent for preparing migrants for other country’s labor market.

² Only eleven Russian language schools are functioning today in Georgia.

From the governments' perspective, improving Georgian is the key factor to increase quality of education in term of ethnic minorities. However, the implemented policies throughout the years have shown that it is not ultimate way to improve quality of education (NAEC 2018). The state programs renewed in 2006 and in 2010. All these changes were also related to increasing the state language proficiencies. During the interview the NGO expert evaluated state policies adopted since 1998:

'If we discuss about the ethnic minority policies in a unified context, we can clearly see that the state policy focuses only on improving the state language proficiencies in ethnic minorities. It is profitable for the state, especially during the elections. As it is known, the leading party always has huge influences in the ethnic minority regions. It can be said that minority groups are one of the biggest supporters of the leading party in Georgia. So, the message that, the state takes care of the future of ethnic minority groups really works effectively. In a nutshell, it can be said without hesitation that in spite of dozens of strategies and action plans, real reforms in non-Georgian language schools have not developed throughout the years'.

Noticeably, the interest of studying is high in minority groups, especially among ethnic Azeri communities. In recent years more ethnic Azeri families enroll their children in Georgian schools than it was before. They believe that their children can acquire better knowledge in Georgian schools. The principal of the Azeri language school discusses about the parents' attitude towards the education of their children:

"I have been working as a school principal more than 15 years. During this period a number of students who continue studying at universities are significantly increased. Families in our community believe that if they transfer their children to Georgian language schools, they will have better perspectives in the future. There were more than 400 students last year in my school and this academic year more than 100 students were

transfer to Georgian language schools. Our village is near the Georgian language school and it's easy for students to attend lessons there. After completing schools, those students have better command of Georgian language but due to the difficulties that exist for them in Georgian society their quality of knowledge is not good for sure'.

It should be noted that both experts share the same opinion as the school principal mentioned in his discussion. In this context two important issues should be differentiated: knowledge of Georgian language and knowledge of the school subjects. Both issues are equally important and problematic today in non-Georgian language schools. As it was mentioned earlier the state has prioritized the state language teaching that can have positive outcome, however, it is not enough to improve the quality of education. In this case, the bilingual education can be considered as the best solution because it is a useful tool to achieve academic literacy as in mother language as well as in a second language.

Concerning the effectiveness of bilingual education, both experts clearly emphasized that well-planned and implemented bilingual education is the effective method for non-Georgian language schools. The same position is observed in the monitoring report of Public Defender's Office 2017: "A large number of those schools are unable to use bilingual textbooks. On the one hand, teachers do not have enough Georgian language competencies to explain the Georgian part of the lesson. On the other hand, students due to the lack of Georgian language skills they are unable to understand analyze or study in Georgian" (Public Defender's Office of Georgia 2017)".

Noting that the recommendations from several international organizations emphasize the bilingual education as a possible future strategy for ethnic minorities in Georgia (ECMI 2009). The results of bilingualism can be better academic performance of national minority students, better social skills, stronger intercultural understanding and tolerance, integration of minority groups etc. But there are many important factors. The reform cannot be successful without

qualified teachers, strong and qualified administration and management at schools, modern teaching methods and high-quality textbooks. All these aspects are problematic in minority education in Georgia today.

Concerning the textbooks in minority education policies, they are also a matter of critical analysis. During the research, all respondents equally identified textbooks as one of the prioritized educational needs for non-Georgian language schools. Until today for some of subjects, non-Georgian language schools use textbooks which were provided by their kin states, Azerbaijan and Armenia. These textbooks are outdated and are not complied with the national curriculum. As results, teachers, students and management face difficulties in meeting the requirements of school completion exams.

Moreover, the students and the teachers speak about the serious mistakes in translation of the bilingual subjects' textbooks, including, History and Geography of Georgia, Natural Science. The country report on Georgia in 2016 by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) talked about the problems of ethnic minority education and underscored that the problems still exist in the quality of education:

'Ethnic minorities in Georgia continue to experience problems in the fields of education. The quality of textbooks translated from Georgian into minority languages is often poor. Around 70% of texts have been translated, while 30% are only available in Georgian and are mostly ignored by teachers in minority schools. The quality of teaching Georgian as a second language to minority children also remains problematic. These factors lead to a lower educational standard for minority children. All this causes obstacles for them in higher education and employment (ECRI 2016)'.

On the national level, the Public Defender's Office observed the quality of textbook in non-Georgian language schools in its annual report in 2017. It mentioned that non-Georgian

language schools face not only the problem of the state language teaching and learning but also their quality. Most of these challenges related to bilingual textbooks but also those books that are used from previous curriculum. The report emphasizes that there are many historical or geographical inaccuracies in the textbooks which were provided from kin states and it is significantly important to change it (Public Defender's Office of Georgia 2017).

In terms of minority education, another critical issue is a different Voucher system for non-Georgian language schools that aims to create equal opportunities for all students across the country. Despite the increased funding results of school completion exams show that the outcome is not adequate to expenditures. The main problem is a gap between an educational policy and funding of non-Georgian language schools. To be more precise, the state budget finances the non-Georgian language schools without improvements in quality of education and instruction in these schools (Voucher System in General Education in Georgia 2014). As the study by East-West Management institution revealed the system does not take into consideration some institutional and structural aspects (EWMI 2014). The funding does not link to linguistic needs and the reform of minority education. Accordingly, the allocation of additional funding does not provide equal educational opportunities for all students. The spending from the state budget is ineffective.

With regards to teachers' qualification, it is a serious challenge in Georgian educational system and this problem is much more complicated in non-Georgian language schools (Tabatadze 2017). During the interviews, the experts and the representative of local educational recourse center unanimously name the deficit of qualified teachers as a severe problem that the non-Georgian language schools face today. These schools have deficit not only in Georgian language teachers but also in other subjects.

Generally, a teacher's profession is not popular in Georgia because of low wages and a lack of social esteem. In ethnic minority communities the issue is a little bit different. In

particular, aging teachers imposes a serious problem in ethnic minority regions. The teacher's profession is perceived as a work after the mid ages among the ethnic minorities. Approximately 50% of teachers in non-Georgian language schools are over 51 years of age and 25% of the teachers are pensioners. (Tabatadze 2017). In Georgia, for woman, a pension age is 60 years-old and 65 for man. As one of the school principals said in his interview: 'Our community often uses this phrase – 'there is only one step from school to a cemetery'. Old teachers do not have any motivation, or willingness to develop professionally. Their lessons are not developed with modern methods of teaching. Accordingly, old methods of teaching have a negative effect on students' motivation and in total; it affects the quality of education.

Concerning the professional development programs, in the educational strategy 2017-2021 the Ministry emphasizes the importance of qualified teachers in those regions where deficit is expected to rise, such as ethnic minority regions. During the interviews teachers and the principals revealed that they are often invited in various professional development trainings which are organized by the TPDC. This proposed training is conducted outside city center which is also a good opportunity for teachers to live in a one space and share their experiences, problems and expectations to each other. Moreover, some training is conducted in non-Georgian language schools, or the same regions where these teachers live. As the school principal mentioned, participation in the trainings is mandatory for the teachers.

However, there is one huge gap between planning and implementing of the trainings. To be more precise, all these trainings organized by TPDC are in Georgian. Considering that very few ethnic minority teachers can understand Georgian these trainings are not productive for all participants. On the one hand they have a negative effect on teachers' motivation and on the other hand the state budget that is determined for developing teachers' qualification is spent ineffectively.

To sum up this part, phony reforms and singular programs have brought some positive changes in terms of the state language proficiencies. However, the in-depth reforms have not been done yet. The problem is evident as in the policy designing process as well as in policy implementation. All those mentioned above programs have been gathered in one program which is designed for promotion of non-Georgian language school teachers' professional development and improvement of teaching and learning in order to enhance the quality of teaching of the state language (TPDC 2019).

According to the analysis of the secondary information and the interviews it can be assumed that a lack of political willingness and resources, deficit of qualified teachers in minority education the pluralistic–integrative education paradigm does not provide in Georgia today. As a result, it causes serious challenges in various directions, such as isolation of the ethnic minority groups and civil integration problems, protecting linguistic rights on ethnic minorities.

Chapter 2- Minority Education Policies in Terms of Higher Education

The following chapter is devoted to analyzing an affirmative action policy for ethnic minorities in terms of higher education system and define their educational needs.

Equal opportunity to higher education is a right protected by all democratic states. In particular, in the 21st century this issue has become more up-to-date than it was before. Accordingly, the higher education institutions and educational policymakers face new challenges. On the one hand they should provide a high quality of higher education because of the rising competitiveness on the labor market and on the other hand, they ought to provide access to education and equality for all individuals, including those people who do not learn a language of ethnic majority, have a lack of academic literacy, and less opportunities to enter in the higher education institutions equally. Georgian higher education institutions face the same challenges today. Take into account that the teaching language in Georgian higher education institutions is Georgian, only modest number of ethnic minority individuals have access to it, in spite of the affirmative action policy that the government suggests to them. The causes of this outcome can be lacunas in policy designing and inaccuracy in policy implementation.

Noticeably, the focus discussions and the interviews I conducted for the purposes of this research revealed that ethnic minority students in Georgia have very limited professional choices. The limitations are mainly linked to scarcity of information about professions demanded in the job market in Georgia. Some professions are prestigious because there are better opportunities to find highly-paid jobs. According to the Public Information from the Ministry, the most demanded faculties in minority students are Economics and Business Administration, Humanitarian, Social Sciences, Medicine and Law. Moreover, in terms of female students of ethnic minorities, they have much more limited professional choices

because of their traditions and cultural norms. The families of the female entrants are more likely to encourage their girls to study on pedagogy and medicine because of the social prestige in their communities. This attitude is outlined in both, ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenian groups.

2.1 Higher Education Affirmative Action Policy for Ethnic Minorities

An affirmative action policy for ethnic minority groups is an instrument to attain equality in higher education institutions in Georgia. The Law on Higher Education envisages the state stipends for students, granted by the institution, or from any other sources (Parliament of Georgia 2005). Under the affirmative action policy, the government has a special program for underprivileged students and ethnic minority students are financed by this program from the state budget.

Before 2005 the higher educational institutions administrated the entrance examinations individually. Due to the high rate of corruption and deterioration the quality of education in the institutions a newly elected government cancelled the existing system and designed a new educational policy in the country. In 2005 it introduced centrally administered exams named unified national exams. The new policy required entrants to pass three mandatory subject exams, including general skills exam. As a result, only three students from the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and 17 ethnic Azeris from Kvemo Kartli region became students (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). To overcome the negative outcome of the policy the state designed and implemented an affirmative action policy as a simplified version of the unified national exams for ethnic minority groups. After passing the general skills exam and one elective subject in Georgian, students become eligible for enrollment in higher educational institutions. The target groups were all ethnic groups who wish to continue studying in higher educational

institutions in Georgia. Their ethnicity was a determinant factor before enrolling at the universities and after enrollment they had equal conditions as other students.

In 2006, the Order about the unified national exams changed and the minority entrants were granted to pass the general skills exam and one selected exam in Russian. Also, part of the policy was a preparatory program for the exams. The affirmative action policy slightly increased the rate of enrolled students in higher educational institutions in 2007 however the rate started decrease again in 2008 (Kharatiani and Nachkebia 2018). In response to this output the state simplified the policy. According to the new regulations the entrants could pass the general skills exam in their native languages.

In spite of simplified and preferential actions by the government, radical changes in minority enrolment in higher educational institutions did not provide properly. Analysis of minority education policy clearly shows that since designating the policy the minority educational needs were not taken into account by the state. The first step, passing exams in Russian should be deeply criticized because Russian is not a language that is convenient for young people in minority groups. The bizarre paradigm was that the high school students who were studying in their native languages at schools passed the exams in Russian and thereafter continued studying in higher educational institutions in Georgian. It can be said that the policy was not well-designed properly.

Since 2008 the MES started modification of the policy for the purpose of increasing access to higher education for minority students. Also, it refers to increase the contingent of ethnic minority students in the higher educational institutions. The state designed a policy where it defined a quota system and introduced a preparatory language program. To be more specific, the important part of the quota system is the Georgian Language preparatory program-One Plus Four program, which was introduced within the frameworks of the new initiative. The main aim of this program is to help ethnic minorities to develop the language skills for

continuing studying on their Bachelor degree programs. The higher educational institutions are allowed to get involved in the One Plus Four program voluntarily, but they have to take accreditation for it from the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement. This state body has a responsibility to grant accreditation for the educational programs across the country.

The scheme of affirmative action policy is the following: the entrant passes the general skills exam in his/her mother language and enrolls in the Georgian language preparatory program. After one-year intensive learning Georgian, he/she takes the language certificate and enrolls in a higher educational institution without any extra exams. This language program is a 60-credit course under the Law of Higher Education (Parliament of Georgia 2005). Furthermore, the whole package of studying is financed by the state.

The affirmative action policy considerably increased a number of registered and enrolled students belonging to ethnic minorities in 2008 (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). For instance, 113 entrants passed the general skills test in the Armenian language, and 40.7% successfully enrolled, whereas 250 students-to-be passed the test in Azerbaijani language and 29 became a student. Furthermore, for more numbers of enrolled minority students in higher educational institutions, the state defined the institutions which are to admit the students based on the results of the general skills tests only, must allocate 6.6% for such admissions for ethnic minority students from total 100% number of the students to admit (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016).

Noticeably, the One Plus Four program was defined as a temporary program until 2018- 2019 academic year, because the Ministry was planning to establish the bilingual education in non-Georgian language school which would enable students to have enough language proficiencies to pass the unified national exams as their Georgian fellows. However, the Ministry has not made the final decision about the bilingual education policy. During the

interview the expert from the Ministry emphasized that the state is still working on redesigning the existing the One Plus Four program.

To conclude, the lack of political willingness has an adversary effect on the minority education perspectives and encourages increasing inequality between Georgian citizens. As in case of school education, in consequentiality of the policy designing, and implementation is evident in higher education context too for ethnic minorities. On the one hand the MES management could not make decision for a long time and this position has had negative effect on minority students. And on the other hand, the state has been spending too much money for the affirmative action policy for years, but the desirable results have not been achieved yet.

2.2 Lacunas of Quota System

In terms of ethnic minority access to higher education, the initiative of quota system has increased number of ethnic minority students in higher educational institutions. Minority families have a motivation to encourage their children to continue studying. Despite the quota system the state gives them financial support and simplified way of enrolment in higher educational institutions. In order to define educational needs in higher education for ethnic minorities it is important to evaluate the affirmative action policy.

Through passing the general skills exam minority students enroll in the One Plus Four program and their studying during the five years are financed by the state. In the interviews the practitioners emphasize that the quota system in accordance with state grants has become the higher education more accessible for ethnic minorities than it was before 2010. It should be noted that, due to their cultural norms Azeri community have much more willingness to use this opportunities and study in Georgia than ethnic Armenians. The reason of this attitude

can be related to fears of Georgian influences on their communities through educated young people who are expected to start working in the civil services in the nearest future.

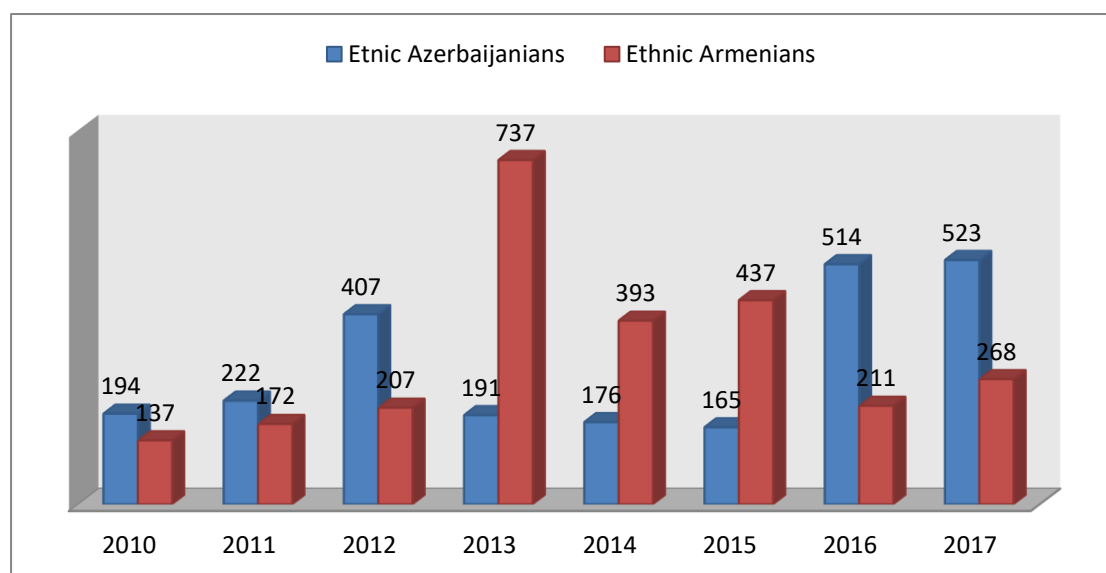
In spite of the above-mentioned positive changes in terms of increasing motivation to enter in higher education, the analysis of the statistics and focus group discussions outline several problems. To be more precise, every year the number of quotas are defined for ethnic minority students in higher educational institutions, but one third of the places are not filled because of a huge number of failures in school completion exams, students who could not pass the general skill exams, and a high rate of dropping out the Georgian language preparatory program, or high rate of non-completion status students who have not had enough capacities to assimilate materials during a bachelor degree (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016, S. C. Ministry of Education 2019). It can be assumed that the policy is designed properly but the implementation cannot prove because of the other related problems such as bad command of the language proficiencies and low academic literacy. The following section discusses about the causes in detail.

To begin with, the general skills exam is a huge hindering factor for entrants, even in their native languages. Results of the entrance exams in the general skills of the Armenian and Azeri speaking entrants and their comparison to the results of the entrance exams in general skills of the Georgian speaking entrants' provides a valuable background for analysis (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). In spite of administration of the general skills exam in their mother language, the results of the exams on average are considerably lower than the results of the ethnic Georgian entrants. About 30% of total entrants failed in this exam (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). This fact highlights the problem of quality of education in non-Georgian language schools. Simultaneously the number of students who register for the general skill exams has growing tendency every year. As Figure 2 displays more ethnic Azeri

enrolled in One Plus Four program through this year. It should be also noted that the number is higher in ethnic Azeri entrants than in ethnic Armenians.

Figure 2 One Plus Four Program Participants

Source: 1+4 Program, Assessment Report 2018



Another hindering factor for ethnic minority students to enter in higher education system is school completion exams. As it was mentioned in previous chapter the statistics clearly show that the quality of education is the only cause of this outcome. What is more, as the analysis of the report collected for the research reveals one more cause of substantially low quota places, compared with allocated quota places in the universities is a drop out of the Georgian language preparatory program (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). As it was mentioned earlier, the affirmative action policy for ethnic minority youth implies one plus four principle, where the main condition to enroll in Bachelor degree is to complete the Georgian language preparatory program in the university and take the language certificate. Some of the students leave the program because they have insufficient knowledge of the language and could not assimilate the materials of the program.

Also, other reasons can be economic and social challenges. To be more precise, most of those minority students are from the regions and the higher educational institutions in Georgia

are located in the big cities. Most of the Universities which take part in the one Plus Four program are in Tbilisi. Taking into consideration that Georgia undergoes economic transition and it is in the process of economic development, poverty defines one of the main challenges for the country. It is much more severe in the villages and the peripheries. Accordingly, some minority families who could not cope with economic difficulties are unable to provide even daily expenditure of their children. The One Plus Four program does not provide any additional stipend for the students from the regions. As the focus groups participants mentioned in the discussions, finding a job for ethnic minority student who cannot understand the state language properly is almost impossible. As a result, some students stop studying and return to their villages and help their families in agricultural activities.

In addition, there is a low rate of retention and completion among minorities in higher educational institutions. For instance, from 156 students enrolled in Tbilisi State University in 2010 through quota, only 14.8% which was 23 students completed Bachelor degree program in 2015. This was the first cohort of the One Plus Four program (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). According to the Public information from the Ministry only 51% of enrolled students completed studying in five-year period.

2.3 Effectiveness of the One Plus Four State Program

With regards to the effectiveness of the One Plus Four program, my research revealed that even though the state policy has considerably improved access to higher education for ethnic minorities, throughout the years, there are various challenges of the policy. To be more specific, the program is developed by the state so that it covers all main needs for ethnic minority individuals, including territorial dispersion of the higher educational institutions and equality in the quota system- every year the identical numbers of quotas are determined for ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenian students.

However, one important element was not taken into consideration during the designing of the program. The minimum language competencies are not defined for those entrants who want to enroll in the One Plus Four program. The language competencies of students who are involved in the program are substantially different. Their competencies are divided into three categories: students who do not have any knowledge of Georgian, students who have minimal competencies in state language and students who have language proficiencies. The universities which take part in the One Plus Four program make internal tests and separate students into different groups. However, the program does not provide different teaching program for students from different language background.

Also, one year is not enough to learn the Georgian language for the first category students. Besides, students who learn Georgian language the offered program is not relevant for their background. So, they lose one whole year and do not learn anything and simultaneously the state spends money ineffectively. For the first category students more time is needed to learn the language and use it for academic purposes. According to the evaluation report of the program that was designed by the Center of Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations-CCIR in 2016, many students stop studying because of the insufficient language proficiencies (Gorgadze and Tabatadze 2016). The challenges mentioned above affect an academic performance of minority students. The high rate of drop-out students is caused by the low academic performance too.

From the students' perspective, the quality of teaching was highlighted as the main challenge of the program. The students' focus group discussion was focused on assessing one-year Georgian language preparatory program and evaluating their bachelor programs. The students demonstrate satisfaction about the one-year Georgian language program aspects, including language acquisition, development of social and other related skills and teachers' qualification. But the respondents also mentioned the lack of effectiveness of the teaching

method. As the students highlighted more writing and listening exercises would be helpful for them to study the language. Besides, in some universities, for instance, in Ilia State University, the quality of teaching was outlined as the best compared with Georgian Technical University, or Tbilisi State University. As respondents mentioned the university focuses on students' needs. Except the language courses, students also have some courses about integration, social responsibilities and various activities with their Georgian fellows. Unlike Tbilisi State University, the language groups are formed so that ethnic Azeris and ethnic Armenians are learning together. This factor is extremely important for students' future relations.

In addition, the students emphasized the problem regarding the academic language. The one-year program does not cover the academic language proficiencies and this approach creates difficulties for students. For instance, one respondent who studies History in one of the most popular Georgian universities spoke about the difficulties that he has to understand the terminology and the language of academic literature. He also mentioned teachers' attitudes towards his problem and said that he had a lack of support from the professors. It should be mentioned that after one-year language preparatory program ethnic minority students do not continue studying Georgian, except some faculties that have Georgian language subject as elective course.

To sum up, it can be assumed that there is no common approach of the universities which take part in the program. Some universities have developed the language program with its own needs, but the others have less effective program that does not comply with the state program's aim. The study examined that there is a need to establish supporting mechanism and students' services in order to further improve effectiveness of the policy. All respondents from the students' focus group also mentioned the needs of additional support from the

universities. Besides it is vital to introduce diversified model for teaching Georgian language as well as provision of differentiated assessment tools of the students' language competences.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze problems and identify main educational needs in school education and in higher education levels for ethnic minority groups in Georgia from an education policy perspective. The research conducted on ethnic Azeri and ethnic Armenian groups and it revealed clearly the core problems facing minority education in Georgia.

In terms of school education, the research examined key challenges facing minority groups on school education level. To be more specific, the research revealed that access to school education formally exists for minority groups. Compared with Georgian language schools they have more financial support from the state budget, but due to the inconsequentiality of the policies, frequent changes in the education management system, non-existence of bilingual education, lack of qualified teachers and outdated textbooks, the desired result is not achieved under the current policies. Minority students still struggle with overcoming the language barrier in Georgian education institutions. Moreover, in spite of the fact that they can get school education in their mother languages, the quality of education is not provided, and the results of the unified national exams and school completion exams clearly demonstrate it.

Regarding the higher education for ethnic minorities, the study examined the affirmative action policy that has been implemented for years and revealed that the policy is rather effective, and modestly increased the number of minority students in higher education. But due to the mentioned-above problems in school education, the minority students struggle to enter in higher education and finish it properly.

After analyzing the challenges, it can be concluded that the state should revise minority education policy and focus on making it more effective than it is today. For improving minority education in Georgia, some important steps should be developed:

Policy Recommendations:

- It is essential for the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia to develop and implement effective bilingual education policy;
- It is essential for the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport to promote the development of a native language teaching policy;
- The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia should improve teaching and learning measures to progress the academic literacy in ethnic minority groups in their native and the state languages;
- The state should revise the affirmative action policy so that the educational needs for all levels of students should be considered, including defining an entrant's language proficiency and designing special teaching programs for students who have different language backgrounds.

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