

**Educational Reforms in Georgia:
Past Progress and Future Directions**

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June 28, 2023

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Abstract

This paper examines the current state of education in Georgia, focusing on the challenges faced by the education system and providing concrete policy recommendations. Through an exploration of past progress and contemporary developments, it explores key areas such as regional disparities, educational quality, and federal budget allocation. The paper highlights the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure equitable and sustainable education for all Georgian citizens. The policy recommendations aim to enhance the education system's effectiveness, promote inclusivity, and foster a skilled workforce capable of meeting future demands.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Education plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic development and well-being of a nation. In Georgia, education is considered a fundamental right and a catalyst of progress and has been a federal priority since the early 2000s.¹ Georgia has seen tremendous recent improvement in educational participation and outcomes. The government has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education, including decentralizing school governance, introducing new curricula, investing in school infrastructure, and developing a professional development scheme.² Despite these efforts, there are still challenges to be addressed, such as unequal access to education in rural areas and low student performance on international assessments. The education system faces numerous challenges and inequities that hinder its ability to provide quality education for all citizens. However, Georgia's commitment to educational reform is a positive step towards creating a more prosperous and equitable society. This article aims to assess the current status of education in Georgia, analyze the challenges it faces, and present concrete policy recommendations, based on this analysis, to effectively address these challenges.

1.2 Key Stakeholders

In the development of education reforms in the country of Georgia, various stakeholders play crucial roles in shaping the future of the education system. These stakeholders include government bodies, educators, parents and students, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations.

- Government bodies, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture, plays a central role in formulating policies and implementing reforms. Other relevant governmental bodies include The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), The National Assessment and Examinations Centre (NAEC), The Education Management Information System (EMIS), The

¹ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

² Ibid.

Teacher Professional Development Centre (TPDC), and municipality Education Resource Centers (ERCs).³ These institutions set the direction and priorities for the education system, allocate resources, establish regulatory frameworks, and monitor and evaluate education programs.

- Educators, including teachers and administrators, are essential stakeholders as they are responsible for delivering quality education, implementing educational policy reforms on the ground, providing feedback on policies and reforms, and advocating for educational resources in response to their students' needs.⁴
- Parents and students provide valuable feedback, advocate for their needs, and contribute to the decision-making process through school boards, parent-teacher associations, and student organizations. Their role also includes holding education officials and administrators accountable for quality education.
- NGOs play an essential role in monitoring and evaluating the reforms, advocating for equity and inclusivity, and providing support and resources to improve educational outcomes. These groups can include educational sphere specialists, social design experts, data analysts, etc., which all have individual roles in strengthening education within a nation.
- International organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, offer technical expertise, funding, and best practices to support the reform efforts.

Together, these stakeholders collaborate to create a comprehensive and inclusive education system that meets the needs of all learners in Georgia.

1.3 Role of Education in Nation Building

According to Benedict Anderson (1983), a nation is an imagined community; a community of persons, often anonymous to each other, but who, nevertheless, feel they belong together and to the same community.⁵ Cultural markers might determine the degree of ethnic identity, but for national identity and citizenship, feelings of belonging, attachment, and loyalty to the society as a whole are far more paramount.⁶ These feelings of belonging and loyalty can be enhanced by the press, television broadcasting, and other modern means—notably education. The functional role of education is evident in the dissemination of values of the nation and views of how it should be constructed, the national history, societal ideals, and directions for future development. Education, as a means which reaches the masses, can be very influential in the process of nation-building and national self-definition.

³ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

⁴ Rustavi Public School Administrator, interview by Yasmine Mitaishvili-Rayyis, May 17, 2023, Tbilisi, Georgia

⁵ Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

⁶ Ibid.

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Education builds a society of intelligent citizens, whose members understand not only their individual, but also the public interest, and are conscious of the need to satisfy their individual interests by acting with civic responsibility and in solidarity with other members of society. Further, an educated citizen is also a pillar of resilience and public safety: a person who believes in scientific opinion and can find and process reliable information will be steadfast against propaganda and false news.⁷

2.0 Historical Overview

2.1 Past and Current Policies

Currently, general education in Georgia lasts for 12 years and comprises six years of primary education followed by three ‘Basic’ and three ‘Secondary’ years.⁸ All general education institutions utilize a national curriculum established by the National Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the governmental body responsible for all levels of education, as well as scientific research.⁹

However, the state of education in Georgia following its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 left a lot to be desired.¹⁰ Schools were challenged with crumbling infrastructure, Soviet era textbooks, and teachers’ wages that amount to under \$1 a day.¹¹ The task of the 2004 Georgian government was arduous and demanded more than simply reducing the rampant corruption in university admissions.

In 2005, under the leadership of Education Minister Kakha Lomaia, Georgia passed a Law on General Education, which featured reforms to move away from the Soviet system towards a more decentralized approach, where schools would be empowered to make autonomous decisions.¹² This law included two major decentralizing reforms: the creation of revitalized school boards of trustees equipped with increased authority and the creation of a new system of financial vouchers to enhance parent choice and ensure that schools were financially autonomous.¹³ The Law on General Education also mandated that the Georgian language be the primary language of instruction in all schools in the

⁷ Tchiaberashvili, Zurab. “*Education Needs Changes, Changes Need Educated Society.*” Civil Georgia, January 26, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/522651>.

⁸ Radjabzade, S, and Linn A. (2021), *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/EMI_Report_SouthCaucasus_v2.pdf.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ A notable exception is found in higher education. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) was founded in 1918. Upon its establishment, it was the first and the only educational body of its kind in the Caucasus region. Now, there are over 23,000 students attending at 8 branches across the country.

¹¹ “*Setting Georgia’s Schools Free?*” Transparency International Georgia, June 21, 2010. https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/School%20Reform-ENG_0.pdf.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

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country; it established the Georgian language as a mandatory subject in all schools, and required that all students achieve a certain level of proficiency in the language to graduate.¹⁴

In addition to promoting the Georgian language, the government has also implemented policies aimed at promoting multilingualism within the population. In a deliberate and recent shift away from a former Soviet identity, English is being emphasized as the default second language of 21st-century Georgia.¹⁵ English is now compulsory in all schools from Grade 1 to Grade 12, and the national curriculum for the English language makes reference to listening, reading, writing, and speaking.¹⁶ The aim of the national curriculum, overseen by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, is for school graduates to achieve at least a B1 level in English.¹⁷

The 2005 government also reduced the rampant corruption in the university entrance process by replacing the Soviet system of entrance exams with the Unified National Exams, in a significant reform that is largely considered one of the most successful in the sphere.¹⁸ These exams, which are developed and implemented by the National Assessment and Examinations Centre, create a meritocratic and transparent university entrance process. The score entrants receive on their mandatory and optional exams directly determines the universities they are accepted to, as well as their state funding status. This transformed the equality of access to higher education and quality institutions, as the previously common practices of bribes or exploitation of ‘natsnoboba’ (ნაცნობობა), informal acquaintances networks, to secure a spot at a university were no longer conventional; performance on entrance exams is now the primary factor of consideration.¹⁹

The national goal of internationalization and attainment of international benchmarks is supported by the previous reforms of the 2004 government. In 2005, Georgia became a member of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process), and is a signatory to the Lisbon Convention, establishing full compatibility with European standards of education at all levels of education.²⁰ Diplomas issued by high schools, vocational colleges, and institutes of higher education are recognized by European countries and the U.S. Georgia is also an active participant in EU educational

¹⁴ Van der Wusten, Alexander. (2018). *Spasibo or Thank You? The Shifting Nature of Russian and English in Georgia*. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). <https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/pdf/English-2647.pdf>.

¹⁵ Mitaishvili-Rayyis, Yasmine. “*Vapshe Ara: Attitudes of English Philology Students in Georgia Towards the Russian Language*.” *Online Journal of Humanities*, Volume 7 (2023). ISSN 2346-8149.

¹⁶ Maisuradze, Tamar. (2022). *Russian Language in Georgia: Not Number One*. Jamnews. <https://jam-news.net/russian-language-in-georgia-not-number-one/>

¹⁷ Radjabzade, S, and Linn A. (2021), *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/EMI_Report_SouthCaucasus_v2.pdf.

¹⁸ National Center for Evaluation and Examinations, “*Unified National Exams - General Information*.” November 11, 2016. <https://naec.ge/ge/post/1493>

¹⁹ Aliyev, H. 2014. ‘*The Effects of the Saakashvili Era Reforms on Informal Practices in the Republic of Georgia*’, *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 6(1): 21-35.

²⁰ Radjabzade, S, and Linn A. (2021), *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/EMI_Report_SouthCaucasus_v2.pdf.

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programs. Under the Erasmus+ scheme, Georgia holds 8th place out of 131 partner countries for successful projects.²¹

More recently, during the implementation of the 2017-2021 Education and Science Strategy, reforms were undertaken to increase the availability of early childhood and preschool education, raise the quality of general education, and improve the accessibility and quality of vocational education.²² Within the scope of this strategy, steps were also taken to boost the attractiveness of the teaching profession and strengthen the quality of higher education, research, technology, innovation, and globalization.²³ These steps included the development of a ‘New School Model’ program, which aimed to improve education quality, train educational leaders, and promote school-based professional development and cooperation between teachers,²⁴ and the Regional Development Program (2018-2021) which aimed to address unequal access to higher education.²⁵

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia presented its Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030.²⁶ Within the framework of the ‘Better Education for a Better Future’ project, an element of the 2022-2030 strategy, focus will be placed on the preparation of professional resources based on modern teaching methodology, support of professional development and teacher training programs of higher educational institutions, professional development of school principals and teachers, and sharing of international expertise.²⁷ The strategy aims to foster active participation of professional associations and organizations and academic and civil society in school principals' and teachers' professional development and training programs, including coaching and monitoring programs. Other current projects include the 4-year ‘Better Education for a Better Future’ project, initiated and supported by the Swiss government, which is aimed at increasing the quality of education in Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia, and ‘The English Language Teaching Strategy,’ which was developed with the support of the British Council and aims to improve the competencies of English language teachers in general education.²⁸

²¹ Radjabzade, S, and Linn A. (2021), *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/EMI_Report_SouthCaucasus_v2.pdf.

²² Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

²⁵ Zimmermann, Philipp. “*Protests at Tbilisi State University: Student Housing and Educational Equity in Georgia*.” Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, July 1, 2022. <https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/07/01/protests-tbilisi-state-university-student-housing-and-educational-equity-georgia>.

²⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

2.2 Legislative Frameworks

The language and educational policies in Georgia have important implications for education in the country, and are seen as essential for maintaining the country's national identity and for promoting social cohesion.²⁹ The relevant legislative framework for education includes the following:³⁰

- Constitution of Georgia;
- Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education;
- Law of Georgia on General Education;
- Law of Georgia on Vocational Education;
- Law of Georgia on Higher Education;
- Law of Georgia on Science, Technology, and their Development;
- Other legal acts related to the field.

2.3 Status of Education

The total number of students in general education is projected to reach reach 634.8k by 2024 from the current 592.9k.³¹ Also, 98.4% of school-aged children (between 6-17 years of age) were in school, university, and/or vocational education.³² Further, with a national literacy rate of 99%, above the world average of 91.51%, the status of education in Georgia— upon initial observation— could be classified as excellent.³³ While education in the country is not without its positive aspects and historical improvements, evaluating enrollment and completion data from all levels of education, brings a clearer picture comes into focus, emphasizing core deficiencies and areas for progress.

At the early education stage, 72.3% of preschool-age children are reported to have attended public or private kindergartens in the 2021-2022 school year. The lack of availability of such services in neighborhoods was the highest reported barrier to preschool services (44%).³⁴

²⁹ Nodia, G. (2009). *Components of the Georgian National Idea: an Outline*. Identity Studies in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region Volume 1, pp. 84-101.

³⁰ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

³¹ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

³² *Access To Education*. UNICEF Georgia, April 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/media/8216/file/Access%20to%20Education.pdf>.

³³ Kvakhadze, Irine, Tamta Beroshvili, and Mariam Surmava. Rep. *Higher Education in Georgia*. TBC Capital, November 2022. https://tbccapital.ge/static/file/202211105125-higher-education-in-georgia_november-2022.pdf.

³⁴ Ibid.

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In primary education, the completion rate of almost 100% shows no significant difference by socio-economic groups.³⁵ Further, 90% of children aged 3 to 4 are thought to be developmentally on track in Georgia.³⁶ By region, some disparities are present, though completion rates remain extremely high. At the primary level, Tbilisi has no child out of school, whereas the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region has 3% of children out of school.³⁷ At the lower secondary level, as well, the completion rate is nearly universal. However, only 98% of Azeri children complete lower secondary compared to 100% of ethnically Georgian children, and compared to other regions, Guria's completion rate is the lowest, at 97%.³⁸

The critical bottleneck presents itself at the upper secondary level, where the completion rate is only 66%; an estimated 14,543 children are out of school at the upper secondary level in Georgia.³⁹ Here, regional, economic, and ethnic disparities are stark; in Tbilisi, it is 76%, whereas in the Kakheti region, it is only 42%.⁴⁰ The completion rate among the wealthiest families is twice that of the poorest ones.⁴¹ Further, amongst the ethnic minority groups, the completion rate for Azeri children is particularly low at 33%, while the completion rate for ethnically Georgian children is 69%.⁴²

The declining completion rates continue into tertiary education. In comparison to 12 Eastern European and Former Soviet Union countries with a relatively similar GDP per capita, the gross enrollment rate in higher education places Georgia in 7th position.⁴³ Georgia is far not only from the E.U. average, but also from the top three countries in the sample (Belarus, Ukraine, and Bulgaria). High education enrollment data from 2014-2020 shows that an average of 15,000 places are vacant in Bachelor-level programs annually.⁴⁴ Of the students that are enrolled in bachelor programs, only 65% of students in public institutions and 50% of the students in private institutions manage to graduate within four-years.⁴⁵ The primary reasons for dropouts and delayed graduations are reported to be the

³⁵ Baum, Tina, and Nino Davitashvili. Rep. Edited by Mikheil Nadareishvili. *2020 Georgia Education Fact Sheets*. UNICEF Georgia, 2010. <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FinalGeorgia-Education-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Baum, Tina, and Nino Davitashvili. Rep. Edited by Mikheil Nadareishvili. *2020 Georgia Education Fact Sheets*. UNICEF Georgia, 2010. <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FinalGeorgia-Education-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Kvakhadze, Irine, Tamta Beroshvili, and Mariam Surmava. Rep. *Higher Education in Georgia*. TBC Capital, November 2022. https://tbccapital.ge/static/file/202211105125-higher-education-in-georgia_november-2022.pdf.

⁴⁵ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

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high cost of tertiary education and poor academic result.⁴⁶ Despite low completion rates, the enrollment rate in higher education is optimistic, sustained by increasing household incomes, and rising intakes from older age groups and foreign students.⁴⁷ The gross enrollment rate in higher education is expected to raise to 160.3k by 2024 from the current 152.8k.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

3.0 Challenges

Over the past two decades, Georgia has embarked upon significant educational reform. Key educational metrics have significantly improved as a result of these efforts, including the achievement of nearly universal primary enrollment and a modest improvement in student performance on international assessments.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, despite these advancements, a sizable portion of Georgian students continue to leave school without having mastered basic competencies for life and work.⁵⁰ As disparities between regional and ethnic groups are significant and expanding, equity is also a problem. Moreover, according to nationally representative citizen polls, low quality of education, high costs, and unsatisfactory teacher qualifications were reported as the biggest issues facing the education sector.⁵¹ These problems, as well as several others, are a reflection of broader difficulties in modernizing the teaching profession, using evidence-based decision-making, and amplifying education quality.

3.1 Quality of Education

The issue of low-quality education poses significant challenges and highlights the need for concerted efforts to address these and other shortcomings in the sector. Several factors contribute to the low quality of education in Georgia. Inadequate management, funding, and resource allocation hinder the provision of quality education. Insufficient financial support limits the ability to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified teachers, maintain proper infrastructure, and provide necessary learning materials. This lack of resources compromises the overall educational experience for students, impeding their academic attainment. The repercussions of low-quality education in Georgia are far-reaching; it perpetuates social and economic inequalities by preventing social mobility and diminishing the potential of Georgia's human capital, limiting the nation's economic development and competitiveness on the global stage.

According to 2020 World Bank data, a student in Georgia formally spends 12.9 years in school, but this corresponds to only 8.3 years of quality education.⁵² Further, the Global

⁴⁹ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

⁵⁰ Sakhokia, Natela. Expert Opinion. Edited by April Gordon. *On The Need For Reforming School Education In Georgia*. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2016. <https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/opinion-papers/59-expert-opinion-eng.pdf>.

⁵¹ *Taking Georgians' Pulse: Findings from December 2022 Face to Face Survey*. The Caucasus Research Resource Center Georgia, February 2023. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia_December%202022%20poll_public%20version_ENG_vf.pdf?fbclid=IwAR28_tQciXofGj8rpFdnzh7i-i1f1WvNez2vAEmHI8IZWckyogM7Q2-Z3Uc.

⁵² Tchiaberashvili, Zurab. "Education Needs Changes, Changes Need Educated Society." Civil Georgia, January 26, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/522651>.

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Competitiveness Index from 2019 shows that Georgia lagged behind other countries in the world, including regional peers, in workforce skills, placing 125th out of 141 countries.⁵³

Georgia has no independent evaluation framework to systematically monitor the quality of education. Therefore, international structures, such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), International Literacy (PIRLS), and International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), are the primary sources to assess general education quality.⁵⁴ The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial survey of 15-year-old students that aims to assess the extent to which they have acquired the key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society.⁵⁵ Across all domains, Georgian students perform below their Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) peers. Georgian pupils come in below average, ranking 67th in math, 71st in reading, and 74th in science, out of 78 countries.⁵⁶ Further, the performance of Georgian students has declined between 2015 and the latest PISA assessment in 2018, reversing most of the gains observed between 2010 and 2015.⁵⁷ In 2018, Georgia was the bottom eight of 79 countries, ranking alongside Kazakhstan and Panama.⁵⁸ Though pupils in private schools recorded better average outcomes than their public school counterparts, the gap between public and private school attainment in Georgia is higher than in the OECD.⁵⁹ Further, quality education in Georgia is not widely affordable; the private school enrollment of just one child would require 25% of an average household income, which makes private education unaffordable for a large portion of the population.⁶⁰

Only two universities in Georgia are consistently ranked in the top 30% of institutions worldwide, suggesting that there is potential for improvement at the tertiary level, as well.⁶¹ This poor overall attainment in general education means that universities face a trilemma; they can choose to deny access to the weaker students, or they accept them but invest additional resources to develop and deliver remedial courses, or they come to terms with the fact that many new students will struggle in

⁵³ Tchiaberashvili, Zurab. "Education Needs Changes, Changes Need Educated Society." Civil Georgia, January 26, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/522651>.

⁵⁴ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

⁵⁵ "Georgia Student Performance (PISA 2018)." Education GPS, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2018. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GEO&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

⁵⁶ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Georgia Student Performance (PISA 2018)." Education GPS, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GEO&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

⁵⁹ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

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their university courses and the average quality of their graduates will be lower.⁶² Currently, given the close relationship between enrollment numbers and public funding, incentives are designed to maximize student intake.⁶³ While some universities do, in fact, devote resources to bringing weaker students up to speed, a concern is that the majority of them do not, and weaker students continue to be in a disadvantageous position, either departing as early leavers and dropouts or graduating without the requisite abilities.⁶⁴

Addressing the low quality of education in Georgia requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Improving management and capacity building, infrastructural support, increasing educational investment and equitable funding allocations, enacting curriculum reforms and professional development, and establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are all significant and will be examined more in-depth, below.

3.2 Management

One of the key management problems in Georgia's education system is the existence of inefficient decision-making structures. Past reforms were aimed at decentralizing public education institutions, shifting core management responsibilities to school boards composed of parents, teachers, and schoolchildren, rather than a central governmental body.⁶⁵ School boards are tasked with the hiring of teachers, agreeing on the implementation of school curriculum, approving teaching materials, and overseeing the school budget.⁶⁶ The Ministry of Education and Culture presents a certified candidate for the position of school principal, but they are only appointed with school board approval.⁶⁷

Despite the 'decentralized' management in some aspects of school fairs, centralization of decision-making authority within central government bodies is still leading to delayed responses and hindered progress. Simon Janashia, an expert in the education sector, argues that the school system develops very slowly, and improvements in management principles and educational processes do not

⁶² Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Facts to Know about Georgian Education System." Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2022. <https://elibrary.emis.ge/uploads/other/124.pdf#:~:text=There%20are%20%2C087%20public%20and,UNESCO%20for%20the%20second%20time>.

⁶⁶ "Setting Georgia's Schools Free?" Transparency International Georgia, June 21, 2010. https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/School%20Reform-ENG_0.pdf.

⁶⁷ "Facts to Know about Georgian Education System." Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2022. <https://elibrary.emis.ge/uploads/other/124.pdf#:~:text=There%20are%20%2C087%20public%20and,UNESCO%20for%20the%20second%20time>.

show any meaningful changes.⁶⁸ This top-down approach can stifle innovation and hinder the implementation of necessary reforms that address emerging challenges and adapt to changing educational needs.⁶⁹ This approach also means that teachers and students often fall through the cracks of government oversight. Despite being the highest-level strategic document of the education sector, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia's Unified National Strategy of Education and Science is not regarded by stakeholders as a definitive point of reference; many teachers and principals have not seen it or even heard about it.⁷⁰ High-level initiatives are often introduced, sometimes at odds with the Unified Strategy, and frequently lack adequate documentation, but they are given more strategic weight.⁷¹

Additional cases of less-than-efficient management can be found in other governmental bodies in the educational sector; the Education Management Information System, the Teacher Professional Development Centre (TPDC), and The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE).

First, the Education Management Information System (EMIS), established in 2012, is responsible for collecting and maintaining statistical data from schools, including student and teacher demographics, attendance, and school budgets.⁷² Data analysis is conducted by EMIS statisticians, who respond to requests from across the country. The volume of requests can be overwhelming, and EMIS staff are not always able to accommodate them in a timely manner.⁷³ The EMIS is also responsible for the provision and management of information and communication technology to schools, adding additional burden to the limited capacity of the organization.

Second, the Teacher Professional Development Centre (TPDC), established in 2009, sets and establishes the development of professional standards for educators and school leaders, offers professional development to teachers through regional training centers, and administers career advancement programs.⁷⁴ However, stakeholder assessments indicate that this training is insufficient and varies widely by region, indicating key opportunities for improvement.⁷⁵

Third, originally established to accredit programs in vocational and higher education institutes, the purview of The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) has now

⁶⁸ Nikoladze, Tatia. "What's Wrong with the Schools? Six Problems in Georgian Education." Jamnews, June 2, 2023. <https://jam-news.net/problems-in-georgian-schools/>.

⁶⁹ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

expanded to oversee school authorization.⁷⁶ However, the capacity of this center is a key concern, as the review process places heavy demands on time, people, and money. As a result, it is limited in how many schools it can approve in a given school year.⁷⁷

Increased decentralization has offered local authorities more leeway in responding to local demands. However, it has raised concerns regarding school actors' capacity to undertake their increased responsibilities effectively. This is exacerbated by Georgia's lack of robust accountability mechanisms to assure quality control and effective steering of decentralized systems. Empowering schools with greater autonomy while also promoting capacity building for local educational leaders can foster innovation, accountability, and effective resource utilization, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

3.3 Infrastructure

Beginning in 2006, Georgia began to invest in school infrastructure, 19-21% of the Ministry of Education budget.⁷⁸ However, the country still faces numerous infrastructure problems within its education system. School buildings and education spaces are all too often outdated, dilapidated, and otherwise inadequate. Many schools lack sufficient classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other essential spaces. Providing adequate heating, water, and internet connection to schools, especially in rural areas, is an additional challenge.

First, a significant number of institutions do not have a safe and comfortable environment for students and staff. According to the Public Defender's (2020) monitoring report, 53.8% of the inspected kindergartens require major infrastructural improvements.⁷⁹ Data from the Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency (ESIDA) states that just 51 schools, or 3%, of all public schools in Georgia are in good condition, and around half are in either poor condition or need to be replaced entirely.⁸⁰ Presently, over 33,000 children study in schools deemed as needing replacement, and a further 250,000 study in buildings classified as 'poor.'⁸¹

Most of Georgia's school buildings were built in the late Soviet era, defined as after 1956.⁸² To this day, three out of four schools in Georgia were built from the late Soviet period to the

⁷⁶ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Svanidze, Mikheil. *Rebuilding Education in Georgia: The Infrastructure Challenge in Georgia's School System*. GeoWell. 2021. <https://geowel.org/en/policy-paper-public-school-infrastructure/>.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

⁸⁰ Svanidze, Mikheil. *Rebuilding Education in Georgia: The Infrastructure Challenge in Georgia's School System*. GeoWell. 2021. <https://geowel.org/en/policy-paper-public-school-infrastructure/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

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disillusionment of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁸³ The first comprehensive audit of Georgian public schools was undertaken in 2019, when, as part of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact (MCCC), a bilateral United States foreign aid agency agreement, Georgia commissioned an assessment of all of the schools in Georgia and their respective facilities, with estimates of what it would cost to fix them.⁸⁴ Between 2018 and 2021, four different government agencies spent a total of over GEL 350 million to address infrastructural challenges of Georgian schools. These renovations were not centralized under a unified plan or a systematic plan.⁸⁵

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science announced a project to build and renovate 800 schools in the next four years, with an initial budget of GEL 1 billion.⁸⁶ The goal is for all public general education institutions to have sound infrastructure by the end of 2026. Tenders have been completed for the renovation of 320 public schools and have been opened for another 80.⁸⁷ Phase two of the plan will involve 400 more educational venues between 2024-2026.⁸⁸ Whether this project will be effectively completed remains to be seen. The quality of the interventions, adherence to financial obligations, and observance of phase deadlines require special attention from stakeholders.

The lack of quality education spaces hampers effective teaching and learning, reduces student engagement, and limits personalized attention. Insufficient facilities and educational technologies also impede the implementation of practical and hands-on learning experiences, hindering the development of critical skills and knowledge acquisition. Aging buildings, deteriorating structures, and outdated technology also hinder the overall educational experience. Insufficient maintenance leads to a deterioration of facilities, posing safety risks and creating an unfavorable learning environment. Moreover, the lack of modern technology and internet limits students' access to digital resources, which are increasingly important for contemporary education.

Importantly, educational policy needs to continue taking a long-term perspective and start utilizing demographic and sociological data to measure regional population trends and adjust the construction of new schools and renovating the old schools accordingly. Any long-term projects on school infrastructure development need to be consolidated with regional development, employment, municipal zoning, agriculture, and migration government policies. Dually, regional governmental bodies need to be more responsive to outstanding and immediate problems in schools, such as heating, water, sanitation, etc., and address them without delay.

⁸³ Svanidze, Mikheil. *Rebuilding Education in Georgia: The Infrastructure Challenge in Georgia's School System*. GeoWell. 2021. <https://geowel.org/en/policy-paper-public-school-infrastructure/>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Hearing Of Minister Of Education And Science Within Ministerial Hour." Parliament of Georgia, December 1, 2022. <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-ministris-saatis-formatshi-ganatilebisa-da-metsnierebis-ministrs-mikheil-chkhenkels-mousmina>.

⁸⁶ "Georgian PM, Education Minister Review School Infrastructure, Scientific Research in 2023 Plans" Agenda.Ge, February 8, 2023. <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2023/527>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

3.4 Regional Disparities

The Georgian government has publicly acknowledged the enormous educational disparities between the capital and the regions and pledged to support students from the regions.⁸⁹ Indeed, the equitable regional distribution of resources within the educational system presents substantial administrative difficulties. Consequently, the quality of schools within the system varies greatly; the resources, both human and financial, are limited.⁹⁰ Particularly in remote and marginalized areas, schools with budget constraints struggle to provide adequate infrastructure, learning materials, and professional development opportunities for teachers, resulting in disparate educational opportunities and outcomes.⁹¹

To illustrate this divide, of the 63 higher education institutions (HEIs) in Georgia, 44 are located in Tbilisi.⁹² Tbilisi State University, for example, hosts 24,000 students, though 40% are not originally from the capital.⁹³ The most prestigious universities, such as TSU, are concentrated in Tbilisi— significantly privileged in their variety of degrees and specializations offered, the extent of internationalization, equipment of labs, and availability of digital and technological devices— while the regions host the least reputable educational institutions.⁹⁴ Some regions, such as Guria, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Svaneti, and Kvemo Kartli do not offer any public higher educational institutions, at all.⁹⁵ These disparities are accentuated by growing urbanization and processes of funding allocation.

First, due to low fertility rates and high rates of outmigration, Georgia is facing a rapidly shrinking and urbanizing population, which makes providing quality education in rural areas increasingly challenging. Between 2000 and 2010, nearly 10% of the population emigrated internationally.⁹⁶ However, the rate of this outmigration is not equally distributed throughout the country; the rate of population decrease in villages is three times that of cities.⁹⁷ Combined with internal urban migration, 60% of the population is expected to live in cities by 2030, meaning that

⁸⁹ Zimmermann, Philipp. “*Protests at Tbilisi State University: Student Housing and Educational Equity in Georgia.*” Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, July 1, 2022. <https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/07/01/protests-tbilisi-state-university-student-housing-and-educational-equity-georgia>.

⁹⁰ Sakhokia, Natela. Expert Opinion. Edited by April Gordon. *On The Need For Reforming School Education In Georgia*. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2016. <https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/opinion-papers/59-expert-opinion-eng.pdf>.

⁹¹ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

⁹² Kvakhadze, Irine, Tamta Beroshvili, and Mariam Surmava. Rep. *Higher Education in Georgia*. TBC Capital, November 2022. https://tbccapital.ge/static/file/202211105125-higher-education-in-georgia_november-2022.pdf.

⁹³ Zimmermann, Philipp. “*Protests at Tbilisi State University: Student Housing and Educational Equity in Georgia.*” Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, July 1, 2022. <https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/07/01/protests-tbilisi-state-university-student-housing-and-educational-equity-georgia>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ “*Georgia Student Performance (PISA 2018).*” Education GPS, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GEO&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

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schools in rural areas are finding themselves with increasingly fewer students, while their urban counterparts are facing overcrowding.⁹⁸ With regards to higher education, the high concentration of universities in Tbilisi results in large numbers of students migrating to the capital from other regions every year. The uneven distribution of universities affects access and affordability of higher education, due to the requirement of the ability to relocate, pay the high rent prices and living costs in Tbilisi, etc.⁹⁹

Second, this shifting population has significant implications for financial resource allocation. In 2005, a voucher-based system was introduced to increase transparency in education funding and increase school autonomy.¹⁰⁰ Under this system, parents are free to choose the school they wish their child to attend, be it public or private, and a voucher of roughly GEL 380 per student (GEL 505 for rural schools and GEL 635 for schools in mountainous areas) is allocated directly to the school from the Ministry of Education to the costs of their attendance.¹⁰¹ Vouchers are the main source of income schools utilize to cover expenses such as salaries and maintenance costs.¹⁰² Voucher financing, however, is insufficient to support operating expenditures for smaller schools, which do not have enough pupils to cover their costs, due to the variability in school enrollment levels.¹⁰³ As a result, schools with fewer than 169 students, which account for more than 60% of all Georgian schools, are permitted to determine and request their own budget amounts from the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁴ Due to the lack of standard procedures for calculating these supplementary amounts that schools request and receive, there are substantial discrepancies in financing across schools of the same size.¹⁰⁵ Even among schools with identical enrollment rates, financial awards might differ by as much as 300%, raising concerns about the transparency and oversight of the system.¹⁰⁶ Further, the current system of voucher funding and exams is of greater benefit to students from high socio-economic status families and urban settlements, as they can attend better schools and prepare for exams with private tutors outside of school.¹⁰⁷ In some cases, students from vulnerable groups cannot continue their education into the tertiary level, because of their household's high financial burden and limited

⁹⁸ "Georgia Student Performance (PISA 2018)." Education GPS, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GEO&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

⁹⁹ Kvakhadze, Irine, Tamta Beroshvili, and Mariam Surmava. Rep. *Higher Education in Georgia*. TBC Capital, November 2022. https://tbccapital.ge/static/file/202211105125-higher-education-in-georgia_november-2022.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Janashia, S. (2017), *General Education in Georgia: Policy Problems and Solutions*, ISET Policy Institute.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Tabatadze, Shalva & Natia Gorgadze (2018) *School Voucher Funding System of Post-Soviet Georgia: From Lack of Funding to Lack of Deliverables*, *Journal of School Choice*, 12:2, 271-302, DOI: 10.1080/15582159.2017.1408000

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

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social grants and other support services offered by the government, and the institutions, themselves.¹⁰⁸ The amount of a university scholarship is based on the scores obtained on the Unified National Exams, but pupils from marginalized groups and communities, who need the most financial support, face additional barriers to achieving high scores in exams due to inequitable and insufficient preparatory opportunities.¹⁰⁹ In addition, more than a quarter of students (26%) work full-time during their studies. Additionally, almost half of all university students (48%) need to work to cover their daily expenses, and over a quarter (26%) work full-time during their studies; this puts students with poorer socio-economic circumstances at unequal footing, increasing dropout rates.¹¹⁰

3.5 Government Spending and Costs of Education

The allocation of government funds toward education is a meaningful indicator of a nation's commitment to fostering a well-educated and prosperous society. In recent years, the government of Georgia has demonstrated a growing commitment to investing in education, increasing budget allocation from 2.4% to 3.0% of the GDP in 2010-2019, to the current ratio of 3.62%.¹¹¹ However, this is still below the E.U. average of 4.6%, Estonia's spending of 6.6%, Denmark's 6.4%, and the U.K.'s 5.5%.¹¹² The appropriation for the Ministry of Education's 2023 budget is 2 billion 30 million 800 thousand GEL, which is an increase of 345.9 million GEL from the previous year.¹¹³ However, the effectiveness of its allocation remains to be seen.

The highest share of the education budget is allocated for general education, 72% of which was spent on teachers' salaries in 2022.¹¹⁴ Only 0.3% of the GDP is spent on tertiary education, which is low by international standards.¹¹⁵ Georgian university students have a larger financial burden than students from peer nations because tuition and living expenses are mainly financed by households, public funding is modest, and students have little to no self-earned income.¹¹⁶ The Ministry of

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Tchiaberashvili, Zurab. "Education Needs Changes, Changes Need Educated Society." Civil Georgia, January 26, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/522651>.

¹¹³ "Hearing Of Minister Of Education And Science Within Ministerial Hour." Parliament of Georgia, December 1, 2022. <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-ministris-saatis-formatshi-ganatilebisa-da-metsnierebis-ministrs-mikheil-chkhenkels-mousmina>.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

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Education primarily allocates the budget for higher education to student grants and scholarships.¹¹⁷ Though the price of enrollment at a public university has remained almost unchanged in recent years, costs of living associated with attendance have been growing at rates unmatched by the static grant amounts offered by the government to successful applications.¹¹⁸ For example, a timeline analysis from 2013 to 2022 shows that the rental price index went up by 75%.¹¹⁹ Higher real estate prices can ultimately lead to reduced demand for higher education, given that household income and federal support are not increasing proportionally.¹²⁰ Indeed, recent protests at Tbilisi State University demonstrated the precarious conditions of students, particularly those from the regions, due to the capital's changing housing market. Student housing policies and state housing support need to be placed on the agenda of the Ministry of Education. A student housing strategy or rental support scheme is key to promoting educational equity in the country and to enable young people to access the academic and economic opportunities of the capital.¹²¹

By investing public funds in education, the government will demonstrate that it understands that engagement in the educational process is a value in and of itself, and that engaging in this process paves the way to other values necessary to become a democratic society.¹²² Ensuring the efficient and effective utilization of allocated funds, monitoring their impact, and addressing disparities in educational quality across regions are key areas that require attention. It is imperative that the government enhances transparency and accountability in the allocation and management of education funds. Implementing robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of spending can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that resources continue to be allocated equitably.

3.6 Educators and Human Capital

The quality of educators and teachers plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of a nation. Effective management of the education system requires a well-prepared and continuously trained teaching workforce. In the focus student groups, the prevailing public view was that teaching staff fall into two categories; predominantly younger teachers with good subject knowledge and sufficient skills and those who are not living up to students' expectations in terms of

¹¹⁷ Kvakhadze, Irine, Tamta Beroshvili, and Mariam Surmava. Rep. *Higher Education in Georgia*. TBC Capital, November 2022. https://tbccapital.ge/static/file/202211105125-higher-education-in-georgia_november-2022.pdf.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Zimmermann, Philipp. "*Protests at Tbilisi State University: Student Housing and Educational Equity in Georgia*." Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, July 1, 2022. <https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/07/01/protests-tbilisi-state-university-student-housing-and-educational-equity-georgia>.

¹²² Tchiaberashvili, Zurab. "*Education Needs Changes, Changes Need Educated Society*." Civil Georgia, January 26, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/522651>.

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their support and their subject knowledge, who were typically described as older faculty members.¹²³ This challenge is exacerbated by low salaries in the sector, an aging workforce, and insufficient professional development opportunities.

First, insufficient compensation and limited incentives fail to attract and retain highly qualified and motivated professionals in the sector. Due to low salaries, employment as an educator-pedagogue, teacher, and other academic or administrative position is often perceived as an unattractive career choice. Since the 90s, the salary of education sector employees has been one of the lowest. According to the 2021 data, the overall average monthly nominal salary in Georgia was GEL 1357.4, while the average monthly nominal salary of employees in the education sector was GEL 709 in the public sector, and GEL 921.3 in the private sector.¹²⁴ This is an average monthly remuneration of GEL 815.2 or \$311.1 for educational employees, 40% less than the average worker's salary.¹²⁵ The challenge of teacher recruitment is especially acute for regional universities, which generally have a lower level of financial and human capital, leaving them, in some cases, to rely on lecturers commuting from Tbilisi.¹²⁶ From January 2023 the Ministry planned to increase the salary of public school teachers by GEL 125, and the salary of the administrative and technical staff by 10%, in addition to granting paid maternity leave for all educational employees.¹²⁷ The ramifications of this reform on the sector's labor force are yet to be determined, and careful observation needs to be undertaken to determine its effectiveness.

Second, low salaries make the teaching profession undesirable for Georgian youth, and as a result, Georgia has an older teaching workforce than most peer countries in the region. The share of teachers over 50 years old rose to 48.5% between 2011 and 2018, an increase of 11.5%.¹²⁸ Only 12.9% of Georgian educational employees are 25-34 years old and are at the initial stage of their careers.¹²⁹ Most teachers are past retirement age and have spent the majority of their professional lives under the Soviet-era centralized educational system, in which teachers were given detailed

¹²³ Radjabzade, S, and Linn A. (2021), *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/EMI_Report_SouthCaucasus_v2.pdf.

¹²⁴ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

¹²⁵ *Own calculations, utilizing a conversion rate of \$1 = GEL2.62 (as of June 28, 2023)*

¹²⁶ Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

¹²⁷ "Hearing Of Minister Of Education And Science Within Ministerial Hour." Parliament of Georgia, December 1, 2022. <https://parliament.ge/en/media/news/parlamentma-ministris-saatis-formatshi-ganatlebisa-da-metsnierebis-ministrs-mikheil-chkhenkels-mousmina>.

¹²⁸ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

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instructions on exactly what to teach and how.¹³⁰ These employees received their education during the Soviet period and have since lacked professional training opportunities, not possessing contemporary competencies related to student-centered teaching and assessment methods.¹³¹

To promote the renewal of the teaching workforce, the government has implemented a teachers' retirement scheme, offering to pay two years of salary to staff members eligible for retainment. As a result, as of December 2019, 6,500 of the 12,000 eligible teachers have chosen to retire. Furthermore, 1,900 young practitioners entered the public school system in 2019, positively affecting the age structure, and the government aims to introduce a new teacher development scheme, creating faster entry and promotion opportunities for young practitioners.¹³² However, in 2023, this multi-faceted challenge remains unresolved, indicating greater interventions are necessary.

Second, Georgia faces obstacles in providing comprehensive and ongoing teacher training and professional development opportunities. Limited access to high-quality training programs, insufficient support for teacher collaboration, and inadequate incentives for professional growth contribute to the stagnation of educator quality.¹³³ The Ministry of Education's 'New School Model' promoted the professional development of teachers and increased accessibility and quality of vocational education, with the main goal being to increase human capital and respond to labor-market demand.¹³⁴ Despite the steps taken in the direction of teachers' professional development and career advancement, in 2017-2019, on average, only 25% of teachers showed minimal results in subject exams and only 27% in professional skills exams.¹³⁵ Insufficient investment in ongoing professional development limits educators' capacity to adopt innovative teaching methods, utilize modern educational technologies, and stay abreast of current educational practices. Additionally, recruiting new educators is necessary to replace leaving staff, to bring in contemporary teaching methods and philosophies, and to maintain an adequate student/lecturer ratio, in the face of steadily increasing student enrollment in urban areas.¹³⁶

At the university level, the availability of quality lecturers seems to be increasing, due to the development of international initiatives and change programs, utilized both to attract back members of

¹³⁰ "Setting Georgia's Schools Free?" Transparency International Georgia, June 21, 2010. https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/School%20Reform-ENG_0.pdf.

¹³¹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, (2022), *The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030*, <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>.

¹³² Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

¹³³ Li, R., et al. (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94dc370e-en>.

¹³⁴ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

the “academic diaspora” and Georgian scholars after time spent abroad, as well as bring international talent to Georgia.¹³⁷ Further, several universities are adopting creative solutions to strengthen their profile, such as by employing high-profile lecturers in part-time capacities, and using international cooperation projects, such as the U.S. Department of State Fulbright program, to increase the attractiveness of Georgian institutions for international scholars and involve them in local activities.¹³⁸ However, these short-term ad-hoc solutions cannot replace a proper funding scheme and sector-internal development to construct a strong and modern educational and academic environment.

Having said this, the issue of educator quality in Georgia is not without success; in the 2018 PISA, 77% of students in Georgia agreed or strongly agreed that their teacher shows enjoyment in teaching, above the OECD average of 74%.¹³⁹ Further, compared to the OECD average, more Georgian students reported teachers show an interest in their learning and continue to teach until they understand.¹⁴⁰ Systemic inadequacies do not undermine the motivation, passion, and knowledge that experienced individual educators bring to their classroom; potentials for reform, increased compensation, and greater professional development opportunities should, ideally, be seen by senior staff as supportive measures to help them meet the evolving needs of students, not as an existential threat.

3.7 Labor Market and Brain Drain

A robust labor market and favorable employment opportunities are vital indicators of a nation's economic health and social well-being. In the context of Georgia, the challenges posed by a poor labor market and inadequate employment opportunities underscore the urgent need for educational reforms.

At first glance, the relationship between education and the labor market in Georgia seems positive. Women with tertiary diplomas between the ages of 25-34 appear to be substantially more active in the labor market relative to women with lower educational attainment levels (66.7% for BA degree holders, 72.7% for MA/PhD holders, and 53% for other groups) and experience substantially higher employment rates (54.3% for BA degree holders, 62.6%, for MA/PhD holders, and between 45.2% and 35% for other groups).¹⁴¹ Participation rates of men are above 90% for all educational categories, however unemployment levels are also high for men holding a BA degree (1 out of 5 is

¹³⁷ Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ “*Georgia Student Performance (PISA 2018)*.” Education GPS, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=GEO&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

¹⁴⁰ Baum, Tina, and Nino Davitashvili. Rep. Edited by Mikheil Nadareishvili. *2020 Georgia Education Fact Sheets*. UNICEF Georgia, 2010. <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FinalGeorgia-Education-Fact-Sheet-2020.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

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unsuccessfully looking for a job), while only men with MA or PhD degrees are relatively better off.¹⁴² While still far from optimal, the performance of higher education graduates of all genders in the labor market seems significantly better than for other groups.¹⁴³ Therefore, it is not surprising that young generations look increasingly seeking to enroll in tertiary education programs.

However, only 13% of employees are currently working within their field of specialty, and young people are 2 to 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than their parents.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, there seems to be a mismatch between the skills possessed by educated job seekers, and the demand of the domestic labor market.¹⁴⁵ Natia Gorgadze, a program manager at the Center for Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations researcher specializing in education has noted that this problem is a key contributor to emigration; “Unfortunately, today our country's employment market is limited in scope. There are fields where employment is practically impossible to find or it is impossible to get a decent salary; therefore, specialists who find themselves in other countries and see their own professional success there, in the long term, obviously, are leaving their homeland.”¹⁴⁶ Citizen polls, indeed, have shown that a fifth of Georgians are considering emigration to find work abroad.¹⁴⁷ This data does not just report a desire, but a migratory trend.

Across the South Caucasus, students and young professionals are seeking better education and job prospects abroad, creating an outflow of intellectual resources that is a far-reaching problem in Georgia.¹⁴⁸ Between 2012 and 2021, Georgia's net migration amounts to -73,610 persons.¹⁴⁹ Further, according to data from the 2002 and 2014 censuses, Georgia's population decreased by 642,000 people, from 4.371 million to 3.729 million, or overall by about 15%, showing the persistence of a trend that started in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁵⁰ In 1989–2002, Georgia's population decreased

¹⁴² Pignatti, Norberto. Rep. *Higher Education Reform In Georgia: Challenges And Opportunities*. International School of Economics at TSU Policy Institute, June 21, 2018. <https://iset-pi.ge/storage/media/other/2021-10-06/f801cce0-2673-11ec-bd97-25fa0095a319.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Sharadze, Sophio. “*In Georgia, Students Look Abroad to Build a Future*.” Chaikhana, November 30, 2022. <https://chaikhana.media/en/stories/1405/in-georgia-students-look-abroad-to-build-a-future>.

¹⁴⁷ *Georgians Wanting to go Abroad. Taking Georgians' Pulse: Findings from December 2022 Face to Face Survey*. The Caucasus Research Resource Center Georgia, February 2023. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia_December%202022%20poll_public%20version_ENG_vf.pdf?fbclid=IwAR28_tQciXofGj8rpFdnzh7i-i1f1WvNez2vAEmHI8IZWckyogM7Q2-Z3Uc.

¹⁴⁸ Sharadze, Sophio. “*In Georgia, Students Look Abroad to Build a Future*.” Chaikhana, November 30, 2022. <https://chaikhana.media/en/stories/1405/in-georgia-students-look-abroad-to-build-a-future>.

¹⁴⁹ Gabritchidze, Nini. “*Georgia Downplays Mass Emigration Amid Economic, Political Frustration*.” Eurasianet, February 22, 2023. <https://eurasianet.org/georgia-downplays-mass-emigration-amid-economic-political-frustration>.

¹⁵⁰ Rukhadze, Vasili. “*The Latest Census Underlines Georgia's Profound Demographic Crisis*.” The Jamestown Foundation, May 12, 2015. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-latest-census-underlines-georgias-profound-demographic-crisis/>.

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by over one million, from 5.4 million to about 4.371 million.¹⁵¹ This mass exodus was the result of economic collapse and political turmoil; people left the country in search of jobs and a better future abroad.¹⁵²

An increasing number of Georgian students are seeking to attend higher education overseas to improve their career prospects in Georgia or abroad. In 2017, 11.3k Georgian students studied in foreign countries, with more than half enrolled in Central and Eastern Europe, 35% in North America and Western Europe, and 13% in Asia.¹⁵³ Some Georgian schools, especially high-end private schools, specifically aim to prepare their students to study abroad. 90% of the graduates of the Guyvi Zaldastanishvili American Academy in Tbilisi continue their studies abroad; In 2005-2022 years out of 938 school graduates, only 92 stayed in Georgia. Further, even the Ministry of Education's Unified National Strategy for 2022-2030 places a priority on granting Georgian students international opportunities through exchange programs, like Erasmus+ and government-funded study abroad programs; in 2021-2022, these programs helped 480 students study in Belgium, Austria, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Italy, and Budapest.¹⁵⁴ While prioritizing the acquisition of international experience in the future workforce is a positive measure, without the synchronous internal development of a labor market that incentivizes and motivates bright students to return, Georgia is simply supporting the loss of essential human capital. Economist Marina Pkhovelishvili warns that "We should remember that each Georgian brain lost overseas is a huge setback for the development of our country."¹⁵⁵

An extrapolation of this trend signals a demographic crisis for Georgia if the problem is not tackled. The loss of young, educated, forward-looking people has long-term economic ramifications such as the reduction in human capital, shortage of skilled scientists, limited capacity to innovate and adopt more advanced technologies, etc. Educational policies, which have a demonstrated impact on the labor market and economy, are a crucial line of difference against brain drain. Interventions such as establishing close collaborations between educational institutions and industries can facilitate the identification of required skill sets and ensure that educational programs align with labor market demands. These partnerships can offer internships, apprenticeships, and work-study opportunities, providing students with real-world experience, and a smoother transition into the domestic workforce. By proactively aligning the education system with labor market needs and equipping students with relevant skills, Georgia can foster economic growth, reduce unemployment, and alleviate social disparities.

¹⁵¹ Rukhadze, Vasili. "The Latest Census Underlines Georgia's Profound Demographic Crisis." The Jamestown Foundation, May 12, 2015. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-latest-census-underlines-georgias-profound-demographic-crisis/>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Bochorishvili, Eva, and Nino Peranidze. *Georgia's Education Sector*. Galt and Taggart, July 28, 2018. <https://api.galtandtaggart.com/sites/default/files/2021-05/25610.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

4.0 Recommendations

To foster ongoing and sustainable development of education in Georgia, the lingering challenges need to be proactively addressed; comprehensive reforms need to be implanted that promote access, quality, inclusivity, and innovation across all levels of the sector. Drawing from the previous quantitative and qualitative analyses, the following areas of reform and their respective considerations have been identified as the most critical.

4.1 Access to Quality Education

4.1.1 Infrastructure

Improving infrastructure creates conducive learning environments that support effective teaching and learning. Insufficient school infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas, poses a challenge to ensuring equal access to quality education. Upgrading facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and technology infrastructure, enhances the overall educational experience for students. Policy measures should focus on building and renovating school facilities, particularly in underserved regions. Adequate infrastructure provides the necessary resources, tools, and spaces for educators to deliver high-quality, safe, and engaging instruction. By prioritizing infrastructure improvements, education policies can create an environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and innovation.

- Develop a national plan to address the infrastructure gap in schools, with a particular focus on rural and remote areas, including adequate heating, cooling, and internet connectivity.
- Allocate sufficient funds for building and renovating school facilities, ensuring they are safe, accessible, and equipped with necessary resources.
- Establish a student housing strategy or rental support scheme to recognize students as a vulnerable group, requiring state housing aid and resources.
- Promote public-private partnerships to leverage additional resources for infrastructure development, such as agreements to build schools, childcare facilities, or subsidized student housing in new development projects above a certain number of units.

4.1.2 Educational Disparities

Disparities in access to education persist among different socio-economic groups and regions in Georgia. Implementing targeted programs to address these disparities and ensure equal opportunities for all students is vital. Regional disparities can lead to unequal distribution of educational resources, opportunities, and outcomes. By focusing on reducing these disparities, education policies can bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, disadvantaged communities, and under-resourced schools. This promotes fairness, social justice, and equal opportunities for all students to reach their full potential, contributing to the overall improvement of the education system.

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- Implement targeted programs to address educational disparities among different socio-economic groups and regions.
- Develop capacity building and technical skills of local administration and school board members to support ongoing community-level reforms.
- Provide financial support, such as scholarships and grants, to economically disadvantaged students to ensure equal educational opportunities.
- Establish and enforce policies to promote equitable resource allocation, teacher distribution, and educational opportunities across the country.

4.2 Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is important in developing better education policies as it shapes the content, structure, and delivery of education. A well-designed curriculum reflects current knowledge, research, and societal needs, ensuring that students acquire relevant and applicable skills. It enables education policies to align with the evolving demands of the workforce, societal changes, and global trends. All public curricula should be updated regularly to align with the changing needs of society and the demands of the job market. Integration of digital literacy, creativity, critical thinking skills, and entrepreneurship education can equip students with the necessary competencies for the future.

- Conduct regular reviews of the national curriculum to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with societal needs and future job market demands.
- Integrate digital literacy, critical thinking skills, entrepreneurship education, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) subjects into the curriculum.
- Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, industry experts, and policymakers to design and update curricula based on emerging trends and industry requirements.

4.3 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is consequential in developing better education policies as it equips individuals with the practical skills and knowledge necessary for the workforce. Enhancing the quality and prestige of vocational education, expanding the range of vocational programs, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector can promote skills development and address youth unemployment. By emphasizing hands-on learning and industry-specific training, VET programs prepare students for careers in various fields, bridging the gap between education and employment. VET also contributes to economic growth by providing a skilled workforce that meets industry needs and drives innovation.

- Enhance the quality and prestige of vocational education by promoting its value and significance in addressing labor market needs.

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- Collaborate closely with industry stakeholders to develop relevant vocational programs that align with market demand and offer practical training opportunities.
- Establish apprenticeship programs, internships, and partnerships with industries and businesses to provide hands-on experience and enhance the employability of graduates.

4.4 Teacher Training and Professional Development

4.4.1 Continuous Professional Development

Establishing comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs for teachers can enhance their pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and classroom management techniques; it ensures that educators stay updated with the latest research, methodologies, and best practices. By engaging in ongoing learning opportunities, teachers can enhance their instructional skills, deepen their subject knowledge, and adapt their teaching methods to meet evolving student needs. Continuous professional development equips educators with the tools and strategies to effectively implement education policies, leading to improved student outcomes. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement, promotes innovation in teaching, and supports the development of a highly skilled and motivated teaching workforce.

- Develop comprehensive and continuous professional development programs for teachers, focusing on 21st-century pedagogical skills, content knowledge, assessment methods, and classroom management techniques.
- Encourage teachers to participate and lead in workshops, seminars, and online courses to enhance their professional competencies.
- Establish mentorship programs and peer learning communities to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among teachers.

4.4.2 Incentives and Recognition

Providing competitive salaries, incentives for professional growth, and recognition of excellent teaching performance can attract and retain high-quality educators. Offering incentives, such as financial rewards, career advancement opportunities, or professional development grants, can attract and retain highly skilled educators. Recognition, through awards, commendations, or public acknowledgment, recognizes the dedication and exceptional work of teachers, boosting their morale and job satisfaction. By valuing and incentivizing teachers, education policies promote a positive and supportive work environment, which in turn enhances teaching quality, fosters innovation, and encourages a commitment to ongoing professional growth.

- Provide competitive salaries and benefits packages to attract and retain high-quality educators.

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- Establish a performance-based system that recognizes and rewards exceptional teaching performance and professional growth.
- Create opportunities for career advancement, such as leadership roles, specializations, and research opportunities, to incentivize teacher retention and professional development.

4.5 Inclusive Education

4.5.1 Special Education and Support Services

Special education and support services ensure that students with diverse learning needs receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed academically and socially. Strengthening inclusive education policies and practices, improving access to special education services, and fostering inclusive learning environments can support students with disabilities and diverse learning needs. By recognizing and addressing the unique needs of these students, education policies can foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Special education and support services promote access to quality education, facilitate students' personal growth and development, and enhance their overall educational outcomes.

- Strengthen inclusive education policies and practices, ensuring access to quality education for students with disabilities and diverse learning needs.
- Develop a comprehensive framework for providing appropriate support services, accommodations, and assistive technologies in schools.
- Establish specialized resource centers and multidisciplinary teams to assess, support, and collaborate with teachers in addressing diverse learning needs.

4.5.1 Teacher Training on Inclusion

Teacher training on inclusion equips educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to create inclusive learning environments. By providing comprehensive training to teachers, education policies can address the diverse needs of students, foster a sense of belonging, and promote equitable educational experiences. Effective inclusion training enables teachers to understand and accommodate individual differences, implement differentiated instruction, and utilize appropriate teaching strategies. This ultimately leads to improved learning outcomes, increased student engagement, and enhanced overall educational quality.

- Integrate inclusive education modules and pedagogical approaches into teacher training programs at pre-service and in-service levels.
- Provide specialized training for teachers to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities and create inclusive learning environments.

- Foster partnerships between mainstream and special education teachers to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing.

4.6 Evidence-Based Decision-Making

Evidence-based decision-making ensures that choices are grounded in reliable data and research rather than assumptions or personal biases. By relying on evidence, policymakers can identify effective strategies, interventions, and approaches that have been proven to enhance educational outcomes. This enables the formulation of policies that are more likely to succeed, leading to improved student achievement, increased equity, and enhanced educational experiences. Evidence-based decision-making also allows policymakers to assess the impact of existing policies, make informed adjustments, and allocate resources effectively, leading to a continuous cycle of improvement in the education system.

- Establish mechanisms for regular engagement between local administrators, regional authorities, and policymakers to understand educational needs, priorities, and emerging policy challenges.
- Encourage the integration of statistical data, such as educational attainment results, enrollment numbers, and census results into policy development processes and decision-making in the educational sector.
- Foster partnerships between government agencies, research institutions, and civil society organizations to analyze and interpret data for evidence-based policy formulation.

5.0 Conclusion and Limitations

The Law of Higher Education provides legislative protection for three layers of freedom in education— freedom in research, freedom in teaching, and freedom in learning— with the goal of creating accessibility and openness in education. Despite this legal codification, and significant progress with reforms, these goals have not been fully attained.¹⁵⁶ Addressing the challenges faced by the education system in Georgia is necessary to ensure equitable access to quality education and fostering the development of a skilled workforce capable of meeting future demands. The policy recommendations outlined in this article emphasize the need for curriculum innovation, management capacity building, infrastructure development, teacher training and support, increased public funding, regionally-inclusive education policies, and labor sector collaboration.

During the implementation of educational reforms in Georgia, several considerations must be taken into account to ensure their effectiveness and long-term impact:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging all relevant stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, administrators, and community members, is crucial. Their input and involvement can provide valuable insights, foster ownership of the reforms, and ensure that the implemented changes align with the needs and aspirations of the education system.
- **Professional Development and Capacity Building:** Providing comprehensive and ongoing professional development opportunities for educational administrators and educators is vital. Adequate training and support should be offered to equip these cohorts with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively implement and sustain the reforms.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing robust data-driven monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is paramount to track the progress and impact of the reforms. Regular assessment and feedback loops enable policymakers to identify areas that require further attention, and make the necessary adjustments.
- **Sustainable Implementation:** Reforms should be implemented in a phased and sustainable manner. Rushed or abrupt changes can lead to disruption and resistance. Allowing sufficient time for planning, piloting, and gradual implementation helps build a solid foundation and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

While embarking on educational reforms, it is important to consider the potential limitations and challenges that may arise:

- **Resistance to Change:** The implementation of reforms often faces resistance from various stakeholders who may be hesitant or skeptical about the proposed changes. Overcoming resistance through effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and addressing concerns is critical for successful reform implementation.

¹⁵⁶ *Law of Georgia on Higher Education*, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2004). GEO-2004-L-85398.

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- **Time and Resource Constraints:** Implementing educational reforms requires time, financial resources, and sustained commitment. Limited resources or competing priorities can pose challenges to the successful and timely implementation of reforms.
- **Policy Alignment and Coordination:** Coordinating and aligning various policies and initiatives within the education sector can be complex. Ensuring coherence and synergy among different reform efforts is essential to avoid confusion and maximize their collective impact.
- **Socio-economic and Regional Disparities:** Addressing socio-economic and regional disparities is critical during the reform process. Inequitable access to resources and opportunities may undermine the intended outcomes of the reforms, and proactive efforts should be made to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunities for all students.

By implementing multi-lateral policies that address these systemic vulnerabilities, Georgia can lay the foundation for a robust educational system that empowers its citizens and contributes to sustainable socio-economic development. After all, a well-educated and forward-looking young generation greatly contributes to the overall progress of the country, holding the potential to propel Georgia towards stronger democratic institutions, sustainable development, economic growth, and social equity. If successful in the long term— beyond the 2030 benchmark established by the current strategic plan— the country will establish the continuity of a skilled human capital force and civil society capable of meeting future demands.

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