

Encounters of Cultural and Language Policies (The Case Study of Georgia)

Georgia, being a multi-ethnic and consequently multilingual country, exhibits diverse demographic characteristics. According to the 2014 population census by the Georgian Statistical Service, 86.2% of the population comprises ethnic Georgians, while ethnic minorities constitute 13.14%. Among the minorities, Azerbaijani and Armenian populations constitute a significant portion (11%) with compact settlements across different regions, whereas 2% represent smaller ethnic groups with dispersed settlements (Department of Statistics of Georgia). Despite their dispersed settlement, about 96.5% of ethnic minorities are proficient in their mother tongue (Unified Official Language Program, 2021, p. 89), consequently indicating a high degree of ethnic identity and a lower risk of assimilation. However, proficiency in the official language, Georgian, is notably low, especially among compactly settled minorities (Study of Access to Quality Education of Ethnic Minorities, 2022, p. 55).

For a comprehensive integration of ethnic minorities within the titular society, approaches and strategies of cultural policy should be incorporated into the language policy. The presentation aims to explore how cultural policy strategies are incorporated into Georgia's language policy at various levels, using the EU model as a framework. The EU model encompasses Language in Education, Media and Broadcasting, Language Promotion and Preservation, Public Administration and Services, Language Planning and Legislation, Cultural Festivals and Events, Cultural Diplomacy, Support for Language Learning, Cultural and Linguistic Tourism, Digital and Media Platforms, and Intercultural Dialogue.

Various research methods, including qualitative research, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, analysis, and observation, working with sources were employed. The findings revealed the absence of an education strategy tailored to the specific needs of ethnic minorities in Georgia. In schools with submersive programs, despite active teaching strategies, the predominant culture is still emphasized over minority cultures. At the university level, the Georgian language preparatory program at TSU lacks a substantial focus on teaching culture. Additionally, the intercultural sensitivity of school teachers is reported to be low, and multicultural aspects are insufficiently incorporated into school textbooks. The elementary school multilingual teacher program inadequately addresses cultural elements and intercultural education approaches. Additionally, there is a shortage in the provision of training for both teachers and students concerning cultural competencies. In contrast, support for various events, including cultural festivals, is provided to a greater extent.

References:

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