



History Teaching in Georgia: representation of Minorities in Georgian history textbooks

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Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has recently started a major reform of the education system. In April 2005, a new law on Education was adopted, which stipulates that the Georgian language, the history of Georgia, the geography of Georgia and other social sciences shall be studied in Georgian, at the latest by 2011, in all schools in the country.¹ Moreover, new textbooks and new curricula are being developed for all subjects. These changes aim at bringing uniformity to the education system in Georgia by increasing the use of the Georgian language and teaching Georgian history.

These reforms imply considerable changes for the 130 Armenian and 164 Azeri schools in the Samskhe Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions, namely in the field of history teaching. Up to recently, these schools received history and other schoolbooks from Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively. They also learned the national history of these states, and Georgian history from the point of view of Armenian or Azeri authors. With the standardization of the curriculum and textbooks for all schools in Georgia, two major changes have occurred. First, the history of Armenia/Azerbaijan is not included in the new curriculum.² Second, the new textbooks, that are slowly replacing the old Armenian and Azeri ones, are written by Georgian authors.³ They describe the history of Georgia, relations between Georgia and its neighbors, minorities in Georgia, from the point of view of Georgian historians.

Since September 2004, CIMERA has been addressing the issue of language policy and multilingual education in Georgia. In March 2006, we organized an international conference on “Language Policies and Education in Multilingual Societies” in Tbilisi, gathering together minority representatives, teachers, Ministry of Education officials and international experts.⁴ To prepare for the conference, CIMERA conducted focus group discussions in the Samtskhe Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions. During the discussions, teachers and parents from minority groups often voiced concerns regarding the reform of history teaching. Some of them feared that children might lose their cultural identity if Georgian and Caucasian history were to be taught in Georgian and from a Georgian point of view only.

This led CIMERA to conduct a four-month research project to analyze how minorities are represented in the Georgian history textbooks and to assess whether these representations were potential sources of conflict. The research, conducted from September to December 2006, consisted, on the one hand, of interviews with history teachers, minority parents, historians, and Ministry of Education officials

¹ New law of Georgia on general education, April 2005, clause 5 (4).

² These will only be optional lessons, which the school has to organize with its own financial resources and in addition to the compulsory number of hours of the curriculum.

³ At the time of writing, these new books are being translated into the Azeri and Armenian languages. In the future, according to the new law on education history and geography will be taught in the Georgian language only.

⁴ This eventually led CIMERA to set up a pilot multilingual education project, which is currently implemented in 12 schools in the Samskhe Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions, with the financial support of the OSCE/HCNM.

and, on the other hand, of an analysis of history textbooks. The evolution of history teaching in Georgia since independence was analyzed as well.

The following two papers are the result of the research project:

In *Post-reform history textbooks in Georgia: changing patterns and the issue of minorities in Georgian history*, Levan Gigineishvili describes Georgian historiography and explains the roots of its ethnocentric vision. The author also describes the main elements of the current history teaching reform and the possible resistance to it by the Georgian population. Finally, he suggests how minorities could be better included in the accounts of historical events of Georgia where non-ethnic Georgians have played an important role.

The teaching of history in Georgia, with a special focus on the Armenian and Azeri minorities and their representation in Georgian history textbooks is the core of the research. In this paper, Ieva Gundare analyzes interviews she conducted with textbook authors, history teachers from majority and minority groups, parents and Ministry of Education representatives. She explores interviewees' attitudes towards the teaching of history, new history teaching methods, and minority history. She also analyzes how minorities are described (although more often, they are not even mentioned) in the pre-reform textbooks that are still largely in use, as well as in some extracts from the new textbooks.

The research project has shown that minorities are quasi absent from Georgian history textbooks. However, it has also revealed that the current history teaching reform represents a unique window of opportunity to discuss the inclusion of minorities' history in mainstream history teaching: the new textbooks dealing with Georgia's recent history have not been published yet, and the discussion about their contents is still on-going. Further, one of the reform's main aims is the introduction of a multi-perspective approach. This approach is more conducive to the inclusion of other groups' history than the ethnocentric vision that has prevailed in Georgian historiography up to now.

The findings of this research were presented and discussed during a workshop held in Tbilisi in December 2006. The active participation of representatives from the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science and of history textbook authors in the workshop showed how openly the Ministry is prepared to discuss the issue of minority history. The two main conclusions of the workshop were that, first, in order to include minority history in Georgian history textbooks in future, there is a need to develop academic research on this topic, since almost no literature exists on the subject; and second, that there is a need for further training of history teachers, who still have little access to information on the aims of the reform and on new teaching methodologies.

We would like to thank the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs for its financial support of the project.

Post- reform history textbooks in Georgia: changing patterns and the issue of minorities in Georgian history. *Levan Gigineishvili*

Introduction

This article will describe the changes that occurred in history teaching at Georgian schools following the new reforms in 2003. A brief analysis of what existed before the reform will be provided as a comparative background (from the 19th century, when Georgian historiography started, up to the creation of the independent Georgian state in 1991). This article will focus on the presence (or absence) of minorities in school textbooks on the history of Georgia. Georgia is a multicultural, multiethnic country, however, the national education project entails uniform history curricula for all public schools. But if ethnicities other than Georgian are not present in the textbooks as past builders and actors in the history of this country, then they may not get the feeling of belonging to it; moreover, they may develop the perception that they are “guests” or “secondary citizens” who are living in the land of the autochthonous Georgians out of some whim of providence. Of course, constitutionally Georgia warrants the full-scale participation of all citizens, regardless of their religious (or irreligious) views and ethnicity, in social-political life. However, unless history textbooks take into account the national history of ethnic minorities, the consequence could be their *psychological* marginalization and alienation both from their point of view and that of ethnic Georgians.

One possible solution is the introduction of more objectivity into the teaching of history, abandoning the traditional, national discourse, and thus presenting history as a sheer science, entirely or almost entirely divested of any political or identity-building agenda. More precisely, the presentation of history as a sheer science, untarnished by ideological expectations, and the discussion of the historical facts within accepted scientific terms, will help to nurture more open-minded, critically reasoning, and creative citizens, fit for the Western type of society which Georgia is striving to achieve. As the article will show, this is by and large the path taken by the modern reform in school education.

Latent problems, however, can be found in this approach: it is possible that such historical textbooks will be disconcerting to those Georgians – historians, parents etc. – who are accustomed to the traditional discourse that presents Georgia’s history in unbroken continuity from pre-Christian times to the present. The new approach that apparently says a polite goodbye to this continuity may, for them, represent a hazard to Georgian identity. Therefore, the reform may boomerang and face violent rejection on the part of the public.

This article will tackle the question of whether it is possible to retain the national discourse in a modified fashion so as not to be exclusive, but inclusive, of

minorities with a view to giving them real grounds for emotional attachment and a feeling of belonging based on the centuries-long history of Georgia. The question related to this is that of truthfulness: should history serve the purpose of social-political expediency, or should it strive towards objectivity and truthfulness? How profitable are benign lies, that is to say, the inclusion of minorities in historical accounts, if they are not actually there? While deeming such well-meant brainwashing totally unacceptable, this article will attempt to show that Georgian history provides ample examples of non-ethnic Georgians actively participating in and forging the historical processes in this country.

What was

i) *The 19th century*

Modern Georgian historiography originated in the 19th century as a reaction to the Tzarist policy of Russianization. By the beginning of the 19th century, Georgian kingdoms (Kartl-Kakhetian and Imeretian) had been annexed by Russia and reshaped and renamed as Tbilisi and Kutaisi Gubernias, respectively. Even the name “Georgia” was held suspect and banned because it was a nostalgic reminder of past independence and could raise a dangerous hope for its resurrection.

In the first half of the 19th century, a few unsuccessful attempts to regain independence culminated in the failed coup of the Georgian nobility in 1832, which had aimed to expel the Russian authorities and reinstate the Georgian Monarchy. Russian policy at first aimed at soothing the situation. This entailed, on the one hand, punishing the mutinous Georgian noblemen mildly and granting them the opportunity to advance their careers in the service of the Tzar and, on the other hand, sending to Georgia very able and sensitive officials, who would be responsive to the local needs. Vorontsov, who took over the office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus in 1845, learned Georgian, facilitated the opening of the Georgian theatre and gained the universal affection of the Georgian nobility.

However, later Russian officials, especially those like Dondukov-Korsakov (who was governor of the public sector in the Caucasus from 1882 to 1890) fell far short of Vorontsov’s discretion and started the real policy of Russianization. Tzarist policy was opposed to the Georgian language, eliminating it from schools and churches; it also strove to eradicate Georgians’ historical memory, so that they would have no other allegiance but that to the Russian Empire. This however resulted in the unprecedented consolidation of Georgians against the hostile tide that had intended to sweep away their ethnic identity.

This consolidation had two dimensions, horizontal and vertical. *Horizontal* in the sense that it joined together the different parts of the country which, before the annexation, had been under the sway of feudal families, often fighting bloody feuds against each other; these were now all united under the concept of “Georgia” which, although divided into different parts (Megrelia, Guria, Imereti etc.), still formed a complete, indissoluble entity. *Vertical* in the sense that the different classes – the stratified aristocracy with higher and lower ranks, on the one hand, and peasants and

workers on the other hand – acknowledged their common identity as “Georgians”, which should have been regarded as more important and fundamental than their class identity. (In fact, many aristocrats lost their ethnic identity by embracing allegiance to the Tsar as their religious duty).⁵ This gave birth to a completely new understanding of Georgia – a unifying term overarching territorial and social divisions. For that purpose the new public language was developed – a democratic Georgian language understandable for all. The initiator of the language reform was Ilya Chavchavadze – a boisterous and inspired youth, who having returned from Petersburg, with a wealth of West European knowledge, vehemently attacked the former linguistic system of “three styles”, according to which literature had to be written in the “high style”, almost totally unintelligible for the common people. The language introduced by Ilya Chavchavadze and his followers became the standard through the newspapers and journals, such as “Iveria” and “Matsne”, which often came under attack from Tzarist censorship throughout the 19th century.

The past became very important for reanimating the beleaguered national/ethnic identity and historiography was used exactly for that purpose. Thus, the necessity of preserving the ethnos of Georgians was the reason for turning to past political and cultural achievements. That is why the newly emerged 19th century historiography was resolutely ethnocentric, spreading the ethnocentric vision even to the distant times, when ethnos in its modern sense had not yet emerged, but rather was eclipsed by other factors, such as social/class stratification and religious affinity. A mystified vision of Georgia, one of a definable entity under divine patronage that throughout the centuries was continually passed from one generation to another like a precious gift, was from the outset part of this new Georgian historiography⁶. Although ethnocentric, this historiography tended to eschew chauvinism by asserting the equality of all nations (ethnos-es) and the necessity of mutual respect between them⁷. The attitude towards non-Georgians in Georgia was the same as towards guests: they are given shelter and warmly welcomed and yet are not to take advantage of the generous hosts, since that would be a sign of ingratitude⁸. With the project to gradually abolish class distinction, unifying all classes under the banner “Georgian”, the Georgians, regardless of their class membership, were to become a new sort of ethnic nobility in the country.

By the end of the 19th century or the beginning of 20th century, this nation-building plan was already deeply entrenched in Georgian mentality. However, it was challenged by the Marxist movement, with its cosmopolitan stance on universal class solidarity that by then had become a very popular theory. Eventually this ideological conflict led to the murder in 1907 of Ilia Chavchavadze, the acclaimed father of the new Georgian nation – “new” in the sense of the national unification of

⁵ Sometimes, even the patriotically inclined Georgian noblemen, who witnessed the oppressive policy of the Tzarist administration in Georgia, still retained their loyalty to the Tzar, as to the one anointed by God. One of the most illustrious examples is Dimitry Kipiani, head of the Georgian nobility in the second half of the 19th century. Dimitry vehemently attacked the Russian bureaucracy for the policy they held, yet kept his fidelity to the Tzar, who was the one behind that bureaucracy. On this see Archil Djordjadze, *Life of Dimitry Kipiani*. In: *Archil Djordjadze's selected letters*. Tbilisi: “Merani”, p. 438.

⁶ Cf. Ilia Chavchavadze, *The Nation and History*. In: *Ilia Chavchavadze's selected works*. Tbilisi: “Sabchota Sakartvelo”, 1984, pp. 108-112.

⁷ Cf. Vaja-Pshavela, *Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism*. In: *Vaja-Pshavela's complete works*, vol. V. Tbilisi: “Sabchota Sakartvelo”, 1961, pp. 213-215.

⁸ See, for instance, a poem by Vaja-Pshavela: “Haos and Kartlos”.

the above-mentioned vertical and horizontal dimensions; in all probability the murderers were to be found under the Georgian social democrats.⁹ The social democrats, such as Philippe Makharadze or Noe Jordania, with their supra-national/ethnic discourse pitted the working class identity against the national/ethnic identity. For an ideology that considered the inter-class struggle as the objective law governing historical development, Ilia Chavchavadze's popular national project that wanted to unite all classes under the banner "Georgian" was historically false and reactionary. However, even the social democrats became more nationalistic when they came to power, after the February revolution, as leaders of the short-lived independent Georgian Republic (1917-1921).

ii) *The 20th century – Soviet Georgia and the aftermath*

During the era of the Soviet Union, when the Georgian Soviet Republic was created, history was taught according to the grand Marxist discourse – as an inevitable dialectical process leading from the feudal society to the socialist, which itself was to be superseded by the communist. However, the communist leaders – Lenin and Stalin, the latter presiding over the issues of nationalism – understood that national/ethnic belonging was a very sensitive subject among Georgians and that it was too early to try and eradicate it (Lenin calling the national issue "arch-complex"¹⁰). Thus, the Communist leadership allowed the national history to be taught too, albeit seasoned by Marxist theories. In this way, an uneasy blend was achieved combining heroic Georgian history, in which the kings and nobility played the pivotal role, with the Marxist historical narrative, which placed the class struggle at the heart of the universal historical process.

Two sorts of allegiance and patriotism were permitted to coexist: the Georgian patriotism and the Soviet patriotism. Actually, Stalin even used this ethnic patriotism to generate a military spirit among the Soviet Georgian soldiers (and not only the Georgians) in World War II by commissioning historical movies aggrandizing military heroes of the medieval Georgian kingdom.¹¹

However, with the gradual bankruptcy of Communist ideology, the national/ethnic identity attained the status of a singular devotion. And with the Soviet oppression of religion, when most of the population had become irreligious, even religious and mystical sentiments accrued to the idea of Georgia; this is so visible in the works of poets and writers and even of historians. School textbooks promulgated a vision of history that was largely the creation of Ilia Chavchavadze

⁹ The murder of Ilya Chavchavadze was preceded by series of slanderous articles against him in the social-democratic press. For instance, Philippe Makharadze, who later became head of the Communist government of Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, accused him of robbery and the attempted murder of peasants in the Saguramo region. Cf. Ilia Chavchavadze's polemical response to the Marxist lampoon by Philippe Makharadze: Ilia Chavchavadze, *"Can this be true?"*, In: Ilia Chavchavadze's complete works, vol. V. Tbilisi: "Sabchota Sakartvelo", 1987, pp. 111-145.

¹⁰ Actually, it was not Stalin – a Georgian – but Lenin, who protected the rights of small nations, and particularly of Georgia to form a Communist Republic of its own, and thus to retain a national "face". Lenin even attacked Stalin, paradoxically, for his Russian imperialism. On this, see: Vladimir Rogovin. *Was there an alternative: "Trotskyism" from the viewpoint of the passed years*. Iskra-Research: Moscow, 1992, chapter IX: "The Georgian Incident" (in Russian).

¹¹ We should also mention here the polity of the so called "Korenizatsia" of the 1920-30s, according to which the central government in Moscow not only championed national republics and the equality of the different nations, but even granted privileges to the populations of the titular nations – like Ukrainians and Georgians – as compensation for former Russian imperialist oppression.

and his followers, that is, Georgia as a uniform phenomenon throughout the centuries, with its heroic and battered past¹². What differed from the Chavchavadze model was that Georgia was no longer supposed to engage in romantic striving towards anything better (save Communism), its historical hardships having ended in the blessed era of Soviet Georgia.

What is significant is that the Georgian patriotism of Soviet times did not strive towards a *political* unit – since Soviet Georgia did not have an independent political life – but towards a *cultural-historical* unit. Therefore, not Georgian politicians were regarded as important national figures (because they were the marionettes of Moscow), but rather Georgian writers, poets, actors, and historians – those who treasured the continuous heroic history of Georgia, with emphasis on its glorious past and its medieval culture: this had become something sacred, even to the irreligious Georgians. In as much as Soviet Georgia was not a political agent, there was no question of creating a political vision and program for Georgia which would allow all inhabitants full-scale and equal participation in social-political life. Georgian patriotism in the Soviet era, thus, (with only few exceptions¹³) became the property of ethnic Georgians only and the history textbooks corroborated this position.

The situation did not change, even in 1990, when Georgia regained its independence and became a political agent. On the contrary, the position of the first President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was expressly ethnocentric, even up to the promulgation of the slogan “Georgia for Georgians”. Textbooks, although cleansed of Marxist theories, presented Georgian history solely in terms of the history of the Georgian ethnicity, isolated from world history – that is to say, world events were mentioned only tangentially, to the extent they directly touched on Georgia. For instance, one would learn the name of an invader and number of his troops, but would not have a clear vision of the international power relationships of that epoch. This situation remained by and large unchanged until the most recent reform with its entirely novel approaches.

What is

i) Georgian history as a part of world history

According to the current education reform, started in 2004, the history of Georgia has to be learned not as a separate subject, but incorporated into world history. Thus, the facts of Georgian history are presented in the new textbooks within the context of universal processes. This is a major step forward, because students can get a clearer vision of universal historical patterns and notice that the mentality in, say, medieval Georgia, was quite similar to that in contemporary European or Byzantine counterparts and that the differences were mostly accidental rather than

¹² For instance, such is the vision of history provided by the famous and widely used supplementary textbook for schools “Mother History” (“Deda Istoria”) by Levan Sanikidze. Levan Sanikidze, *History the Mother*. Tbilisi: “Bakmi”, 2004.

¹³ Nodar Dumbadze is one of the last authors of 20th century Georgian Soviet literature, who propagates supra-ethnic allegiance of the citizens of Georgia to their common country. Cf. Dumbadze’s novel “Hellados” in: Nodar Dumbadze, *Kukaracha*. Tbilisi: “Saari”, pp. 78-99.

essential. A good example is the new 7th class history textbook, where the section on medieval monarchies in Europe and Russia precedes the section on the medieval Georgian monarchy. This provides students with many good points for comparison. For instance, a section on Western European monarchies culminates in a chapter on the limiting of Royal power through the Magna Carta in England; students can relate this to a similar attempt (although unsuccessful) to limit Royal power and to create an independent legislative body in Georgia during the reign of Queen Tamar, a few years before the Magna Carta¹⁴. Such a vision of universal patterns of historical development, and their own country's history as an inseparable part of those patterns, reflects one of the principles of the National Aims of Public Education, i.e. that the "system of public education aims at formation of a free citizen who bears both national and universal values". Indeed, a universal vision of the historical processes presented in the new textbooks will induce in students a feeling of belonging not only to their country's history, but to the history of humanity in general. Provided the school reform is successful, the former isolation will be effectively overcome.

However, despite all these praiseworthy aspects, there is a risk that native history is all too fuzzy, since the focus of attention is now on the world rather than on Georgia. The section on Georgia in the textbook for the 7th class is so short, that one has the impression that it represents just a footnote to the general developments of world history – only twenty pages in the 350-page book are dedicated specifically to Georgian history covering a period from the third century BC to the 18th century AD. (In fact, a new type of textbook specifically for Georgian history will be created for the 9th grade students. However, I cannot give an opinion about this book before it is published). Thus, although the 7th grade textbook is called "Georgian and World history/geography", in the balance of "the national and universal", the shift is decisively towards the universal/cosmopolitan at the expense of the national.

ii) *Accentuating critical reasoning*

Besides the inclusion of Georgian history in world history, the very character of the presentation of Georgian history has been radically altered. The new textbooks abandon the former patterns with the heroic accounts of history, giving a way to a more detached, scholarly approach. This is in accord with the Ministry of Education's official document "National Aims of Public Education" (NAPE) which declares its goal to be "not only acquisition of information, but also its estimation according to contents, purpose and quality". That is why the textbooks provide not just a single outlook on any historical fact, but a plurality of outlooks: on the one hand, a plurality of historical sources (two or more different accounts of the same facts, often not only Georgian, but also foreign), and, on the other hand, a plurality of scholarly opinions of these sources. This is the exact opposite of the indoctrination-type approach that was adapted before, when the range of interpretation was "squeezed", sometimes to just a single opinion. Now, after processing and evaluating the different sources of the facts provided in the new textbooks, pupils have to use

¹⁴ *Georgian and World history/geography* (7th grade). Ed. by: Zurab Kiknadze, Vaja Neidze, Lela Pataridze, Mzia Surguladze, Zurab Laoshvili, Tamar Uzunashvili. "Logos Press": Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 264-265 (henceforth in this article 'VII grade op. cit.').

their own analytical powers and decide independently which of the sources provides more reliable information. After that, they can compare their opinions to those of renowned historians (also presented in the textbooks) – who are usually not in accord with each other – and indicate independent preferences, or even criticize all of them and propose their own solutions. Just one example of that method: the greatest of the pitched battles in Georgian history, the Didgori battle of 1121, is presented in the textbook using narrations from four different medieval sources – Georgian, Armenian, French (Frankish) and Arab.¹⁵ The differences between the accounts are so significant that a whole vortex of questions will arise in the mind of the pupil. This is the great merit of the new textbooks as compared to the previous ones.

One thing is to be particularly highlighted: the promotion of the critical spirit in the new historical textbooks is coupled with the abandonment of the former grand narrative of Georgian history that originated in the 19th century, as mentioned above. The new textbooks reveal a conscious effort to achieve *postmodernesque* deconstruction of the grand national narrative. Therefore, value judgments, prejudices and emotional zest are almost totally absent in the new textbooks on Georgian history. This, however, may not be appreciated by part of the Georgian public, which looks at history from the traditional perspective (originating from Classical Greek historiography). Part of the old rhetoric was aimed at the souls of listeners, encouraging in them the desire for virtuous deeds and a repugnance for disgraceful deeds; “virtue” and “disgrace” were traditionally understood in terms of serving or betraying the interests of one’s community and country. Western individualism was alien to this traditional vision. Such was the history of Georgia as taught at schools before the reform: moralizing and emotional, both less critical and less self-critical.

If the demolition of national narratives is part of globalization, then the new history textbooks are agents for accelerating this process. Just to give one salient example: in the traditional historical narrative, the Georgian kingdom’s adoption of Christianity was regarded as a major advance. The abandonment of backward, pagan religion linked Georgia to the culturally progressive Christian world – the Christian Roman Empire. The intrinsic merit of Christianity and its superiority over Zoroastrianism was taken for granted. In the new textbook, however, the adoption of Christianity by King Mirian is presented as mere political expediency, as a desire to link himself to the Roman Empire which had become very powerful during the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great. Then six accounts from different historical figures about the Christianization of Georgia are provided and the pupil has to critically analyze these. In the pupils’ assignment the emphasis is put on the following: “You will once more think about *the role of a person in history* (my emphasis L.G.); discuss what role a person, particularly a politician, can play in making choices that are decisive for the fate of a country”.¹⁶ Thus, the accent is on the role of a person, a historical agent (here King Mirian) making independent choices that may turn out to be decisive for his or her country and not – as in the previous textbooks and in the general perception of the majority of the Georgian populace – on the *contents of that choice*. In the traditional account, the emphasis was put on the intrinsic value of

¹⁵ *History* (10th grade). Ed. by Zurab Kiknadze, Lela Pataridze, Mzia Surguladze, Tamar Uzunashvili. “Logos Press”: Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 111-114 (henceforth: ‘10th grade op. cit.’).

¹⁶ 7th grade op. cit. p.256.

Christianity as “the rescuer of Georgia from the backwardness of idolatry” and as the major formative principle of Georgians’ new identity from the Middle Ages onwards. This was accepted no less in the 19th century than in the medieval Christian annals, and even the historiography of the Soviet era (which, while denying the religious truth of Christianity, still admitted its progressive character compared to Zoroastrianism) acknowledged this in a modified way. The emphasis on the “role of an individual”, however, is a modern and Western-like idea that helps pupils think about themselves as active citizens who can introduce progressive changes into their society. The grand traditional narratives, as well as the rhetoric and emotions connected with them, have by and large been abandoned in the new textbooks.¹⁷

It could be said that this change seems all too brisk. In this paragraph, I shall present some of the objections that may be raised by the opponents of the reform. The accentuation of critical reasoning is one of the great achievements of the new textbooks; there is ample room for independent opinion and interpretation. However, critical reasoning is after all just *a tool* to achieve an aim, but not an aim in itself. What is the aim?

In the traditional vision, it is to promote in students an attachment and devotion to their country, its history, and the meritorious acts of their ancestors, that can serve as patterns to be emulated in order to become better citizens. Something similar is also aimed at with the new vision. Otherwise, what does the phrase “promotion of national values” used in NAPE mean? Now, can a critical analysis by itself promote such values, unless a moral and even emotional discourse is permitted and the *feeling* of continuity with the past of one’s own country upheld? If the selfless efforts of ancestors, who even gave their lives for the benefit of their country and the purpose of preserving the desired identity, accounts for the fact that Georgia now exists, how can this narrative be abandoned and “national values” still promoted? And what is meant by the term “national values?” Is critical reasoning meant to be part of it? But critical reasoning is an *independent tool* which is as much a part of intellectual life as a knife and fork is of eating. Critical reasoning is there to help a pupil arrive at historical truthfulness. The historical truth, in the traditional pattern at least, is connected with the fate of the native country, the dignity of some and the ignominious behavior of others who influence the country’s future. Thus, moral concerns and values, both national and universal,¹⁸ are part and parcel of history teaching.

¹⁷ The presentation of Christianity in the section on world religions is well organized and balanced; the basic theological and moral teachings of Christianity are presented with great clarity and mindfulness (by mindfulness I mean basically the choice of the New Testament quotations, which really provide the gist of the Christian message of universal love). The same is true about the presentation of Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. While tolerance is emphasized in all these accounts on world religions, the distinguishing factors are not bypassed, but paid due attention. In the chapter about Christianity, there is no special emphasis on its identity-forming role for Medieval Georgians, when the very term “Georgian” meant nothing less than an adherent to the Orthodox Church with liturgical practice in the Georgian language. This is in tune with the vision of the modern secular state, where religion is officially separated from politics (except for the symbolic/ritualistic significance of the presence of the Patriarch at the President’s inauguration etc.) and the term “Georgian” does not necessarily entail a religious affiliation. The detachment of the term “Georgian” from the meaning denoting a member of the Georgian Orthodox Church started as early in the 19th century, especially when Ilia Chavchavadze and his followers tried to find ways to incorporate Muslim Georgians from the Achara district into the new nation-building process. Cf. Ilia Chavchavadze’s article “Muslim Georgia” in: Ilia Chavchavadze (1984), pp. 547-551).

¹⁸ Actually, in the traditional narrative, national values are believed to be those universal values which are expressed in national history. According to Ilia Chavchavadze, nothing national has a value, unless it also has a universal value; cf. Ilia

In fact, teachers, who feel that the important dimensions of morality and the historical continuity of the life and deeds of their national ancestors are not sufficiently accentuated in the new textbooks, may turn to the older textbooks in their teaching practice.

One can mitigate the fervency of these remarks by indicating that there is nothing wrong with the modern textbooks' accent on the *role of the individual* in history. It is shown that personal decisions were fundamentally responsible for changing the fortunes of the country even in the remote past. A fatalistic understanding of history is to be avoided according to the precepts of the Ministry of Education. Unlike in the Soviet Union, where human beings were regarded as pawns of the system, individual responsibility for one's actions and ideas should become prominent in the modern era. One of NAPE's principles is to nurture free, responsible citizens, who hold their fate and fate of their country in their own hands.

Moreover, for the preservation of historical continuity, the concrete examples in the new textbooks of the "role of a person in history" are again adduced from the well-known heroic facts of Georgian history. Just two examples: i) a story about King Demeter (14th century) who preferred to go to the court of the Mongol Khan although certain that he would be executed there. By doing this, the King saved his country from a punitive invasion by the Mongol army that could have razed the kingdom to the ground,¹⁹ and ii) a story about Iotham Zedginidze, a nobleman, who knowing that there was a plot against the King of Georgia, warned him not to sleep in his bed that night. After the King refused to believe this, Iotham persuaded him to change beds for the night; reclining on the King's bed, Iotham was mortally wounded, and yet he saved the King and his action benefited the entire kingdom²⁰.

The choice of these stories with their powerful moral messages is not accidental, because, however obliquely, the textbook authors intended to communicate such praiseworthy instances of selflessness in serving one's country, connecting the role of the individual to the traditional vision that an individual should serve his country. These stories were also in the older history textbooks; however, what is significant is that in the new books emotional intonations are consciously shunned – the bare facts are presented to the students, who are free to interpret them as they wish and to distil the moral messages from those facts if they like.

Actually the students have a far more difficult task in the new textbooks than they had in the previous ones: they have to orient themselves in the realm of values without any previous directions and even, as the NAPE asserts, to "create the new values themselves". Will such value-creation mean that a student will be free to regard both Iotham and King Demeter not as heroes, but as lunatics who had irrepressible suicidal inclinations? I think they have a right to this, according to the new criteria, because it is their task to form independent ideas. In this case, teachers should be even more cautious, so that the formation of independent ideas does not turn into a new fashion of forming just any ideas, without much effort or

Chavchavadze: "Akaki Tsereteli and 'The Knight in Panther's Skin'", in: Ilia Chavchavadze, complete works, vol. III, 1986, pp. 148-159.

¹⁹ 10th grade op. cit. p. 121.

²⁰ 7th grade op. cit. p. 261.

responsibility, in the manner that Ilya Chavchavadze warningly called “intellectual adultery.” I do not think that this is necessarily oppression if one makes it clear that such stories are included in the textbooks for the purpose of showing how historical interpretations can lead to ideas of selfish interest and/or national sacrifice. But this message is presented so diffidently in the new textbook, it is as if the authors were fearful of being accused of Communist-type indoctrination. In fact, postmodernism has effectively fought many forms of idolatry; however, reverence for postmodernist demands is in itself a new type of idolatry. After all, not all traditional narratives are bad and oppressive; they can still be utilized, even if in a modified manner.

iii) *Geography, the law and the understanding of the science of history*

Before moving to the issue of minorities in the new history textbooks, let me briefly mention the other revolutionary features of these textbooks. The first is the incorporation of geography and environmental studies, which makes a good interdisciplinary setting and will definitely help students to integrate these closely interrelated fields of study. Furthermore, knowledge in these areas is meant to increase students’ concern for the environment.

The textbook for the 7th grade also provides knowledge on the basic elements of law in its historical development.²¹ Such issues as women and law and children and law are discussed in the historical perspective. Students get a basic idea of the purpose of the courts and how they operate. The book provides examples of important modern legal documents, such as the 1989 UN Convention on the “Protection of Children’s Rights”.

But the more important change, I think, is the incorporation of the history of *the science of history* in the new textbooks. From the beginning, the 10th grade textbook posed the basic general question: what is history? Why is it important to study it? And, finally, how is it possible to study it, using what kind of sources and tools? The pupils are provided not with a single view, but with a whole spectrum of different visions on the essence of history from Ancient Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to modern history theorists, like Mark Bloch and the School of Annals. The ideas on the significance of history of such greats as Herodotus, Thucydides, Ibn Khaldun, Machiavelli, Vico, Hegel, Ranke, Renan etc. are amply present in the new textbooks. Such heated issues as the relation between historical science and patriotism are duly covered and viewed from different perspectives. To give one good example: on the one hand, students are presented with the vision of Jakob Gogebashvili, who established the principle of “advocating history”, that is to say, history in the service of patriotism so as to emphasize the praiseworthy ‘pages’ of a national history, while glossing over the shameful ‘pages’; on the other hand, pupils are simultaneously shown Ivane Javakhishvili’s repudiation of “advocating history”, which provides excellent material for an in-class debate.²²

The panoramic vision of this historical science in its development throughout the centuries as well as the variety of sources and means – like numismatics, paleography, heraldic etc. – account for the new textbooks’ great advance compared

²¹ 7th grade op. cit. pp. 328-349.

²² 10th op. cit. pp. 31-32.

to the older ones. And the lively tasks that encourage students to carry out independent creative research in libraries, museums etc. are also undeniable merits of the new editions. The skills necessary for writing an historical essay according to modern Western standards are also taught in the new textbooks, but not in the pre-reform ones.

iv) *The issue of minorities*

It can be said from the outset that minorities in Georgia are not specially dealt with in any of the new history textbooks. As mentioned above, in the 7th class textbook the portion of Georgian history was considerably reduced for the purpose of giving more room to the presentation of world history, whereas in the 10th grade textbooks national history is not a central concern, but rather the *science of history*, with facts of national history dispersed here and there as specific cases for historical research and analysis. However, in these shortened texts Georgian history is presented as the history of Georgians only, as in the previous textbooks.

The ethnocentrism of the native history is taken for granted and viewed uncritically. There is no trace of a conscious attempt to discover and analyze the appearance of non-Georgians in the history of the country. Only in one textbook, that of the 7th grade, in the section on religions in Georgia, are there brief notes on when this or that religious group – and these groups by and large coincided with ethnic groups – came to this country.²³ When we do occasionally find mention of the other ethnicities in Georgian history, this occurs without any conscious intention (even though not politically motivated) on the part of the authors of the textbooks. One such instance concerns various travelers' accounts of the multicultural/multiethnic situation in the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi. Sometimes people who played a significant and even decisive role in history are mentioned without indication of their non-Georgian ethnicity (like Zakare and Ivane Mkhargrdzeli, the Kurds). There is no mention of the fact that neither of the Georgian Royal families were ethnically Georgian (the term “ethnically” is of course anachronistic with regard to the Middle Ages), according to the tradition of Medieval Georgian historiography. The first dynasty (up to the eighth or ninth century AD) was ‘genetically’ related to the Sassanian family, thus being of Persian blood, while the second, the Bagrationi upheld their Jewish origin, their pedigree going back to the Biblical Kings David and Solomon. Whether true or not, this claim at least shows that in the Middle Ages the ruling idea consolidating the kingdom of Georgia was not ethnicity, but religion and the monarchic structure, with a belief in the divine right of kings.

In fact, the same principle of spreading this ethnocentric attitude – which originated mainly in the 19th century as a response to the Russian policy of assimilation – to include even ancient and medieval history is still to be found in the new textbooks. So, even if history is presented in a more scientific/neutral fashion, detached from ideological/national motives, even if critical reasoning is greatly encouraged and world history takes up a larger portion of the joint Georgian/world history course, still everything that is written about Georgia reflects the ethnocentric perspective, as if following the established pattern due to inertia.

²³ 7th grade op. cit. pp. 158-161.

Therefore, according to the new textbooks, the minorities in Georgia will be studying cosmopolitan world history and proportionately less Georgian history, in which they are scarcely mentioned and with which they will hardly be able to identify themselves. Of course, it is not expressly stated in the textbooks that terms like “Georgian kingdom” and “Georgian army” necessarily have an ethnic bearing, but left unexplained, it will be understood as such.

What is at stake here? The history of Georgia indeed shifted towards ethnocentrism as it approached the 19th century. And even in the early Middle Ages, the ethnic element was prominent, because Orthodox Christianity with Georgian as the language of the Bible and Church services was a major factor of “Georgian” identity (a 10th century writer, Giorgi Merchuli thus defines the term “Georgia”: “‘Georgia’ is the name a vast country in which the Church service is held in the Georgian language”²⁴). The Georgian language was a unifying factor as a language of religion, scholarship and political life, just as Latin was in Medieval Europe. But unlike Latin, Georgian had greater *ethnic drive*, because it was the living language of an existing ethnic group. True, religion and politics were more important than ethnos in the Middle Ages, but the ethnos was also there.

The Christian kingdom of Georgia was, after the fall of Byzantium in 1453, sandwiched between powerful non-Christian world powers such as the Persian and Ottoman Empires, and this accounted for the fact that Orthodox Christianity became a cornerstone of national identity. Since it was practiced in Georgian, a strong ethnic element was also distinguishable in religion, although it did not rival the dominant position of religion in this case. The balance shifted towards ethnicity when Georgia became a part of the Russian Orthodox Empire: now religious affinity with the invading superpower represented a far greater danger with respect to assimilation than the religious differences with the previous superpowers (like the Arab or Persian Empires). In fact, before assimilation was not possible unless the Christian religion was abandoned; now it was possible even if one remained a Christian. Therefore, one could say that ethnic identity acquired an equal, or even a more prominent, role than religion in the 19th century, and preservation of one’s ethnic identity was projected as a Christian duty: i.e. if you lose your Georgian ethnicity, forget the language and the ancestral past, you are no longer a good Christian, even if you die for the Russian Orthodox Emperor.

That was a major shift from the Middle Ages when allegiance to the anointed Monarch was, to a large extent, regardless of ethnic belonging. Thus, a pre-modern vision that the social-political dimension of life was integrally connected with the divine mission on earth was preserved in the 19th century Georgian nation-making project. However, if previously the divine mission, for the layman at least, had consisted of service to the anointed Monarch, now the latter was substituted by the notion of the ‘homeland’ or ‘nation’ (in Georgian “Mamuli”), service to which was perceived as a religious duty. The “Mamuli” was understood expressly in ethnic terms.

This was a unifying factor in the 19th century, for it saved the Georgian ethnos from assimilation with Russia; it was also a unifying factor in the 20th century during

²⁴ Giorgi Merchule, *Life of St Gregory of Khandzta*. In: *Monuments of Ancient Georgian Literature*, Tbilisi: “Sabchota Sakartvelo”, 1978, p. 182.

Soviet times, for it again cemented Georgian ethnic identity against Marxist cosmopolitanism which was endangering the very essence of ethnos, giving it secondary (or no) importance compared to class identity. However, this same ethnocentrism, with no clear project for overcoming marginalization of other ethnicities in the country, has become an obstacle in the 21st century, when Georgia, now an international political agent, needs to integrate its national minorities into Georgian society, in order to strengthen its state building process.²⁵

Some recommendations

The “citizenship mentality”, that is to say, the elevation of the term “Georgian” from the merely ethnic to the supra-ethnic/citizenship dimension is a vital task for strengthening modern Georgian statehood. This is possible in two ways: i) *the deconstructionist way*; ii) *the conservative-inclusive way*.

The *deconstructionist way* implies complete abandonment of the traditional historical narrative entailing unbroken continuity with the heroic (or not always so heroic) past, since that narrative has become incorrigibly ethnocentric; the sudden adoption of the American- or French-type supra-ethnic understanding of “nation”; abandonment of the pre-modern idea of serving one’s community and country as a ‘natural duty’; supplanting this altruistic stance with the demanding values of the free market and liberal democracy, when a person’s *rights* are paramount and more fundamental than his duties to the society and country. This will imply studying a new kind of history at school: a history detached from ethnic/national concerns, a purely scientific discipline. The new textbooks show certain traits of this approach. However, such a radical change, I think, will prove unsuccessful in Georgia, which still remains a very traditional society. And traditionalism describes not only the ethnic Georgians, but other ethnicities living in this country as well.

The *conservative-inclusive way*, in its turn, implies retaining the traditional narrative; keeping the idea of unbroken continuity with the past; keeping the traditional value-system of serving society as a civic virtue (even if not as a religious duty) which will help to maintain an ideological balance against the excesses of neo-liberal atomization of society. However, all that should be modified by a “Copernican” shift from *ethnocentrism* to the *citizen-centrism*, so as to create a civic space with equal, full-scale participation for all ethnicities in the social-political life of Georgia.

This shift is a demand of time: the danger of assimilation is no longer pending for the Georgian ethnicity, but since Georgia has become an international political agent, its efficiency as such will be increased if all ethnicities in it develop a feeling of being equal partners, co-citizens of the country – one team in the international arena.

To this aim the less ethnocentric, more inclusive presentation of history (and especially medieval history, which is still conceived of as part of the unbroken

²⁵ I agree with Jose Ortega y Gasset’s idea that the national state is and should be based not upon the common language and common blood of the people living in it, but rather upon “a common [political] project and unity of people who are inspired by this project”. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Rebellion of Masses*. Moscow: “Ermak”, 2003, p. 183 (in Russian).

identity of Georgians) will be a major asset. And this will also be a more objective presentation of history, since ethnocentrism was a later phenomenon and earlier events are better seen in the categories relevant to the context of the epoch, that is to say, untarnished by anachronistic ethnic sentiments.

It is possible to do this and to show the presence and action of non-ethnic Georgians in the native history. Even the above-mentioned advocate of the “advocate-type historiography”, Jakob Gogebashvili, explaining the wonderful fact of Georgia’s preservation despite the sea of hostile great powers surrounding them throughout history, said that “all ethnicities in this land felt that they were its natural children, and thus they fought the enemies of their common fatherland with the zeal of natural children”.²⁶ Even if rhetorically embellished, this phrase expresses a historical truth.

Let me mention a few facts that can be interpreted in inclusive terms; some of these examples are given in the new textbooks. For instance, the new 7th grade textbook describes the Golden Era of Georgia from King David (1089-1125) to Queen Tamar (1183-1213). It is reported that the unprecedented success of Georgian statehood was accounted for in part by the fact that King David removed the unworthy aristocracy, who held positions through hereditary rights, from office. The lower nobility or non-aristocrats replaced them as worthier candidates. Thus, David put emphasis on personal merit rather than on any other considerations, such as class or ethnic group (which was hardly, if at all, a significant issue at that time). It is said, that he put political expediency above all other concerns, thus creating a 40,000 strong regular army consisting of Cumans whom David invited from the beyond the Caucasian steppe (overall, with their families, the Cumans numbered about 200,000). There were many political rivals at home who objected to the King’s grand plan, but as the following events proved, Georgia could hardly have survived the powerful Seljuk alliance in 1121 without this enlarged regular army. In David’s time, we witness the elevation of minor-class representatives to the highest offices with no concern for their ethnic origin. This policy was continued even after David’s death, so that during Tamar’s reign we find chief commanders in the Georgian army, elected because of their prowess, who were of Kurdish-Armenian origin (though this is not mentioned in the 7th grade textbook). And we read then on the pages dedicated to the last great monarch of the Golden Era – Tamar, that she had to go back on the policy established by David and give in to the demands of the traditional aristocracy who sought to regain their lost privileges. Furthermore, we read in the new textbook that in yielding to them Tamar deposed a very able official Khubasar (apparently a non-Christian name: he could well have been a Muslim); she nipped in the bud the attempt to make parliamentary reforms which came from the merchant class led by Khurtlu-Aslan (also a Muslim-sounding name: no surprise, since the merchant class in the capital, Tbilisi, apparently consisted predominantly of Arabs and Armenians); she deposed another high official Aphridon (also an oriental name) who rose to this status from a very low standing on personal merit.²⁷

²⁶ Jakob Gogebashvili, *About Abkhazia*. In: Jakob Gogebashvili’s complete works, vol. IV, Tbilisi: Pedagogical Institute Publishing House, 1955, p. 201.

²⁷ 7th grade op. cit. pp. 262-265.

All these facts are mentioned in the textbook, and I think it must be clear that one of the reasons for the fall of the Georgian kingdom after Tamar was precisely this concession to return to the older patterns of the hereditary aristocracy, which again paved the way for unworthy people to hold the highest offices.

I think such instances could well be utilized for the education of modern Georgians of all ethnic groups to show that, in the most prominent times of Georgian history, what mattered wasn't ethnic belonging but the personal worth and merit of the subject. And when this pattern was forsaken, and petty aristocratic concerns supplanted the grand political scheme, Georgia's fortunes changed for the worse. The same understanding can be transferred to the modern political nation of Georgia: if the petty concerns of ethnocentrism prevail over the demands of political expediency, Georgia cannot fully realize its potential as a successful modern country.

To give another example, let me turn to the 8th grade Georgian history textbook issued in 2004. This is the traditional type of ethnocentric history and it has less space for critical reasoning than the other books mentioned above. One praiseworthy aspect of this book, however, is that it contains excerpts from direct sources, as well as the authors' interpretations, giving the pupils the opportunity, to some extent, for creativity and independent thinking. In this textbook, non-Georgian subjects of the kingdom of Georgia are almost totally absent from the historical accounts. For instance, the battle of Krtsanisi in 1795, which was decisive for Georgia, is presented as a battle fought by Georgians only. However, it is known from sources not included in the textbook that the Georgian artillery consisted mostly of Armenians from Tbilisi, all of whom died heroically in this battle. The textbook, however, mentions only a Georgian artillery commander, Giorgi Guramishvili²⁸. If there was such solidarity between ethnic Georgians and Armenians in the defense of their common kingdom in that decisive battle, why should this be withheld in the history textbooks?

Besides that, the religious factor can also be addressed and utilized: Christianity is an important element of Georgian identity, the tradition of Christian martyrdom and sainthood having been kept alive for centuries ever since the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in 326. And we see that the majority of the early Medieval "Georgian" saints were, in fact, ethnically of Jewish, Greek, Persian, Syrian, Armenian and Arab origin. In dealing with the history of Christianity in Georgia, this should be emphasized in the textbooks so as to show the supra-ethnic and unifying significance of this religion. In fact, nowadays, a large portion of the ethnic Georgian population is surging back towards its Christian roots - this surge is of course partly conditioned by the 70 years of suppressed religiosity experienced during the era of the Soviet Union. Emphasizing the supra-ethnic dimension of the most treasured side of their history – the history of the Christian heroes in their country – will definitely be an aid to overcoming ethnocentric visions. However, this is a separate and quite a complex issue that can be dealt in another essay.

²⁸ *History of Georgia* (8th grade). Ed. by M. Vachnadze, V. Guruli, M. Bakhtadze. "Artanudji": Tbilisi, 2004, p. 127.

The textbooks which I have reviewed:

1. *Georgian and World history/geography* (7th grade). Ed. by: Zurab Kiknadze, Vaja Neidze, Lela Pataridze, Mzia Surguladze, Zurab Laoshvili, Tamar Uzunashvili. "Logos Press": Tbilisi, 2006.
2. *History of Georgia* (8th grade). Ed. by M. Vachnadze, V. Guruli, M. Bakhtadze. "Artanudji": Tbilisi, 2004.
3. *History* (10th grade). Ed. by Nino Kighuradze, Lali Pirtskhalava, Tsira Chikvaidze. "Kari": Tbilisi, 2006.
4. *History* (10th grade). Ed. by Zurab Kiknadze, Lela Pataridze, Mzia Surguladze, Tamar Uzunashvili. "Logos Press": Tbilisi, 2006.
5. *Introduction to History* (10th grade). By Paata Ramishvili. "Diogene": Tbilisi, 2006.

The Teaching of History in Georgia. With special focus on the Armenian and Azeri minorities and their representation in Georgian history textbooks.

Ieva Gundare

1. Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, serious transformations in the teaching of history in Georgia began and these resulted in the removal of Marxist ideology from the curricula and concentration on the history of Georgia. Georgian authors started to develop history textbooks for schools. Yet, the bi-polar interpretation of history from the Soviet era was preserved and political history has maintained its leading role. Before the reform in 2004, efforts to introduce innovative teaching methods were sporadic. Textbooks gradually began to include excerpts from historical sources as well as tasks and questions that require independent thinking. Occasionally new methods were introduced in teacher training seminars, mainly organized by NGOs and sponsored by international donors such as the Red Cross and the Soros Foundation. Because history textbooks developed in the 1990s were ethnocentric, minorities were hardly mentioned. When minorities did appear in the textbooks on Georgian history, they were represented exclusively as neighbors, foreigners, or new settlers. Sometimes the textbooks expressed strong anti-Russian sentiments.

The current reform of history teaching was started in 2004. Its goal was to bring the standards of teaching to a European level at a time when the current stage in the field was not far removed from the Soviet type and the early ethnocentric way of historiography and teaching history. Thus, this reform can be evaluated as a real revolution²⁹. It means a total change of the existing system. This probably fits into the context of the Rose Revolution. Some Georgians oppose the reform because it entails the integration of Georgian and world history, while the minority representatives are against changing the language of instruction from the respective minority languages to Georgian.

The textbooks published after the reform of 2004 do devote less attention to Georgian history; thus, it is not surprising that minorities are not included. The teaching of history in minority schools in the Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe Javakheti regions differs from that in schools with Georgian as the language of instruction in various aspects. Minority schools have the right to teach the history of their "titular" country as an optional subject. For the study of Georgian history, minority schools use Georgian textbooks translated into their respective languages. Most of the other textbooks used in history lessons in the regions are sent from Armenia or Azerbaijan. According to teachers and parents, the methods of history teaching in minority schools are more outdated than in mainstream schools. There is an acute need for the subject-specific training of teachers in minority schools. Furthermore, the reform is just starting in minority schools. Currently, the new curriculum is being

²⁹ This term was used in regard to the reform by Oliver Reisner, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.

implemented in only 30 of the minority schools, where it is being tested before its general application in the other schools of the region.

History-related tension does exist between both Georgians and Azeri and between Georgians and Armenians, however, this was seldom mentioned during the interviews. This tension is more evident in the case of the Armenian-Georgian relationship. Accusations about misinterpreting the history of the 'other's side' can be found in the media and heard in public. Azeri-Georgian relations in the battlefield of history seem calmer. In the future, a lot could still be done to promote pacific relations between the different communities in Georgia in the field of historiography and history teaching.

2. Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyze the representation of Armenian and Azeri minorities in Georgian history textbooks in the current situation of history teaching in Georgia. In order to achieve this objective, textbooks were analyzed, and a series of interviews were held.

2.1. The Analysis of Textbooks

The focus of the study concerns the analysis of textbooks. This analysis is essential for a general survey of the teaching of history in Georgia, since all the teachers interviewed stated that they follow textbooks closely. However, when analyzing Georgian textbooks at the present moment, one should take into consideration that the entire educational system in Georgia is in a process of major change. Thus, pre-reform books have already been widely criticized (including by some of our interviewees), while the new books are just starting to be developed.

The analysis of textbooks will be divided in two parts – ‘pre-reform’ textbooks and ‘reform’ textbooks. For the analysis of ‘pre-reform’ textbooks, Georgian history textbooks that had been translated into Russian, published between 1991 and 2006, and that were available at the National Library (disregarding repeated editions) were selected. This analysis was important not only in order to understand previous textbook development in Georgia, but also because these textbooks are still being used in schools and will continue to be used for up to five more years.

Seven ‘pre-reform’ textbooks were analyzed: five textbooks on Georgian history (one book each for the 7th, 8th, and 10th grades, and two books for the 9th grade) and two textbooks for the 4th and 5th grades on Georgia itself that include elements of history. The teachers informed us that textbooks for the 11th grade have not been translated.

As part of the current reform, four textbooks have been published and are already being used in schools – one for the 7th grade and three different versions for the 10th grade. None of these books has been completely translated into another language, so only a few excerpts from these texts will be analyzed in this paper.

In analyzing these books, the main focus was on the occurrence of any mention of the Azeri and Armenian people. However, because this is rare, attention was also paid to the other ethnic minorities living in Georgia today, as well as to the representation of the neighboring countries of Georgia, and to the Georgians themselves. The methodological approach of the textbooks was also considered.

2.2. Interviews

In total, 20 interviews were conducted in Tbilisi, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, and Marneuli during the period of October 4–12, 2006. The focus of the project was on the Azeri and Armenian minorities, thus a significant number of the interviews were held in the regions of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe Javakheti, because there the respective minorities live compactly and constitute the majority of the population. The time at which these interviews took place may be characterized as turbulent both in the short-term and the long-term perspective. In the short-term perspective it was

the very beginning of the school year – in Akhalkalaki, our interview was scheduled for the first school day in an Armenian school, a stressful experience for all Armenian respondents. In the long-term perspective, this period marks the very beginning of educational reform in Georgia. It was interesting to bear witness to this. Yet, sometimes it seemed that the respondents were more interested in learning about what they should expect in the future, than in talking about something that soon will be deconstructed.

The interviewees can be divided into the following categories:

- six university professors of history: four of them from Tbilisi State University, and two from the Samtskhe-Javakheti region;
- six history teachers: all female; all experienced but not senior teachers (with average teaching experience of 12 years, and a range of 7 to 18 years); by ethnicity, there were three Georgians, one Armenian, and two Azerbaijanis;
- four textbook authors – two female textbook authors of a 10th grade ‘reform’ book, two male professors who might be involved in textbook development in future; all are simultaneously university professors in Tbilisi;
- two representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science;
- two trainers of teachers: both Georgians by ethnicity; one of them is also a teacher in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, while the other is a Ministry representative and director of a school in Tbilisi (he used to be a history teacher and has 16 years’ teaching experience);
- five parents representing minorities – all mothers; by ethnicity: three Armenians, two Azerbaijanis; at least two of the parents were teachers themselves (although they did not teach history).

One interviewee does not fit into any of these categories, but was selected as a non-Georgian insider. He is a German historian living in Georgia who is interested in the teaching of history and historiographic issues.

It should be noted that all the minority teachers interviewed, as well as the older children of the interviewed parents (except one), had received higher education in Armenia or in Azerbaijan and not in Georgia. This is usual, since graduating in the “titular” country carries high prestige among the two minorities. Further, entrance exams for Georgian universities require high skills in the state language, which most students from the regions do not have yet.

Two interviews should be mentioned as special cases, because two people participated at the same time. In one case, two parents showed up at the interview together in Akhalkalaki. One mother was Armenian, while the other was a Georgian married to an Armenian and had children attending an Armenian school. The reason for their coming to the interview together was unclear – most likely, they felt more comfortable not being ‘interrogated’ alone. In general, we were against group interviews. Moreover, there was some concern that, as they represented two different ethnicities, they would perhaps not be open with us. Yet, this interview proved to be one of the most open interviews we conducted. The Georgian mother in the mixed marriage was especially sensitive to interethnic tension. It is possible that the two

interviewees were friends, and that the presence of a person who thinks similarly helped them to be open. Also, they were probably local activists who were used to expressing their opinions.

The other case of a double interview concerned a teacher in Tbilisi who invited a Russian language teacher to assist her as interpreter during the interview. Ironically, no interpretation was needed, and the other teacher was eager to express her views as well.

I should also like to highlight two teacher interviews which were especially interesting. Teacher C.C. was the only ethnic Armenian teacher we had a chance to talk with. Yet, it is important to stress that she works in two schools in Akhalkalaki, thus she was able to give us information about two different situations. The other teacher, D.D., in Akhaltsikhe was an ethnic Georgian who teaches both in classes with Georgian language of instruction and in classes with Russian language of instruction where the majority of her students are ethnic Armenians. Therefore, the value of her opinion was augmented by the fact that she had significant experience with Armenian students.

All interviews were based on the list of open-ended questions developed for each category of interviewee. The average interview length was 45 minutes. Some interviews with professors and teachers lasted an hour or more, while interviews with parents were shorter – about 15 minutes.

The majority of interviews were conducted in Russian with only a few conducted in English. Neither of these languages is native for any of the interviewers or the interviewees. For a few interviewees, this was a challenge. Some interviewees repeated several times that it is hard to explain their opinion in Russian, while some just sounded as if they had difficulty talking in Russian. Furthermore, some noted that they did not understand a question. Several terms were constantly not understood. For example, most of the teachers had difficulty with the phrase “the interpretation of history”. Yet, this was not only a language problem. Obviously some of the terms have not been widely used up to now when discussing history. For those readers who understand Russian, some specific Russian words used by the interviewees will be given in brackets. All words underlined in the quotations were especially emphasized by the respondents.

During several interviews (mainly with the Georgian history teachers), serious contradictions became apparent, especially in regard to controversial history issues. Initially, respondents claimed that there is no conflict between Georgian and minority representatives or between the various interpretations of history. Later, they gave a few specific examples of tensions and disagreements. This might be explained both by linguistic misunderstandings and by a desire to hide negative information.

One of the limitations of this study is that all of the interviewed people represent an urban population (i.e., four cities: Tbilisi, Marneuli, Akhalkalaki, and Akhaltsikhe), although there are great differences between the conditions in villages and those in cities. Also the time spent in the regions – one day per city – and the number of minority representatives interviewed seemed insufficient to allow a broad insight into the problems. Finally, the majority of our Georgian respondents appeared to be

in favor of the reform. This led us to question our method of selecting interviewees, since they might not represent the whole range of opinions on the reform.

In the explanation of results, interviews with teachers and parents in particular will be extensively quoted in an effort not to omit the context and to give a voice to people who are usually less heard. While many of their responses were not direct answers to our questions, every interview has its own inherent value which, at least partly, should be transmitted to the reader. At the request of the teachers, all interviews with teachers and parents remain anonymous – names are replaced by letters. For more clarity, we have indicated whether the interviewee belongs to the Armenian, Azeri or Georgian community in brackets in the footnotes.

3. Representations of History

History memory is part of everyday life in Georgia. People enjoy talking about and immersing themselves in ancient history and especially medieval history. Georgians are proud of their aristocracy and of their old family histories; popular topics for discussion are ethnogenesis and historical predestination. One teacher (a non-historian) who participated in an interview expressed her admiration of Georgian history: for her, it is “such an interesting thing, it is like a fairy-tale!”³⁰ Traditionally Georgian history is presented in an ethnocentric way – it is like a mirror of national pride and pain, a story of the nation’s suffering inflicted by others. Great focus is placed on the period when the country was influential and doing well.³¹ Popular perception of Georgian history is extremely mythical and stereotypical.³²

Yet the famous professor of history, Giorgi Anchabadze, admitted that at the moment in society there is a tendency to distance oneself from history. “People do not expect any good from history.” He believes that this nihilistic attitude towards history might have a positive impact, as it could deconstruct the historical myths. “Thus, probably in the future Georgians will look at their history in a more realistic (*мреზხო*) way.”³³ Similar suggestions that avoiding discussions on history could be beneficial for relieving ethnic tensions have also been spread by the media.³⁴

During the interviews, Georgian respondents mentioned several times that they are a small nation.³⁵ Furthermore, they often stressed that its existence had been endangered throughout its history³⁶, and was possibly endangered even now. Yet, at the same time, a strong belief that Georgia has greatly contributed to world culture was noticeable. This was expressed both in the school textbooks³⁷, as well as by some of our interviewees. For example, Guranda Chelidze, professor of history, said:

*First of all, Georgia is a cultural country. We differ [from other countries] by our culture, our history. [...] I believe that Georgia is influencing the entire region of the Caucasus. [...] Georgia in its history has always been in the center of [international] attention despite the supremacy of the Persians and the Turks. [...] Georgia has a great influence on world history.*³⁸

Several respondents stressed that the Georgian people are especially tolerant and peaceful, while simultaneously assessing that this tolerance is a shortcoming:

³⁰ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

³¹ Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, Report on History and the Teaching of History in Georgia and Abkhazia: For Caucasus project of International Alert “Confidence-building between Georgian and Abkhaz Societies”, 2005, pp. 13, 15.

³² It was mentioned in several interviews, for example, Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.; Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

³³ Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

³⁴ Гига Чихладзе, “Кому Борчалы, а кому Квемо Картли [То whom Borchali and to whom Kvemo Kartli]”, In Кавказский Акцент, 2005, № 19.

³⁵ For example, Roin Khavrelishvili, Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

³⁶ In Tbilisi, there is a monument devoted to the Georgian language. The danger of assimilation is mentioned repeatedly in textbooks (for example, Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade], Тбилиси: Артануджи, 2001, стр. 13, 27, 58, 64.) and in other publications (for example, Giorgi Gabeskira, The Heritage of Georgia: Where a Georgian Comes to..., N.p: n.p, [2000?], p. 80.)

³⁷ Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade], стр. 112.

³⁸ Guranda Chelidze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

*The Georgian nation is a very tolerant nation. There is no other city in the world where there is a synagogue, a mosque and a church next to each other. Nowhere is there anything like this. [repeating] [...] Georgians have always been a peaceful and friendly nation, loved and respected by other nations. Always. This is also our shortcoming – the reason why everyone abuses us.*³⁹

In the same way that the grand historical narrative of Georgia is ethnocentric, so the self-image of Georgians pictures them as being superior to other neighboring ethnic groups. Yet, according to Georgian author, Giga Chikhladze, this is not a unique Georgian feature but characteristic of all Caucasian nations – every nation is convinced of its exclusive superiority. Caucasian people truly believe that the entire world is divided in two parts – their ethnic group and ‘others’.⁴⁰

³⁹ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

⁴⁰ Гига Чихладзе, “Кому Борчалы, а кому Квемо Картли [То whom Borchali and to whom Kvemo Kartli]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.

4. The Recent History of Teaching History⁴¹

During the Soviet era, history was a propaganda tool, thus it was taught according to the Marxist interpretation of history, i.e. everything was evaluated from the perspective of the class struggle. In this same pattern, the teaching of national history was allowed. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, patterns of the teaching of history in Georgia have not changed much. The main change has been that the history of Georgia has become dominant in the school curriculum, while no major changes have taken place regarding the teaching of world history. In schools, two separate subjects were taught – world history and Georgian history. Marxist ideology was taken out of the curriculum. In terms of methodology, there were no major changes. Representative of the Ministry of Education, Giorgi Zedginidze stated that there were “no changes at all, [...] too much attention was devoted to memorizing information. [...] Students performed poorly where discussion and evaluation were concerned.”⁴² Also, almost all interviewed parents complained that the history lessons required too much memorization.

Previous teaching standards for the subject of history set very high demands – “a maximal rather than minimal program.” Thus, teachers had to cover so much material that they did not have time to discuss alternative interpretations or to provide an in-depth study of a topic.⁴³ Teachers did not even have the time to cover all factual material required by these standards. The same has been said about the textbooks written in the 1990s, that is, that these textbooks were overloaded with facts and conceptually too difficult for students. One of the reasons for this was that the textbook authors of the 1990s were always university professors, not secondary school teachers.⁴⁴

Students studied the history of Georgia chronologically several times, from ancient up to recent history: one cycle lasted from the 5th to 6th grade, the next one from the 7th to 9th grade, and the last one from the 10th to 12th grade. “As a result of this approach, students were no longer curious. It is boring to study the same thing several times.”⁴⁵ One teacher described a pre-reform history classroom as follows: “Students are very silent because there is a lot of information – a lot of information, and a lot of terms. It is very complicated to teach them.”⁴⁶

Before the reform which was started in 2004, little attention was paid to world history, as the main focus rested on Georgian history.⁴⁷ In the 1990s the teaching of history in Georgia, as well as in the other newly independent countries, became

⁴¹ This chapter deals with the teaching of history in Georgia since the collapse of the Soviet Union up to the current reform which was started in 2004, yet, at the moment its implementation is just starting and this process is gradual.

⁴² Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

⁴³ Oliver Reisner, “What can and should we learn from Georgian history? Observations of someone who was trained in the Western tradition of science”, in *International Schulbuchforschung/International Textbook Research*, Vol. 20 (1998), no. 4, pp. 409, 414.

⁴⁴ Susan Bennet, “Seminar on “How to teach controversial and sensitive issues in present-day secondary schools” (Tbilisi, 13–14 November, 2000)”, in *The Tbilisi Initiative: reports of national seminars in 2000*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000, pp. 68, 78.

⁴⁵ Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

⁴⁶ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

⁴⁷ Oliver Reisner, “What can and should we learn from Georgian history? Observations of someone who was trained in the Western tradition of science”, p. 421; Susan Bennet, “Seminar on “How to teach controversial and sensitive issues in present-day secondary schools” (Tbilisi, 13–14 November, 2000)”, p. 68.

clearly ethnocentric. Furthermore, this tendency was part of the official policy in Georgia because the position of the first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was clearly ethnocentric. An ethnocentric approach, in this case, means that any negative episodes are suppressed or underemphasized. For example, it was stressed that Georgia's policy regarding enlarging its territory has always been peaceful.⁴⁸ The achievements of medieval Georgia were represented as the exclusive legacy of ethnic Georgians. Thus, other ethnic groups were marginalized.⁴⁹ In the previous curriculum, there was no space for minority groups – they were omitted as if they did not exist. This created the impression that Georgia was a country mainly consisting of ethnic Georgians.⁵⁰

This relatively sudden shift from one 'correct' history (where everything was evaluated from the aspect of the class struggle) to another 'correct' history (where everything was interpreted from the perspective of the Georgian people) could not have been easy for teachers. One of them described the challenge created by this change of paradigm:

I was taught differently: the picture of Russia was always positive – Russia provided help to Georgia etc. At the present moment, I explain that the reason for this was not a Russian intention to help, but rather the creation of a foothold in the Caucasus. I must say this as well as other negative things about Russian rule. For me this is an unpleasant task. I love the Russian language, and I have always had a good attitude towards Russia. This is a challenge I have to deal with in my teaching. I have to tell my students how it all was, but deeply in my heart, I have a terrible feeling. [...] I was educated in a very different way.⁵¹

4.1. Looking for the 'Correct' History

During the Soviet era, history served as a propaganda tool, and all interpretations of history had to correspond to the Communist party line, i.e. every historical event or process, and the whole development of mankind had to be explained as a struggle between classes in binary opposition, in a 'black-and-white' way. History was viewed as dividing humans from all ages into two classes: a progressive class of exploited people and a class of exploiters. Furthermore, development as a whole was seen to be advancing to progressively higher stages, eventually culminating in communism – a classless society. This used to be the 'correct' history.

Several Western historians have noticed that Georgian historians and history teachers, like their colleagues in other post-communist countries, still today have a very strong tendency to look for one 'correct' history or for 'a single historical truth', which, at least in the early 1990s was the ethnocentric interpretation of history. Thus, historical discourse focuses on convincing the other of the single truthful

⁴⁸ Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *Report on History and the Teaching of History in Georgia and Abkhazia*, pp. 13, 15.

⁴⁹ Levan Gigineishvili, *Conflicting Narratives in Abkhazia and Georgia: different visions of the same history and the quest for objectivity* (April 2003), in www.gse.harvard.edu/~t656_web/peace/Articles_Spring_2003/Gigineishvili_Levan_ConflictingNarrativesAbkhaziaGeorgia.htm, p.8.

⁵⁰ Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

⁵¹ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

interpretation of the facts.⁵² During the interviews, therefore, we paid special attention to the issue of 'correct' history.

When we asked interviewees to evaluate the situation in this regard, one textbook author said he believed that teachers find it easy to accept the situation that there is not one true history.⁵³ By contrast, two other respondents agreed that the majority of teachers are still looking for the 'correct' history,⁵⁴ and that among university professors (although not the majority), this is still a significant issue, despite its decrease.⁵⁵

Looking for the correct view is typical not only with regard to history. Several interviewees repeatedly used statements such as: "I do not know if I am speaking correctly,⁵⁶" "Maybe my opinion is wrong to you", and "However, this is my individual opinion." Also, some history professors tended to give simplified one-sided answers to complex questions. Yet, this could be interpreted not only as a concern about something 'wrong', but also as a desire not to discredit their country, not to give any 'bad' information about it.

During the interviews, most of the history professors, but only two of the history teachers, seemed as if they had truly moved away from the idea of one 'correct' history. Yet, it is very difficult to illustrate this by quotations. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents demonstrated that they are still looking for one history in which to believe. It is not surprising that parents believe in one 'true' history:

If a history textbook is written, this means that there is some consensus among nations. How can a book be wrong? Nobody is able to replace one king with another. It is not possible to change that which has happened. [...] Armenians do not misinterpret the history of Georgia! How would it be possible to do so? History is not explained in just one textbook, it is not published just by Armenians. Such history books [containing the same views as expressed by Armenians] are published worldwide.⁵⁷

In this case, it is also clear that the respondent strongly believes that any book should be true. Yet, a similar opinion was also stated by a teacher:

A true history (правдивая история) should be written as a common effort. [Question: How is it possible to find the truth?] First of all, we look at how it is written in books, and then we can evaluate it critically. It is not possible to change history. We evaluate how it happened, how it is written.⁵⁸

⁵² Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *Report on History and the Teaching of History in Georgia and Abkhazia*, pp. 13, 17.; Oliver Reisner, "What can and should we learn from Georgian history? Observations of someone who was trained in the Western tradition of science", p. 413.; Susan Bennet, "Seminar on "How to teach controversial and sensitive issues in present-day secondary schools" (Tbilisi, 13–14 November, 2000)", pp. 68, 70.

⁵³ Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

⁵⁴ Oliver Reisner, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.; Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

⁵⁵ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

⁵⁶ The Russian word 'правильно' means 'correct', 'right'. In the Soviet tradition, it would be almost equivalent to 'corresponding to the party line'.

⁵⁷ F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

⁵⁸ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

This position is not so straightforward because the teacher also talks about critical evaluation. However, mentioning 'true history', as well as the last two sentences of the quote, leave the impression that history is not an interpretation. A similar view was also expressed by Tedo Dondua, professor of history: "History is history! We have to write the real history [as it was], and nothing else!"⁵⁹

We expected that the reform training of history teachers would diminish the tendency to look for the 'correct' history. Yet, even the teachers trained according to the new standards continued to believe that:

The truth is always one.⁶⁰ If there are contradicting sources, a historian has to write down how it really was.⁶¹

Another teacher who is currently beginning a pilot program in an Azeri school expressed some concern about an approach which allows students to draw their own conclusions, as this might create a situation where students get some 'wrong' ideas:

Some students will think something really bad or wrong, and they might be confused or misunderstand something. This should not be allowed. I do not support this. History consists of facts, and how can you say that something did not happen? There cannot be an alternative opinion.⁶²

This statement reflects social norms and values as well as the very limited impact of the training on the teachers' conception of history. However, the terms 'wrong' and 'history consists of facts' are very revealing. The opinion that 'facts speak for themselves' was repeated by many teachers several times. It confirms, once again, that teachers still do not perceive of history as an interpretation.

Another teacher, who pedagogically already follows the new reform requirements, had an absolutely positivist view, and even believed that the 'correct' teaching of history would solve all ethnic conflicts:

When history is taught correctly... [Question: What is correctly?] 'Correctly' means what actually happened, in reality. If Ossetians would look at their problems correctly, there would not be any conflicts. If they would only recall their roots – where they are from and how they ended up on this territory... And if the Abkhaz nation would look differently at their roots – where they are from and where they are going – the result would be very different.⁶³

Amazingly, the most open-minded testimonial in regard to the issue of truth in history was expressed by a parent. The testimonial began with the common statement: "In general, they say that the truth is always one." But it continued in different manner:

However, it is possible to look at one event from different perspectives and to have various views. [...] History is written by people like us.

⁵⁹ Tedo Dondua, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.

⁶⁰ We were told that the saying "The truth is always one" is almost like a Georgian national proverb" (Levan Akhvediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.), and it was repeated by several respondents.

⁶¹ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

⁶² I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

⁶³ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

*They not only described facts, but also included their emotions and their desires. [...] Maybe they exaggerated or missed something.*⁶⁴

This statement shows that, despite the fact that the majority of history teachers (at least in the regions, although not only there) still have difficulty in perceiving of history as an interpretation, there are critical people in the general public who believe that history necessarily is a subjective discipline. The development of critical thinking skills (i.e., learning not to accept everything as true) is also one of the goals of the current reform in teaching history described below.

4.2. Pre-Reform Textbooks

To understand the importance of textbooks in the teaching of history in Georgia, it should be noted that “for the average teacher the textbook is like the Bible.”⁶⁵ Thus, textbooks should be considered with great care. The attitudes of the interviewed teachers and parents towards textbooks were contradictory. Almost all of the parents said that the textbooks are too complicated, while at first the teachers did not complain about the books. Mostly, the teachers answered that the textbooks are good. However, when we asked for their suggestions for improving the teaching of history, every teacher mentioned that the textbooks should be written in a more simple language, that they should be ‘easier’.

A significant change in the teaching of history since 1991 is that Georgian historians now develop the school textbooks. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, these books were written in Moscow, and the translated versions were used in the republics. The first attempts by Georgian historians to develop textbooks were criticized by their colleagues during the interviews. Professor Anchabadze said:

*Textbooks developed after 1991 were still written in the Soviet style. Compared to Soviet authors, the Georgian authors of the new textbooks did not have any restrictions [as to exaggerating or falsifying facts], thus new myths were promoted in these textbooks.*⁶⁶

A similar view was expressed by Professor Tedo Dondua, who stressed that, at least in their language, Soviet history books were more vivid and interesting to read.⁶⁷

Pre-reform Georgian textbooks provide a good illustration of the teaching of history before the current reform began. Most of these textbooks are written in a highly complicated, scientific way. For example, students in the 7th grade are confronted with the issue of autochthony.⁶⁸ Usage of the term ‘autochthony’ itself seems complicated enough for 14-year-olds, yet the authors go into a detailed discussion on how important it is to learn this concept if an ethnic group is indigenous or immigrant. The authors are open-minded and stress that a variety of theories exist and no ethnicity can be purely indigenous. However, understanding this kind of discussion requires a high level of abstract thinking.

⁶⁴ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

⁶⁵ Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

⁶⁶ Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

⁶⁷ Tedo Dondua, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.

⁶⁸ И. Антелава, С. Вардосанидзе, Р. Метревели, *История Грузии: учебник для 7 класса русской школы [History of Georgia: textbook for the 7th grade of Russian schools]*, Тбилиси: Интеллекти, 1999, стр. 20.

The pre-reform textbooks are full of dates, names and facts. The main focus is on political history – the history of rulers, conquests, and battles. After detailed political chapters, there is a short explanation of social structure and culture. Yet, the very composition of the book itself insists that history is predominantly political. This approach is inherited; it is the Soviet type of history-writing which is also prevalent in other post-Soviet countries. Following this trend, history never addresses the daily life of ‘simple’ people.

Some textbooks provide an international context,⁶⁹ as well as comparisons between Georgian history and Eastern and Western cultures. These comparisons demonstrate how Georgian history fits into these cultures.⁷⁰ Thus, these are the first attempts to develop textbooks which correspond to one of the ideas of the reform – to integrate Georgian history into world history.

A comparison of the textbooks demonstrates that, with time, their quality is improving in all aspects, including print quality, content, and pedagogical approach.

4.2.1. Pedagogical Approach

As previously mentioned, textbooks are gradually improving and becoming more modern in their pedagogical approach as well. While some of the first books contain only a complicated text with some drawing-like illustrations, recently published books offer more than just plain text. They are more reader-friendly, with some of them highlighting the most important point of each chapter.⁷¹ They also provide questions and tasks for students - these too are improving over time. For example, although the answers to the questions in some of the textbooks can all be found in the text itself,⁷² other textbooks already assign tasks that require the student to compare issues, to develop an opinion, etc.⁷³ However, some of these tasks are value-loaded. For example, note the following passage: “Prove that the renewal of Georgian national independence on May 26, 1918 was a natural outcome of the national movement in Georgia.”⁷⁴

In the textbook published in 1996, one already finds such modern features as excerpts from historical sources, although their aim is purely to illustrate or to prove the text of the book.⁷⁵ One of the most recent textbooks (published in 2004) has a very modern pedagogical approach⁷⁶. The language used is comparatively simple, the authors provide explanations of terms, there are short excerpts from historical

⁶⁹ Нодар Асатиани, *История Грузии: учебник для 8 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 8th grade]*, Тбилиси: Артануджи, 2002.

⁷⁰ И. Антелава, С. Вардосанидзе, Р. Метревели, *История Грузии: учебник для 7 класса русской школы [History of Georgia: textbook for the 7th grade of Russian schools]*.

⁷¹ Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, *История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade]*.

⁷² Нодар Асатиани, *История Грузии: учебник для 8 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 8th grade]*.

⁷³ Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, *История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade]*.

⁷⁴ Там же, стр. 112.

⁷⁵ Нодар Асатиани, *История Грузии: учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 9th grade]*, Тбилиси: Ганатлеба, 1996.

⁷⁶ Роин Метревели и Буба Кудава, *Летопись нашей родины: учебник для 5 класса [Chronicles of Our Homeland: textbook for the 5th grade]*, Тбилиси: Артануджи, 2004.

sources, there are maps, and there are questions which require independent thinking on the part of the students.

4.2.2. Georgians and 'Others'

The main focus of the pre-reform books in question was on ethnic Georgians. One of the recent books seemed to be more focused on the history of the Georgian territory than on ethnic Georgians,⁷⁷ while the oldest book considered still preserved the class struggle approach⁷⁸ and the Soviet-style interpretation of relations between Georgia and Russia (i.e., joining the Russian empire was clearly a positive fact, and friendship between the two nations was established).⁷⁹

Earlier observers had already noticed that the Georgian textbooks written according to the ethnocentric approach displayed double standards, i.e. Georgian supremacy diverges from a foreign one, and is not referred to as a 'conquest' but rather as a "strengthening of foreign policy expansion".⁸⁰ Because it is believed that Georgia, throughout its history, has been a very peaceful country, such phrases as "the borders of Georgia were expanded"⁸¹ are used or excuses are made for conquests (for example, certain towns were 'taken' by Georgians since they were military centers for Turks⁸²).

The textbooks analyzed do not discuss minorities separately. When there is a discussion of the conflicts between countries or nations, then, of course, the names of minorities are mentioned.⁸³ Yet they are mentioned not as inhabitants of Georgia but as foreigners. Non-Georgians living in Georgia are mentioned occasionally. Mainly they are called 'neighbors'⁸⁴. A prejudiced description of other peoples (for example, the attacks of nomads are described as "the uproar of wild nomads" [*разгул диких кочевников*]⁸⁵) occurs in rare cases. Some textbooks include such important topics for minorities as migration⁸⁶.

In several books special attention is paid to Abkhaz history. This is explained in detail, although it is vigorously stressed that the Abkhaz kingdom was not an ethnic formation.⁸⁷ Ironically, it is not mentioned that the process of Georgian nation-building was also gradual.

⁷⁷ Мераб Вачнадзе, Вахтанг Гурули и Михаил Бахтадзе, *История Грузии: учебник для 10 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 10th grade]*, Тбилиси: Артануджи, 2002.

⁷⁸ Нодар Асатиани, *История Грузии: учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 9th grade]*, стр. 53, 76.

⁷⁹ Там же, стр. 83, 111, 112.

⁸⁰ Oliver Reisner, "What can and should we learn from Georgian history? Observations of someone who was trained in the Western tradition of science", p. 416.

⁸¹ И. Антелава, С. Вардосанидзе, Р. Метревели, *История Грузии: учебник для 7 класса русской школы [History of Georgia: textbook for the 7th grade of Russian schools]*, стр. 16.

⁸² Там же, стр. 103.

⁸³ Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

⁸⁴ И. Антелава, С. Вардосанидзе, Р. Метревели, *История Грузии: учебник для 7 класса русской школы [History of Georgia: textbook for the 7th grade of Russian schools]*, стр. 24.

⁸⁵ Мераб Вачнадзе, Вахтанг Гурули и Михаил Бахтадзе, *История Грузии: учебник для 10 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 10th grade]*, стр. 133.

⁸⁶ Нодар Асатиани, *История Грузии: учебник для 8 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 8th grade]*.

⁸⁷ И. Антелава, С. Вардосанидзе, Р. Метревели, *История Грузии: учебник для 7 класса русской школы [History of Georgia: textbook for the 7th grade of Russian schools]*, стр. 63.

A textbook on the homeland for the 4th grade addresses the issue of the Abkhaz conflict, explaining that it started because “enemies sewed hatred between the brotherly nations.”⁸⁸ It is unclear how a 10-year-old child would comprehend this statement, but it seems obvious that the reason for the hostilities lies somewhere outside of Georgia, since it is not very likely that there are any enemies among ‘us’.

Two of the analyzed books address the issue of the territories. The textbook for the 10th grade stresses several times that the Samtskhe-Javakheti region is an ancient and genuine Georgian area.⁸⁹ The textbook for the 4th grade goes even further and expresses a certain nostalgia about greater Georgia, stating that South Georgia – Adjara, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli – “once used to be significantly bigger and that the state borders were further south. [...] Some genuine Georgian territories are today part of Turkey. [...] This land is soaked by the blood of Georgian people, there our ancestors are buried.”⁹⁰

One 9th grade textbook dealing with the history of the 19th and 20th centuries is a special case.⁹¹ This book is the most ethnocentric example among all the books analyzed, and demonstrates strong anti-Russian sentiments. This is most evident when the authors use the term “Russian occupants” in regard to 19th century history.⁹² The textbook’s focus is not only on ethnic Georgians, but particularly on the national liberation struggle and even on “the struggle against the degeneration of the Georgians and their assimilation with Russians.”⁹³ Basically, the Soviet class-struggle paradigm is replaced by a national liberation paradigm. The authors mention that the goals of Russia were the assimilation and the destruction of the self-esteem of the Georgian people, stating that “the national interests of the Georgian people were trampled in the dirt”.⁹⁴ Also, the question asking students “How would events develop if Russian colonial policy were more civilized?”⁹⁵ implies that Russian colonialism is particularly uncivilized. Thus, the book contributes to shaping the representation of Russia and the Russians as enemies. Since this book clearly focuses on ethnicities, in the case of Stalin it states: “In 1956 the criticism of Stalin turned, putting the blame on his Georgian nationality, thus injuring Georgian pride. Critics always stressed that Stalin was a Georgian, which, in this case, made no sense.”⁹⁶

⁸⁸ Д. Дондуа, Н. Дарчиашвили и Л. Карденахишвили, *Родина: учебник для 4 класса [Homeland: textbook for the 4th grade]*, Тбилиси: Интеллекти, 2002, стр. 80.

⁸⁹ Мераб Вачнадзе, Вахтанг Гурули и Михаил Бахтадзе, *История Грузии: учебник для 10 класса [History of Georgia: textbook for the 10th grade]*, стр. 153, 170.

⁹⁰ Д. Дондуа, Н. Дарчиашвили и Л. Карденахишвили, *Родина: учебник для 4 класса [Homeland: textbook for the 4th grade]*, стр. 83.

⁹¹ Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, *История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade]*.

⁹² Там же, стр. 20.

⁹³ Там же, стр. 64.

⁹⁴ Там же, стр. 27, 64, 129.

⁹⁵ Там же, стр. 13.

⁹⁶ Там же, стр. 156. At the same time, another glossy history book by Giorgi Gabeskira “The Heritage of Georgia: Where a Georgian Comes to...”, which is not meant to be a textbook but a kind of an introduction to Georgia for foreigners, contains a gallery of famous Georgians which includes Stalin. There is no mention of any negative aspects of his rule. The only evaluation of him is a quote from Winston Churchill stating that Stalin is a genius (p. 249). (It is also available in Internet: http://www.nplq.gov.ge/ic/library_e/gabeskiria/images/247-page-Stalin%20copy.jpg).

The 9th grade textbook also touches on the subject of Armenians living in Georgia. First, the forced settlement of Armenians at the beginning of the 19th century is explained by the Russian policy of “the settling of foreigners in Georgia to create a force of support for Russia.” Yet it is noted that there were no conflicts between the Georgians and the new settlers,⁹⁷ further proof that the Georgians have always been tolerant towards other ethnicities. The other reference to Armenians is offensive – “There was a real threat that the international bourgeoisie (mainly consisting of the Armenian bourgeoisie) would gain supremacy over Georgian lands.”⁹⁸ This statement indicates that Armenians are interpreted as foreigners and not as part of the local population of Georgia. At the same time, this is one of the rare cases where Soviet-type class division is preserved.

Some of our Georgian respondents stressed that the topic of minority populations was not addressed enough in the old textbooks or that it was covered in a bad way.⁹⁹ By contrast, another Georgian teacher said that she does not see any problem with regard to the topic of minorities or ‘others’. She developed her opinion further using an example from Russian history:

Everything is written there correctly. I would not say that anything is wrong there. There is no prejudice. When they explain the communist system, they talk not only of Russian Bolsheviks but also of Georgian Bolsheviks. They do not picture history in a one-sided way. They have included both positive and negative aspects.¹⁰⁰

However, it is interesting to note that this same teacher was the interviewee who spoke of feeling discomfort when teaching her students that Russian influence on Georgia was bad (see above).

⁹⁷ Мераб Вачнадзе и Вахтанг Гурули, *История Грузии (19–20 века): учебник для 9 класса [History of Georgia (19th–20th century): textbook for the 9th grade]*, стр. 10–11.

⁹⁸ Там же, стр. 54.

⁹⁹ Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁰⁰ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

5. Reform

The current reform was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science. It started in 2004 as a broad reform of the curriculum with the general aim of revitalizing the educational system and bringing the educational standards up to a European level. Since the Rose Revolution the desire to meet European standards is predominant, and all the key words used in modern history teaching are employed in the description of the reform. The main focus of the reform was to introduce new methods in the teaching of history, to promote critical and independent thinking, to introduce a multi-perspective approach, and to bring awareness that history is interpretation. According to the reform, content itself is not that important, and because of this, Georgian and world history, as well as geography, are all integrated into one subject. According to the new standards, the main focus is on skills, while development of values is also considered. The reformers have declared that knowledge is not just memorizing information.¹⁰¹

At first, in 2004 a new set of national standards was developed for all grades. The development of a new standard for the teaching of history was chaired by the historian, Giorgi Zedginidze, educated in the USA. During the development of the new standards, all interested parties – including teachers, students, parents, representatives of the teacher training institute, university professors, and potential authors – were involved. The new standards were developed from these discussions. According to Zedginidze, some of the initial ideas were altered because of these discussions.

One of the experts who participated in the development of the new standards, Levan Akhvlediani, considers that these standards are not ideal. In his opinion, the reason for this is the extremely short period of time during which the standards were developed – less than a year. Experts were working very intensively – day and night.¹⁰²

In 2005/2006, new textbooks were developed for grades 7 and 10, and, were simultaneously tested in 100 schools in Georgia. In 2006/2007, the introduction of new standards and textbooks will take place in the test schools' 8th and 11th grades, extending to the 9th and 12th grades during the next school year. As from 2006/2007, the new standard is compulsory for the 7th and 10th grades. The reform is going to be continued in this way.¹⁰³ However, the implementation of the reform in minority schools has been postponed – everything happens there one year later. This means that the trials of the translated textbooks for grades 7 and 10 start in minority schools in Georgia during the current school year.

Continuing with tradition, university professors still dominate textbook development. It is a great achievement and a notable development that one of the books currently being tested was written by two female history teachers. Ministry experts support authors by all possible means – by supplying resources, by

¹⁰¹ Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.; Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹⁰² Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006. Moreover, we met Akhvlediani at the Ministry working with some team members on Election Day, when all offices (including the Ministry) were closed.

¹⁰³ Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

cooperating, and even by directly and personally participating in the process of writing and editing.¹⁰⁴

The aim of the reform is to give teachers free choice in their teaching, unlike before when they had to fully cover textbook content. The new standards allow teaching without any textbook, as long as the teaching corresponds to the standards. The new policy is against determining which specific topics should be covered. According to the new reform, teachers have the freedom to change the assignment and to decide whether to use the textbook or not. However, they do not have sufficient skills to use this freedom, so they continue to follow the textbook very closely.¹⁰⁵

Not only were new standards and textbooks developed, but tests and exams were also changed. A huge part of the reform is the training of teachers. Last year, teachers in the pilot program schools were trained in new methodologies, new assessment techniques and in approaches that utilize multiple perspectives. This year, the training has been extended to teachers of all subjects at all schools, yet the training is no longer subject-based.

The experts who participated in the development of the new standards automatically became teacher trainers. There was no special training for the trainers. Some people who were already trainers before the reform also joined this group of trainers. There are about 12 trainers in each group, with a total of three trainer groups. There are seven centers in the various regions of Georgia which are organizing pilot programs for the new curricula and the new textbooks (training also takes place there). Moreover, training for teachers from schools that are not participating in the pilot programs is also being organized. There are more trainers involved for this purpose – around 100 people.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, former pilot-program school teachers are becoming teacher trainers.¹⁰⁷

Ministry representative Giorgi Zedginidze is aware of the teachers' fear that they will not be able to cope with these new approaches. He, as well as other respondents, also stressed the issue of the lack of motivation on the part of the teachers. Other earlier observers have already mentioned that any reform in Georgia is problematic due to the teachers' resistance if the government does not improve their critical financial situation.¹⁰⁸ Yet Zedginidze does not think the teachers would thwart the implementation of the reform. He believes that, in comparison with the university professors, teachers are more willing and more open to change and to new ideas.

5.1. The Classroom After the Reform

Our information on how the reform is being implemented in history lessons is very limited. We talked to only one teacher from a pilot-program school (this person has one full year of teaching experience, following the new reform) and to two teachers who started to teach according to the new reform in the current school year, i.e. they

¹⁰⁴ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.; Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.; Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁰⁵ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁰⁷ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Oliver Reisner, "What can and should we learn from Georgian history? Observations of someone who was trained in the Western tradition of science", p. 415.

have a couple of weeks of teaching experience. None of them were minority representatives.

The most experienced teacher, D.D., told us that students like the new curriculum very much because they are allowed to express their opinions. Thus, they will remember what they have studied. The volume level during the lessons is higher, yet it is accepted by the administration as part of the reform. Students do not need to memorize history, so they are more interested in subject. The greatest difficulties occur in rural areas where schools do not have computers or libraries, or even any television – “they do not have anything, so it is very difficult for them to implement the reform – the assignment suggests looking for further information, and it is impossible at these schools.”¹⁰⁹

Teacher G.G. admitted that she was already using the new methods suggested by the reform even before the reform was introduced. She has been using them for some 3–4 years, “because there are many methods which are very effective, which promote the independent thinking of students. Students are already starting to think for themselves.”¹¹⁰ Teacher L.L. also expressed a similar desire for change: “We wanted to change earlier, but there were no books for it.”¹¹¹

Furthermore, in non-reform grades, teachers are also allowed to try out new methods, and some are doing so, although only occasionally.¹¹² Teacher L.L. stated that it is not easy to use the new methods in non-reform grades since the textbooks are not suitable for this.¹¹³

Teacher L.L. described teaching according to the new curriculum as an active learning process. Each student has a folder where all of his or her assignments are collected. The teacher evaluates these assignments selectively. Teacher L.L. said that she enjoys the new style of teaching. Students have time to think, to talk freely, to look up information in an encyclopedia, to research, and to work with the textbook because there are a lot of sources. “I like it very much and students like it as well.” Students enjoy group work very much, and they like the fact that they can express their opinions. The main challenge of working according to the new system is that different supplies are needed – folders for student work, paper, and markers. Schools do not provide any of these materials, which the parents have to buy themselves.

When asked about the goals of teaching history, only one teacher used the language of the new standards. It was teacher L.L. from Tbilisi: “Our main goal is to develop skills needed in their future life. [...] to raise students not only as Georgian citizens, but as citizens of the world.”¹¹⁴ This probably means that the new ideas in the reform have not actually reached distant regions and that primarily the reform is understood simply as the introduction of active teaching and learning methods.

¹⁰⁹ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹¹⁰ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹¹¹ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹¹² D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.; G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹¹³ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

5.2. Attitudes Towards the Reform

Ministry officials believe that most teachers support the reform. Teacher trainer, Levan Akhvlediani, noted that the most popular objection is: “The Soviet system of education used to be one of the best educational systems in the world. Why should we change it now?” Opponents are against destroying the old system. Some teachers simply do not comprehend the essence of the reform, and they do not understand active forms of learning. Meanwhile, the older generation of teachers has difficulty coping with the freedom given by the new standards. Akhvlediani implied that there are no differences between the attitudes of Georgian and minority teachers. However, his experience with minority teachers is minimal, since he has been working mainly with teachers from Georgian schools.

According to our interviewees, the teachers’ main objection to the reform is the idea of merging Georgian and world history. This was mentioned by almost all informed respondents, by the teachers themselves, and by the history professors. The argument is that, even in the Soviet Union, Georgian history used to be a separate subject. Opponents express strong fears about losing Georgian identity.¹¹⁵ Another argument of teachers opposing the reform is that, as a result of such teaching, the students will not be cultured (*образованный*) people.¹¹⁶

A strong supporter of the reform, teacher D.D. herself initially thought that integrating world with Georgian history and geography was strange. However, she changed her mind because “everything there [in the textbooks] was so good that it does not create any problem.”¹¹⁷

Teacher G.G. sees a lot of positive aspects in the reform. She particularly stressed that the new textbooks are of a high quality, and are beautiful and interesting. They contain a lot of material for student work – there are questions and explanations of terms. Children like them. In contrast to others, she also sees some problematic aspects. She, like many others, does not like the fact that Georgian history is integrated into general history. Previously, they studied each country – Germany, France, etc. – separately. Now, it is all generalized. “Maybe students do not need to know it all. I do not know. Let’s see how it works out.”¹¹⁸ She also expressed concern that students might disregard the context which is necessary for the comprehension of certain topics.

With respect to the other ideas of the reform, teachers did not show significant opposition. Textbook authors believe that teachers accept the approach that there is not one ‘correct’ history as well as their new role as a guide for the students. The new textbooks are forcing them to accept this new approach.¹¹⁹ Yet textbook author, Nino Kighuradze, stressed that a lot of teachers are simply not ready for any innovations. She also implied that there are big differences between the teachers of various regions. Those teachers who are competent have a very positive attitude towards the reform.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, teacher attitudes in minority schools are characterized by

¹¹⁵ Tsira Chikvaide, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹¹⁶ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹¹⁷ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹¹⁸ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹¹⁹ Tsira Chikvaide, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹²⁰ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

confusion and a lack of information. This will be discussed in a separate chapter below.

With regard to reforming the teaching of history, we observed similar discrepancies in people's views that one finds when discussing other issues. One person may say that he or she supports the reform, but, at the same time, does not support the reform's essential ideas:

In general, I support the educational reform, yet I do not support the decision to merge history with geography. This is wrong because Georgia has a very rich history. Furthermore, Georgia currently plays a great role in international relations. [...] I believe that history should be studied separately.

Moreover, the integration of world history with Georgian history is wrong because Georgia has a great influence on world history. [...] World history and Georgian history should be thought of separately. [...] I believe that all of these subjects should be taught separately. [...] Once again, I want to stress that, in general, I support the reform, although I am against the integration of subjects.¹²¹

The most negative views towards the reform were expressed by Professor Anchabadze and Professor Dondua. They both were invited to participate in the development of the new textbook, and they were both struggling with the ideas of the reform. Professor Anchabadze stated:

The reform for me is not fully comprehensible. [...] The reform is meant to change everything at its core. [...] I do not believe that those who are in charge of the reform have a deep insight into all of the needs of education and of the broader social context.¹²²

A similar view was expressed by Professor Tedo Dondua:

They [reformers] have no idea what they are doing. They do not have a strict curriculum. I am not opposed to the Ministry of Education, but they have no idea what they are doing. There is confusion. [...] They are trying to diminish Georgian history. This integration is too much and too sporadic. There is no sense.¹²³

If these history professors expressed such confusion about the intentions of the reform, then it is very likely that society in general has no deep understanding of it either.

Accounts with regard to parental attitude towards the reform are different. Georgian teacher D.D. from Akhalkalaki, a great supporter of the reform, said that parents have not expressed any opposition.¹²⁴ According to the experience of Akhaltsikhe teacher, G.G., the attitudes of parents vary. There are some who are in favor of the reform, while others oppose it. The main objection is once again that the history of Georgia is not studied as a separate subject. According to her, minority student parents do not oppose the reform – they like it. The only worry of minority parents in

¹²¹ Guranda Chelidze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹²² Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹²³ Tedo Dondua, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.

¹²⁴ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

regard to the reform is the language issue, i.e. the fact that in future the language of instruction will be Georgian. Almost all minority parents interviewed expressed a concern that their children will not be able to master history if it is taught in the Georgian language. This attitude of minority parents was also stressed by teacher G.G. who teaches minority students.¹²⁵

New textbook author, Nino Kighuradze, stressed that initially society saw the reform as a great risk, fearing that it would endanger Georgian national identity and that this was the influence of globalization. Therefore, society even felt a certain amount of aggression towards the reform.¹²⁶ Yet Kighuradze's colleague, Tsira Chikvaidze, complained that there is no discussion about the teaching of history in general society, but only on an academic level. She believes that the rest of society should join in this discussion.¹²⁷

5.3. Reform Textbooks

Textbook development was supervised and organized by the Ministry of Education. An evaluation commission, consisting of seven experts (including three historians, two experts in geography and two experts in civics), assessed the proposals. They themselves did not have the right to write textbooks. Experts at the ministry participated in textbook development by giving oral and written recommendations.

Only one textbook for the 7th grade was developed because most authors did not meet the criteria for the competition. Ten groups of authors applied, but only one project was accepted. For the 10th grade, three alternative textbooks have been completed.

Since the entire reform is taking place under great time pressure, the textbooks were written in a very short period of time – in 6–7 months. First, authors had to understand what the new curriculum required. Akhvlediani understandably stressed: “That takes time as well!”¹²⁸ Afterwards the writing of the textbooks and the trials in pilot programs took place almost simultaneously. Of course, doing this in such a short period of time and maintaining high standards was very difficult.

According to the ministry representatives, the textbook trials in the pilot programs greatly influenced the style and content of the textbooks – after these trials, the books were extensively edited and almost transformed. Much of the content was omitted.¹²⁹ Yet the pilot program school teachers do not regard these changes as serious: they are proud that they were able to have an impact on the textbook editing, although they feel that the changes were only minor.¹³⁰ This description of the final editing of the new textbooks also corresponds to the author's opinion.¹³¹

¹²⁵ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006; E.E. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.; F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.; H.H. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹²⁶ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹²⁷ Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹²⁸ Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁰ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹³¹ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

Textbook development was influenced by achievements in this field in other countries. Several authors spent time at the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig (Germany).¹³² One shortcoming of this textbook development is that many of the authors do not have any experience of teaching in secondary school, since they are mostly university professors. Only in a few cases were teachers involved in developing the new textbooks. Difficulties also arose because some of the books were not published until after the school year had started. Many teachers have not even seen the new books,¹³³ so they do not have a choice.

Few analyses of the new textbooks are available due to the lack of translations. Some excerpts were kindly translated into English by Levan Gigineishvili. I can best judge the 10th grade book by Nino Kighuradze, Lali Pirtskhalava, and Tsira Chikvaidze¹³⁴, because (in contrast to other books) one third of it is available in a Russian translation. This book is also more widely known and popular among teachers.¹³⁵ It focuses not on any specific period but on the philosophy of history, its very essence and methods. On the one hand, this book seems to be simple: its format is more like an exercise book than a traditional textbook; the number and the length of the sources given for analysis are not overwhelming. The thickness of the book itself gives a good impression – it looks as if not too much work would be required to complete it. The book is structured in such a way that first provides a short history of the discipline of history illustrated by various sources, the next part is devoted to various types of sources, and at the end the process of history writing is briefly discussed. Yet, the contents of this textbook are highly academic and more appropriate for history students at university level. Also some of the sections present confusing ideas. For example, the first study unit “What is history?” provides ten different definitions of history, but the only task related to these definitions is to sort them into three categories. If students do not seriously discuss these definitions, their views on the meaning of history might remain limited to Ranke’s “how it actually happened” or Cicero’s “reaching the truth”. In contrast, the following units on the history of the discipline of history, in which the opinions of various ancient authors are discussed, create a totally relativistic impression. Then follows a unit on medieval chronicles stating that “poor monks [...] quite precisely described reality”, thus the authors imply that these accounts do not contain any bias. How will a student later be able to cope with a situation where there are contradictory medieval sources?

This book does not include any mention of minorities since its focus is not on Georgian history or world history as such, but on philosophical and methodological aspects of history. Therefore, any Georgian component is only occasional. For example, there is a study unit on the falsification of history in which a case study with Lavrentiy Beria is used (yet, the fact that he was Georgian is not mentioned). One of the sources is an entry about Beria in the initial edition of the Soviet Encyclopedia in which he was praised as a great Communist leader, the right hand of Stalin, etc. The other source is from the period after Beria’s execution, when substitute pages were sent to libraries and owners of the encyclopedia with a

¹³² Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹³³ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹³⁴ [Unauthorized translation of textbook in Georgian] Nino Kighuradze, Lali Pirtskhalava, and Tsira Chikvaidze, *History (for the 10th grade)*, Tbilisi: Kari, 2006.

¹³⁵ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

recommendation to cut out the Beria pages and to replace them with the new pages on the Bering Sea instead!

Although I have read only a few excerpts from other recent reform-period books,¹³⁶ they seem to be more open with regard to minorities than the pre-reform books. Evaluating the books on the basis of these excerpts, they seem to employ a multicultural and multi-perspective approach. For example, the book by Paata Ramishvili provides a puzzle concerning the life of King David the Builder and the ethnicity of his wives.¹³⁷ Three historical sources are provided – Georgian, Armenian and Frankish. The Armenian source (Matthew of Urha, 12th century) illustrates the Armenian's perception of David:

David was saintly and amiable, adorned with piety and just, compassionate judgment. He was tolerant and fond of the Armenian people. In fact, those who survived from the Armenian army gathered around him [...]. David had one natural [i.e. legitimate] son from an Armenian woman, and the name of the son was Demeter.

The book by Paata Ramishvili, as well as another book for the 10th grade by Zurab Kiknadze et al.,¹³⁸ includes accounts about multicultural life in Tbilisi in the past. The latter book also includes a source which states that the Caucasian people, particularly Georgians and Armenians, have a common ancestor. Furthermore, it contains an account by a French botanist, Turnepore, contradicting the commonly accepted idea of the unabated tolerance of the Georgians:

There are Orthodox and Gregorian churches in the city. There is also a Mosque in the fortress, however, a muezzin would never dare to call the believers to prayer: people would immediately stone him.

It is important to note that since the introduction of the reform, the role of the textbook has not decreased, but rather increased:

*Recently, I started following the textbook very closely, because, according to the new methodology students have to mainly work with the text.*¹³⁹

Another teacher also mentioned that, when using the new textbooks, she does not skip any of the chapters, i.e. follows the textbook closely. However, she does skip some exercises and activities.¹⁴⁰ This means that teachers need further training in skills enabling to use the freedom given by the reform.

¹³⁶ The criterion for translating excerpts from these textbooks was the exact mentioning of minorities.

¹³⁷ [Unauthorized translation of textbook in Georgian] Paata Ramishvili, *Introduction to History (for the 10th grade)*, Tbilisi: Diogene, 2006.

¹³⁸ [Unauthorized translation of textbook in Georgian] Zurab Kiknadze, Lela Pataridze, Mzia Surguladze, and Tamar Uzunashvili, *History (for the 10th grade)*, Tbilisi: Logos Press, 2006.

¹³⁹ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁴⁰ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

5.4. The Prospective Role of Minorities in the Reform

Ministry official Zedginidze has implied that ethnic minorities should be included in the history curriculum. However, this has not been done yet. In the 9th grade, the curriculum will deal separately with Georgian history, and the plan is to include minority issues at this point. Leading officials at the ministry have agreed to start a discussion on the inclusion of minority groups in the curriculum this year – before they start work on the relative textbooks. Ministry representatives do not want to force textbook authors to include these issues, but they want to invite national (Georgian) and foreign experts to discuss them and generate some ideas. Thus different parties – such as teachers and university professors – would be involved; they would discuss not only minority issues but also general issues concerning nationalism.¹⁴¹

Another ministry representative, Akhvlediani, certified that minority issues will already be covered in the 8th grade, because its curriculum will cover the significant topic of the Caucasus, meaning that Armenians and Azerbaijani will be included. He also believes that minorities should be given more room in future textbooks. However, Akhvlediani is aware of the differences between the wishes of the policymakers and those of the textbook authors:

*The situation with respect to the role of minorities in Georgian history should be improved. Not only what the policymakers say but also what the textbook authors will be able to do is crucial.*¹⁴²

In fact, one of the possible 8th grade textbook authors, Professor Anchabadze (who has worked extensively on Abkhaz-Georgian history and reconciliation), is not optimistic about minority inclusion at this point. He said that they will mainly write about conflicts in world history, and, as far as he knows, Georgian minority issues, which are the most complicated topics, will be postponed until the 12th grade.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, Reisner doubts “the readiness to seriously include minorities in the history of Georgia”.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, teacher and teacher trainer D.D. from Akhalkalaki (Samtskhe-Javakheti region) believes that Armenian history, i.e. minority history, is already included in the curriculum, because “the curriculum contains world history and that means that there is everything.”¹⁴⁵

Textbook author Tsira Chikvaidze believes that the issue of inclusion of minorities depends on the author. She suggests that when using the thematic approach, it is easier to include minorities. Yet, at the same time, there is a danger in this approach because the focus is on great civilizations. She expressed an awareness of how sensitive one should be when dealing with history:

History is one of those subjects that should be presented in a very careful way. One should not be one-sided, should not create an image of the enemy, and one should not develop a negative attitude toward various nations and various cultures. In order to do this, when

¹⁴¹ Giorgi Zedginidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹⁴² Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁴³ Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹⁴⁴ Oliver Reisner, Personal interview, 6 October 2006.

¹⁴⁵ D.D. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

*writing a textbook, the most important thing for me is to find the common [features]. This way, students making comparisons will also find the unifying elements.*¹⁴⁶

Chikvaidze's colleague, Nino Kighuradze, is also aware of the fact that minorities are not included in Georgian history textbooks, and that this might offend an Armenian or Azeri student. "One Azeri person I know blamed me personally – why did you not write about us, Azerbaijani, in your book about world history?"¹⁴⁷

All this leads us to conclude that the issue of minority integration in the history curriculum is like a hot potato that everybody wants to get rid of! The reformers are aware that minority inclusion is part of a European model of history teaching, yet, implementation of this plan is still unclear.

¹⁴⁶ Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

6. The Teaching of History in Minority Schools

The Georgians we interviewed in Tbilisi believe that minority schools (including Russian ones) do not teach the history of Georgia. They think they prefer not to use Georgian history textbooks that are translated into the minority languages, but rather those sent from their respective countries.¹⁴⁸ Georgian respondents often emphasized the situation in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. They worry that in these schools students there are taught that Javakheti is a part of Armenia, and they believe that:

*In the Samtskhe-Javakheti region the attitude is that it is not Georgia, it is part of Armenia, or – if not Armenia, then just simply their country.*¹⁴⁹

During our interviews with minority school teachers and parents in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, some of these statements were found to be only partly true, while others were found not to be true at all. Before discussing the findings of the interviews, it should be stressed that the teaching of history in minority schools is in the pre-reform stage.

None of the minority respondents said that history of Georgia should not be studied, but they expressed the view that Georgian history and the history of their kin country, as well as world history, are all equally important. For example, one Armenian parent said:

*If we live in Georgia, we should know its history. There is nothing difficult in it. [...] It is very important that, first of all, my daughter should know the history of Georgia. Because we live in Georgia, she has to know the history of Georgia. She has to know Armenian history because she is Armenian. She has to know world history because it is important for every person. In textbooks local history is addressed, but very little. This should also be a part of history studies.*¹⁵⁰

Almost all minority respondents used the wording found in the first sentence of this quotation. This means that ethnic minorities in Georgia still feel attached to Georgia. An Azeri history teacher even stressed that the territorial integrity of every state should always be supported: “This is always on my mind when I am teaching history.”¹⁵¹

Only in two cases did the respondents tell us that the history of Georgia was not being studied in the recent past. The Georgian teacher from Akhaltsikhe said that Armenians in Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe used to study only Armenian history - and no Georgian history at all, or they just pretended to do so. They did not teach according to the Georgian curriculum. She said that to legitimize the situation, schools were allowed to teach the history of Armenia as an optional subject,¹⁵² and that, obviously, since then Armenian schools have Georgian history among other subjects. One Azeri parent told us that in Kvemo Kartli too the teaching of Georgian

¹⁴⁸ Tsira Chikvaidze, Personal interview, 4 October 2006.; Nino Kighuradze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁴⁹ Levan Akhvlediani, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁵⁰ E.E. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁵¹ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁵² G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

history at school is comparatively recent.¹⁵³ Probably it was started when the textbooks were translated into the Azeri language.

Armenian schools in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region have students studying three separate kinds of history – world history, Georgian history and Armenian history, as additional, optional lessons. This is not practiced in all schools, and the number of lessons varies. In one of the Armenian schools in Akhalkalaki the number of Armenian history lessons this year decreased.¹⁵⁴ The situation in Azeri schools in Kvemo Kartli is different – their teaching of history consists of just two parts – world history and Georgian history. Several Azeri respondents stressed that there is a desire and need to learn some Azeri history, yet they are not allowed to teach it. They said they were not aware that Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti are allowed to study the history of Armenia.¹⁵⁵

In regard to history textbooks, Georgian history is studied from Georgian textbooks that are translated into the respective languages. In Azeri schools in Marneuli, world history is also studied from books published in Georgia, and translated into the Azeri language.¹⁵⁶ However, these textbooks are only for the 6th and 7th grade, thus in later grades they again use books sent from Azerbaijan. Differences between the two curricula are creating some problems. An Azeri teacher sadly exclaimed: “They [the authorities] are not even interested in what we are studying. We are left alone.”¹⁵⁷

Armenian world history textbooks sent by the Armenian government do not fit with the Georgian curriculum (program). Thus teachers in Armenian schools, according to parents, “do not know how to select the material, how to present the history. Teachers themselves are confused.”¹⁵⁸ Armenian textbooks are used in Samtskhe-Javakheti both for teaching world history and Armenian history. However, sometimes there is a shortage of books. In one school Armenian history is studied without any textbooks (or in an entire school there may be only 2–3 textbooks that were published in Armenia), teachers simply teach students from their notes.¹⁵⁹

One Armenian history teacher evaluates Georgian history textbooks as too bulky. “Textbooks for the 7th and 8th grades are acceptable and comfortable to use; however, for older students – they contain too much information that students will not be able to learn.” She expressed a similar opinion about the world history textbooks sent from Armenia, she disliked them. “Earlier we used Russian textbooks – they were more accessible to the students. Their language was simpler.”¹⁶⁰

None of minority school teachers assessed the curriculum itself as too overloaded or too Georgian, while some parents, especially Armenian parents in Samtskhe-Javakheti, became very emotional when talking about the problems in the teaching of history in schools. The most critical words about the teaching of history were expressed by two parents in Akhalkalaki: “The teaching of history is dead!” They

¹⁵³ H.H. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁵⁴ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁵⁵ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.; K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁵⁶ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.; J.J. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁵⁷ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁵⁸ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁵⁹ E.E. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁶⁰ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

mentioned that conflicting versions in Armenian and Georgian textbooks are disturbing (yet their children prefer the Armenian textbook versions). They expressed a wish for one history, accepted by both sides, and written by both Armenian and Georgian historians.¹⁶¹

Azeri parents too dislike the history lessons, mainly because they require a lot of memorization. "Compared to geography – history is less visual."¹⁶² Another Azerbaijani mother whose twins attend the 6th grade said:

History lessons do not make strong impressions on them. They do not especially like history. I do not know why. It is all explained as a fairy tale, and still they do not like it. [...] Home assignments usually involve writing down years from the text (which year what kind of war took place, what countries were involved), and memorizing them. They have to memorize names of kings. History is difficult and boring for young students (5th and 6th grade). It should be more visual, they should organize more field trips in order to make it interesting for children.¹⁶³

To promote interest in history and improve the teaching of history several parents (both Armenian and Azeri) suggested methodological innovations. For example:

History should not be taught in lectures; they will have to find other methods to make history more interesting. I wish that children would develop some interest in history. [...] They have to learn the history of their nation and the state where they live as well as the history of their region and community. I myself know very little about our local history. If there were credible books on local history, I would be interested to read them myself.¹⁶⁴

Another parent requested reform in the teaching of history:

The history of Georgia should be made easier. Textbooks should present the most important issues, not the entire history from the very beginning to the end – who went where, etc. The most important thing is that the child can make sense of it. If the textbook is complicated, nobody wants to read it. Present textbooks are too complicated.¹⁶⁵

Minority school teachers were hesitant to talk about including minority issues in history. For example, our question, "Do you have time to include other ethnic groups in your teaching?" was answered by "Let's not talk about politics!"¹⁶⁶ Another teacher, in response to a similar question started to talk of controversial issues not related to her own ethnicity. She said that she dislikes the textbook approach toward the Sovietization of Georgia. She evaluated this as anti-Russian tendencies. "One should not do this! (*He nađo!*) Why [is it needed]? It all is history, facts which

¹⁶¹ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁶² H.H. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁶³ J.J. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁶⁴ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁶⁵ F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁶⁶ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

happened. Let us allow children themselves to conclude if it was good or bad.”¹⁶⁷ Only one history teacher really dared to complain: “Azeri people are not included there as aborigines¹⁶⁸ in these history textbooks. Minorities are not adequately covered. We are also inhabitants of Georgia.”¹⁶⁹

In regard to the reform, both parents and teachers of minority schools have minimal information. One very illustrative answer concerning the reform was given by an Azeri teacher: “Ask these questions after one year – then we will have an opinion!”¹⁷⁰ Also, there are some significant differences between the regions regarding implementation of the reform. For example, we heard that in Akhaltsikhe students are already assessed by a 10-point system,¹⁷¹ while in Marneuli they will not start a 10-point system until the pilot program classes begin.

Parents usually said that they are aware of the reform, though they currently do not have much information about it. They are waiting for the next textbooks in order to understand it, they have heard that teachers are having in-service training programs. One Armenian parent expressed support of the reform and said she likes it (though she has hardly any information about it). She did not know anything about opposition to the reform in the community or in Armenia.¹⁷² Another Armenian mother clearly said that she cannot comment on the reform as she has very little information about it.¹⁷³ An Azeri mother who is also a teacher said that she likes the reform, particularly the new 10-point assessment system. Yet she also stressed that she lacks information on the reform.¹⁷⁴ Another parent (who at the same time is also a teacher) expects that after the reform teaching will become more interesting because it will include practical activities.¹⁷⁵

In other sources, it was mentioned that the Armenian-speaking population particularly fears the Georgian language becoming the language of instruction for history and geography, which is a part of the reform as well.¹⁷⁶ However, none of our respondents mentioned this when they were asked about the reform. Only after we asked the specific question about the language issue, they all agreed that their students would have difficulties learning Georgian history in the Georgian language, if this transition takes place. They claimed that this process should be gradual. “A quick change would create huge protests and cause indignation on the part of parents.”¹⁷⁷ A teacher at an Azeri school said that the teaching of history in Georgian would be impossible – even they, the teachers do not have sufficient command of the Georgian language.¹⁷⁸ Another teacher mentioned the language problem as well: “In regard to the reform I heard that [...] history is going to be taught in the Georgian

¹⁶⁷ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁶⁸ The respondent used exactly the term ‘aborigines’, meaning ‘autochthonous’ or ‘indigenous’.

¹⁶⁹ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁷⁰ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁷¹ E.E. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁷² E.E. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁷³ F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁷⁴ H.H. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁷⁵ J.J. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Britta Korth, Arnold Stepanian, and Marina Muskhelishvili, *Language Policy in Georgia: with a focus on the education system*, Geneva: Cimera, April 2005, p. 37.

¹⁷⁷ F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

¹⁷⁸ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

language. I am curious – history of Georgia or also world history. What will happen to us, those who do not know any Georgian? We have just started to study Georgian. Will we be replaced?”¹⁷⁹ This statement once again demonstrates that, in general, information about the reform is very fragmented, and some history teachers have not even heard about the integration of subjects. During interviews teachers kept asking us questions about the reform!

Teacher training is problematic as teachers at minority schools have no command of the Georgian language. The implication is that only those minority teachers with appropriate Georgian knowledge will be admitted to teacher training sessions in the future. They would transfer the knowledge gained to their schools.¹⁸⁰

Teacher training, mainly organized by various NGOs, also takes place in the regions, yet it is not sufficient. This is what an Armenian teacher from Akhalkalaki told us:

*I have participated in teacher training seminars for civics and one for history where they introduced us to the new teaching methods. I have tried these methods, yet in history lessons I have not succeeded. Only once in the civics lesson where I used these new methods was it a real success. At the same time, I understood the sense of the method – but only when I succeeded, did I comprehend it. [...] Some methods I am able to use in my teaching because they are very accessible. For example, the ‘Mind Map’ method I use when I explain a topic. In the use of other methods I have failed.*¹⁸¹

This means that teachers need more subject-specific training. Similar problems were also stressed by teachers in Kvemo Kartli. One teacher said: “I work using old methods (*no-ცნაობა*), but I have also included some new methods. Not all of these methods that I [recently] learned are relevant to the teaching of history.”¹⁸²

Despite the unsatisfactory training and shortage of knowledge in regard to the reform, minority school teachers seem open-minded and self-critical. Some of their ideas correspond to the reform’s ideas:

*I believe there can be various interpretations or evaluations of events. Students themselves must come to a conclusion, I as a teacher do not tell them what is good and what is bad. We are not familiar with such methods [i.e. that allow various interpretations]. I am eager to learn this new method [repeats twice] and how to use these new methods in history lessons. I do not have a chance to learn. It is also our fault that our educational process has fallen behind – that everything – all our methods are old-fashioned. The methods that I learned at the university [more than 8 years ago] are outdated.*¹⁸³

Although the reform has hardly reached minority schools, some of the teachers are already asking students to evaluate historical events on their own. Also other

¹⁷⁹ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁸⁰ Britta Korth, Arnold Stepanian, and Marina Muskhelishvili, *Language Policy in Georgia: with a focus on the education system*, p. 44.

¹⁸¹ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁸² K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁸³ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

innovations, such as the use of sources (extracts from chronicles, documents illustrating famous personalities), are occasionally utilized in minority schools.¹⁸⁴

The only information about the reform for minority teachers is provided in teacher training seminars. Teachers who will have to start the trials of the new textbooks in this school year have not seen them yet.¹⁸⁵ As an Azeri pilot program teacher explained, they have had only two teacher training seminars. Training takes place in the Russian language, yet trainers also know a little bit of the Azeri language. Her comprehension of the reform after these training sessions was quite impressive: “Now the teacher is not the main source of information any more. Verbal presentation is not central either. There will be more group work. It is important that everyone participates. It is also important that the teacher talks less, and that students answer more. Discussions should be part of class activities. The 10-point grading system will be introduced.” Yet, she had no idea about the content of the new curriculum as she has not yet seen the textbooks and the standards herself (because they had not been translated and published at the time of interview). It is clear that pilot programs cannot be started as planned.¹⁸⁶ They will start teaching from the old textbooks and continue until they receive the new ones.¹⁸⁷

The attitudes of non-pilot school teachers towards the reform are very positive: “I also wanted very much to attend the teacher training courses provided for pilot school teachers.” When told that changes will take place in all schools next year, the teacher expressed surprise and disbelief.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁸⁵ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.; J.J. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁸⁶ It is very likely that the same happens in the Georgian pilot program schools, because at least one textbook writing project for the 8th grade was started at the time when the trial was supposed to begin. (Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.)

¹⁸⁷ I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

¹⁸⁸ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

7. History-Related Ethnic Tension

Tension between minority communities and the central Georgian authorities has increased recently. However, it is difficult to evaluate whether the Georgian and minority populations in general consider them as significant. The main problem is that ethnic Georgians fear further separatism while minorities fear assimilation. Recent armed conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia have not created a favorable climate for discussions about greater autonomy of the regions inhabited by minority groups. At the same time, there is a certain indifference on the part of the ethnic Georgians towards Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities. The two ethnic Georgians we interviewed, as well as respondents in other surveys, did not see any serious problems in relations with Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities. For many ethnic Georgians it appears to be normal if ethnic minorities are supported by their kin states. Thus, Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Georgia develop a sense of belonging to Armenia and Azerbaijan, respectively.¹⁸⁹ According to international observers, the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli are considered to be risk zones and areas of concern. Comparing these two regions, the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti is more sensitive than that in Kvemo Kartli.¹⁹⁰ The regions are characterized by social inertia, or a low level of participation in the public and political life of the country.

The general impression is that people want to convince themselves, and others, that there are no conflicts. Many of our respondents stressed that there are no problems and, if we mentioned certain facts, they said it was an exaggeration, or even a joke, and one should not take it seriously.¹⁹¹ For example, Guranda Chelidze, Georgian professor of history from Akhaltsikhe, said:

Both Georgians and Armenians constantly talk of how peacefully they have always lived together in the past. [...] We are a tolerant country where so many ethnic groups coexist. [...] Relationships among these groups are very friendly. [...] No ethnic groups in Georgia (Armenians and Azeri) are experiencing problems [...]. These groups always stress [...] that in the past we have had a lot of common [experiences] and very friendly relationships.¹⁹²

At the same time, some interviewees (even those who told us that there is no interethnic tension) mentioned several problems. For example, some Georgians have heard that the Armenian history textbooks used in Armenian schools misrepresent Georgian history or that minority students have problems due to insufficient proficiency in the Georgian language.¹⁹³ Furthermore, some of the people who insisted that there are no conflicts later talked of very serious problems. Chelidze said:

¹⁸⁹ Britta Korth, Arnold Stepanian, and Marina Muskhelishvili, *Language Policy in Georgia: with a focus on the education system*, p. 40.

¹⁹⁰ Britta Korth, Arnold Stepanian, and Marina Muskhelishvili, *Language Policy in Georgia: with a focus on the education system*, p. 19. See also *Georgia's Armenian and Azeri minorities*, International Crisis Group Report no. 178, November 2006

¹⁹¹ Roin Khavrelishvili, Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

¹⁹² Guranda Chelidze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*.

In our region [Samtskhe-Javakheti] Armenians are using history to claim that this region belongs not to Georgia but to Armenia. [...] This is a very serious issue. [...] They are increasingly implying that this part of Georgia belongs to Armenia. [...] They [Armenians of the region] are under the rule of the Armenian government.¹⁹⁴

These conflicting views suggest that our respondents wanted to hide the problems. Most likely it is not a conscious rejection but a desire to present their country in a positive way. They prefer not to complain.

In one interview, the impression of a warm and tolerant nation was given, but under the surface strong xenophobic and anti-Russian sentiments could be seen. Teacher M.M. said:

We love Russians very much, we love everyone. We are all Christians praying to one God. [...]. Georgians [...] always conduct themselves in a way that is better for the guest. And Russians have always misused this phenomenon, [...] because they like it here. [...] I had a guest who [...] said that he preferred Georgia to all other countries [...] He felt at home here. This is how all foreigners feel about Georgia.¹⁹⁵

This does not mean that all Georgians would agree with this statement, yet it is typical that non-Georgians (i.e. ethnic minorities) are considered to be guests and neighbors. This attitude towards non-Georgians as guests (who are warmly received, yet at the same time it is hinted that they should not misuse this hospitality¹⁹⁶) was well-known as early as the 19th century. At the same time it demonstrates Georgian attitudes towards their own country as a very special place – a kind of paradise that everyone wants to own. Furthermore, this statement shows that of all the ‘foreigners’ Christians are preferred and somehow Russians are among those who have particularly misused the hospitality of the Georgians. Although the attitude towards the Russians is not a focus of this paper, there are strong anti-Russian sentiments in Georgia,¹⁹⁷ and these feelings also play a role in Georgian relations with Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Often the reason for any interethnic tension is found in Russia, in the Russian military presence in Georgia, and even in their secret services.¹⁹⁸

7.1. Armenians and Georgians (Samtskhe-Javakheti)

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region is an artificial formation of the historical region Javakheti and Samtskhe. The Armenians settled in Javakheti in two major immigration waves: 1828–1829 and 1915. During the Soviet period, Javakheti used to be a restricted access border zone and this was the beginning of the region’s isolation. Yet this isolation is diminishing, things are not like they were : “earlier

¹⁹⁴ Guranda Chelidze, Personal interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁹⁵ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Levan Giginishvili, *Reformed Historical Textbooks in Georgia: changing patterns and the issue of minorities in the Georgian history*, Unpublished paper (2006), p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, *Report on History and the Teaching of History in Georgia and Abkhazia*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁸ For example, it is mentioned by Гига Чихладзе, “Кому Борчалы, а кому Квемо Картли [То whom Borchali and to whom Квемо Kartli]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.; Ираклий Чихладзе, “Холодное лето Джавахети [The cold summer of Javakheti]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2006, № 7.; Anzor Totadze, *Anti-Georgian Hysteria of Armenian Pseudo-scholars*, Tbilisi: Universal, 2006, pp. 5, 8, 20, 40.

when we used to go [from this region] to Tbilisi they did not perceive us [both Georgians and Armenians] as citizens of the same country.”¹⁹⁹ Still the infrastructure (roads) is so bad that the 90-kilometer trip from Akhalkalaki to Akhaltsikhe takes two hours.

In 1988 an organization called ‘Javakh’ was established as a popular front for local Armenians and claimed greater autonomy for Javakheti.²⁰⁰ This organization used to be popular during the early 1990s. When this organization disintegrated, its former activists established the new political movement ‘Virk’²⁰¹ (led by David Rstakyan). ‘Virk’ has a significant number of supporters, yet it is not officially registered as Georgian legislation does not allow the establishment of political parties based on ethnic and/or regional considerations.

Although the autonomy of Javakheti is not supported by the Armenian government (although there is significant Armenian influence in Javakheti on the cultural level) and Armenia is attempting to maintain a good relationship with Georgia, some groups in Armenia do support the Javakheti’s separatist claims. For example, on April 14, 2005, there was a demonstration in front of the Georgian embassy in Yerevan.²⁰² University students supported Armenians in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region by carrying slogans such as “Georgia implements the policy of Armenian assimilation” and “We condemn Georgian Nazism”. Demonstrations were preceded by meetings held in Alhalkalaki which demanded Javakheti’s autonomy as well as that it join Armenia.²⁰³

However, according to the data of the survey consisting of over 40 interviews and five focus group discussions, in Javakheti itself there is no support for separation from Georgia, and only a small minority of people are in favor of full autonomy. It is worth mentioning that among Georgians there is a wide-spread belief that the Russian military forces are promoting unrest in Javakheti in order to maintain their military presence.²⁰⁴

One Georgian teacher from Akhaltsikhe (Samtskhe-Javakheti) describes the situation as follows:

There has always been tension because Georgians are in the minority and the majority is formed by other ethnicities. No, actually it began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ‘Javakh’ organization has made claims for autonomy several times, and this is very unpleasant for Georgians. But conflicts as such are non-existent, most likely because they do not have support from Armenia. Yet Russian troops are supporting them! Armenians and Georgians have had arguments about churches. It is an unpleasant fact that on the ruins of a Georgian church they [Armenians] have built their church, and then they believe it is theirs. Autonomy should not be given, and it was

¹⁹⁹ For example, Roin Khavrelishvili, Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

²⁰⁰ In regard to autonomy, it is always requested just for Javakheti, not for entire Samtskhe-Javakheti.

²⁰¹ This is the medieval Armenian name for Georgia.

²⁰² <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-23285.html> (18.12.2005)

²⁰³ Anzor Totadze, *Anti-Georgian Hysteria of Armenian Pseudo-scholars*, p. 20.

²⁰⁴ Jonathan Wheatley, *Obstacles Impeding the Regional Integration of Javakheti Region of Georgia*, pp. 13–15, 30, 31, 35.

*wrong when Ossetia and Abkhazia were given autonomy. It is wrong. It can create another hot spot in Georgia.*²⁰⁵

While some of the most radical Armenians describe the present Georgian policies in the region as the “white genocide” of Armenians,²⁰⁶ for the parents we interviewed in Akhalkalaki there are no big disagreements:

B.B.: Everything that happens here is exaggerated. There are no ethnic conflicts. For politicians it is important and to their advantage to preserve the impression that this is a controversial point. Georgian politicians often talk senselessly using expressions such as, “You are immigrants, if you do not like it here – leave”. This should not happen. They should know that – if we have arrived here, we have lived here for a long time. [NB! This was said by an ethnic Georgian!]

*A.A.: Earlier they always said that we were just visitors, guests, “if you do not like here, go back to your Armenia or to Russia.” Now that time has gone. Such language is not used anymore. The situation nowadays is improving, bit by bit.*²⁰⁷

When the situation in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region is described, it often starts with conflicting interpretations of history. However, it is considered as a minor problem, compared to other issues.²⁰⁸

Our interviewees mentioned several historical issues dividing Armenians and Georgians: for example, local heritage monuments that each ethnicity considers theirs, Armenians believe that they exclusively represent the descendants of Urartu. The issue of ‘wrong’ Armenian maps and textbooks where Georgia as a state does not exist was also repeatedly stressed.²⁰⁹ Yet, the general public is not especially interested in history. The only discussion in society regarding history concerns the wish that children should study Armenian history.²¹⁰

Repeatedly our respondents touched upon the issue of the invention of the alphabet, i.e. the belief that Georgian writing was invented by Armenians. Armenians (non-historians) were very serious about it. Two out of three interviewed Armenian parents talked of this issue in a very passionate way. For example:

I am no historian but – who invented it? They should write down the name of the Georgian person who invented the writing. Who invented it? Do they know themselves? There should be some truth in what is written [in textbooks]. If this were not true, it would have been expelled from history long ago. Obviously there was a consensus

²⁰⁵ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

²⁰⁶ Гю Рионели, “Нет катастрофы, из которой нельзя было бы найти выход [There is no catastrophe from which there is not any exit]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.

²⁰⁷ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

²⁰⁸ Гига Чихладзе, “Проблемы Самцхе-Джавахеги: реальные и мифические [Problems of Samtske-Javakheti region: real and mythical]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.

²⁰⁹ For example, G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006. However, Professor Anchabadze claimed that all historical maps (Georgian, Azerbaijani and Azeri) are overlapping. “Each nation desires to be influential. [...] Historical maps are the most vivid example of these contradictions.” (Giorgi Anchabadze, Personal interview, 12 October 2006.)

²¹⁰ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

*[..] – historians should know. Now you cannot change history. It was created earlier, before us.*²¹¹

This attitude is offensive at least to some Georgians. Yet, historians in Javakheti tried to convince us that the story about Georgian writing being invented by Armenians is simply a joke.²¹² The reason is that Armenians know the name of the person who invented their writing, but Georgians don't.

In Akhalkalaki, parents of both Georgian and Armenian ethnicity clearly articulated that these conflicting histories are impeding the teaching of history:

A.A.: My child does not especially like history because in Armenian textbooks they write one thing, in Georgian – something else.

B.B.: History creates a lot of difficulties. Many problems appear when for example a Georgian language teacher explains a period and mentions that Georgians used to live here [in Javakheti], but then in Armenian textbooks it is not written like that. [...] Children regard it all with distrust, they themselves cannot find out – how and what [has happened]. Their attitude towards history – it is all a fairy-tale. [...] The children say: “First, you yourselves [adults] should find some agreement, and only then teach us.”

A.A.: They do not take history seriously. They do not know what to believe.

*A.A. and B.B. [both together complementing each other]: They simply do not have any interest in history. If Armenian TV shows historical programs, they just do not watch it, they are not interested. They barely read books, if at all.*²¹³

One Armenian history teacher in Akhalkalaki made various confusing statements about these contradictions. First, she said: “Textbooks contradict each other – they give contradictory data and facts, and one-sided argumentation.” But later she said: “I have not met any disagreement between Georgian and Armenian views. Once at school they found some inaccuracies in a Georgian geography textbook, so they decided to use Armenian textbooks.” When we asked her if it was difficult for students to handle two contradictory histories (Georgian and Armenian), the response was that she has not noticed any difficulties.²¹⁴

A Georgian teacher who teaches Armenian students in the Russian track in Akhaltsikhe told us that there is a significant “difference between my students’ knowledge and the information I teach them. Armenian textbooks and maps give very different interpretations. [...] Usually Armenian students do not argue, they would not demonstrate that they have opposing views, and they do not bring their controversial sources to the school.” In cases where arguments do arise, the teacher tries to convince students that they are ‘wrong,’ yet she admits this is not easy:

²¹¹ F.F. (Arm.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

²¹² C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.; Roin Khavrelishvili, Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

²¹³ A.A. (Arm.) and B.B. (Geo.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

²¹⁴ C.C. (Arm.), Personal interview, 9 October 2006.

*I tell them that they must know and love their history and language, but they also have to respect the history of the country where they live and where they were born. We have common roots with Armenians but somehow my students are not eager to accept this - I am telling them something very different. Whether they believe me or not, is another question. That is their private affair, whether they believe me or not.*²¹⁵

A recent book by Anzor Totadze, "Anti-Georgian Hysteria of Armenian Pseudo-Scholars," illustrates the conflict. It angrily discusses the misinterpretations of Armenians, and at the same time promotes anti-Armenian sentiments. All our interviewees paid no attention to such discussions and tried to convince us that this is not a serious issue. However, if the articles mentioned in the book are translated and published in Georgian newspapers, they might become a catalyst for more history-based tension between Armenians and Georgians.

Some of the Georgians interviewed expressed a desire to gain more knowledge about the history of Armenia, of their teaching of history as well as of their history textbooks.²¹⁶ It suggests that Georgians are aware of the limited information they have and probably see that learning would help to achieve a better understanding.

²¹⁵ G.G. (Geo.), Personal interview, 10 October 2006.

²¹⁶ L.L. (Geo.) and M.M. (Geo.), Personal interview, 12 October 2006.

7.2. Azerbaijanis and Georgians (Kvemo Kartli)

Kvemo Kartli is very near the Georgian capital. Ethnic Georgians occupy the majority of the administrative positions there. Compared to Samtskhe-Javakheti, the Kvemo Kartli region is more mixed and the population is less politically mobilized; therefore, interethnic tensions in general, and history-related tension in particular, is less apparent. There are even some Azeri representatives of the region who say that a broad variety of socioeconomic problems exist, yet there are no interethnic problems.²¹⁷

The ethnic tension between Azeri and Georgians increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the government of Zviad Gamsahurdia publicly discussed the superior Azerbaijani birthrate. The idea spread that if the Azerbaijani population continued to increase at the current rate, the independence of Georgia would be endangered. The slogan “Georgia for Georgians” became popular. Thus, since then Azeris have been experiencing some discrimination – they are not well represented in the local governments of Kvemo Kartli (while Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti are). As a result of these demographic battles, the Azeri people do not believe official statistics regarding their population. There is an unofficial estimate that the number of Azerbaijanis living in Georgia has reached half a million, compared to the official 285,000.²¹⁸

Some radical and even separatist sentiments were evident in the 1990s in the Borchali district. Again, ethnic Georgians believe that the Russians encouraged the Azeris in the Kvemo Kartli region to resist the Georgian government.

One sign of current tension became apparent recently when anti-Azeri leaflets spread throughout Kvemo Kartli. The message, written in Russian, was an order to Azerbaijanis to leave Georgia. Later investigation showed that these leaflets were spread by the Azeri people. Yet, initially, the Georgian and Azeri media speculated about it being the work of the Russian or Armenian special services.²¹⁹

Information about history-related disagreements is extremely rare. Mostly they concern the issue of whether Azeris are genuine inhabitants of the region or not.²²⁰ Obviously, to convince everyone that this region is genuine Georgian territory, Azerbaijani village names are replaced by Georgian ones. Another newspaper article informed us that in the Marneuli district the monument to the 12th century Azeri poet, Nezami Ganjavi, had been profaned.²²¹ In other words, there is some evidence in Kvemo Kartli of history-related tension between the Azerbaijanis and Georgians, but this is not strongly manifested.

Our interviewees gave very little information about history-related problems. One stressed the opposite – in the course of history Georgians and Azerbaijanis helped

²¹⁷ *Кавказский Акцент* [Caucasian Accent], 2006, № 2.

²¹⁸ Ираклий Чихладзе, “Азербайджанцы Грузии – проблемы существуют, но не решаются [Azerbaijani of Georgia – problems exist but are not solved]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 6, стр. 4. Гига Чихладзе, “Кому Борчалы, а кому Квемо Картли [To whom Borchali and to whom Kvemo Kartli]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.

²¹⁹ *Многонациональная Грузия* [Multi-Ethnic Georgia], 2006, № 9, стр. 2.

²²⁰ Гига Чихладзе, “Кому Борчалы, а кому Квемо Картли [To whom Borchali and to whom Kvemo Kartli]”, In *Кавказский Акцент*, 2005, № 19.

²²¹ *Многонациональная Грузия* [Multi-Ethnic Georgia], 2006, № 5, стр. 2.

each other a lot.²²² Teachers said that cases where students brought information from their families (about territorial grants from kings, for example) into the history classroom, that is, information that did not correspond to official information, were rare.²²³

The only historical fact mentioned during our interviews as a disagreement between Azeris and Georgians dated from 1138, when the Georgians took Ganja city. Georgians describe it as a great victory, while the Azerbaijan historians say that the reason for their defeat was an earthquake (which totally destroyed the city), and not the military might of the Georgians.²²⁴ We asked teacher I.I. how she explains this to her students. She said: "I am neutral. I tell them how it is in the book." When we challenged her, suggesting that some students might know about the earthquake, she would not explain what her reaction would be.

²²² I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

²²³ *Ibidem*.

²²⁴ K.K. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.; I.I. (Az.), Personal interview, 11 October 2006.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The data for this research is limited, thus it is not possible to draw broader conclusions or make generalizations. However, I would like here to reflect on the research topic and the processes involved, as well as to put forward some suggestions for improving the history teaching in Georgia in general, and more specifically, in respect to the implementation of the current reform of history teaching in minority schools and minority inclusion in history curricula.

In the future, it would be worthwhile working on the history-related tension in Russian-Georgian relations as well, as these tensions are very acute and also play a role in the relationships between Georgians and the Armenian and Azeri minorities.

Concerning the research method, focus group discussions would have been more valuable for the research goals, because individually minority representatives seemed to be hesitant to express their views. This was evident in CIMERA's workshop held in Tbilisi on December 12, 2006. There a group of Armenian history teachers clearly articulated their negative attitude towards Georgian history textbooks. They criticized the contents as well as the low quality of translations. None of our interviewees dared to express their views individually in this way. Such discussions could be broadened still further, thus, a textbook analysis workshop where participants are able to work in-depth on texts could provide important results.

Suggestions regarding implementation of the reform

- As is known from educational policy theory, the implementation of any reform requires several components. One of the crucial aspects is informing society. Thus, in the Georgian case, it would be valuable to distribute small informative booklets about the goals, the means and the process of the reform, in the minority languages as well. Personal visits from Ministry representatives to schools, including minority schools and regional schools would be mutually beneficial. Teachers would learn more about the reform and trust its intentions, they would feel heard, while the reformers would have more direct insight into conditions and current problems.
- Another essential part of educational reform implementation is ongoing teacher training. As our interviewees remarked, subject-specific training is especially significant. Issues which should be especially addressed in teacher training sessions are, first, the existence of different historical interpretations, the validity of which have to be assessed according to their respect for a number of methodological rules. Second, the very aims of the reform should be explained more in detail, showing that it goes beyond simply new teaching methods. Furthermore, teachers should also learn how to develop their own lessons, i.e. how to make use of the freedom provided by the reform, and break with the tradition of considering any information from the textbooks as unquestionable truth. Teacher training in the minority languages is needed, at least in the regions. For this it is necessary to train minority representatives as

teacher trainers. Also, the curriculum of the initial teacher training should correspond to the requirements of the reform.

- Because similar reforms in history teaching have taken place in other post-Soviet countries in the last decade and, because these reforms already have met with failure, backlashes, and even contra-reforms, reformers in Georgia could learn from these experiences. For example, in Latvia the history curricula has been reformed three times in the last 15 years: first national history was taught as a separate subject, then world history and national history were integrated into one subject, and now they have returned to teaching the two histories separately.
- Minority history inclusion in the textbooks might be achieved by paying special attention to the history of the regions in Georgia.

Suggestions regarding textbook development

- In order to achieve minority inclusion in the new history textbooks, it would be valuable to include minority representatives in the authors' groups. If this, for some reason, is not possible, then at least authors of the new textbooks should meet and consult with minority representatives and experts in minority history.
- The new curriculum provides space and freedom for various supplementary textbooks and study units. Special textbooks, source collection, and teacher manuals could be developed on minority history and regional history. Ethnic Georgian respondents expressed interest in such materials too.
- Further research on minority history is needed.
- There should be greater focus on social history – daily life, the personal level, feelings and thoughts of the people – this makes history in general more inclusive.
- Tasks for students should be academically less challenging, and more feasible for their developmental level. It might be interesting to introduce the problems historians cannot solve themselves to students, but, if possible, students should also be given the chance to gain the satisfaction of being able to solve some minor problems themselves.

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