Intercultural competencies of students vs. their civic activities (Case of Georgia)

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Abstract: The research highlighted the correlation of the intercultural competencies of middle school students in Georgia with their civic activities and levels of integration, as well as the factors contributing to the development of relevant competencies of students at the formal educational level. In particular, interactive learning contributes to the development of intercultural competencies in students and the integration of different cultural groups, their involvement in the decision-making process, in taking initiatives, and so on. This experience gained in the learning process helps the student to develop the skills needed for an active citizen. The analysis of the research results also revealed: (a) knowledge of different cultures by students and recognition of diversity are in a positive correlation with their willingness to engage, appreciate and take into account different opinions when making decisions; (b) the advantage of the experience gained through informal communication compared with the formal one over the development of students'
intercultural and civic competencies in a diverse school environment; (c) low benchmark of intercultural competence and civic activism in monocultural settings, especially in non-Georgian-speaking school students, which is caused by solitariness of minority communities, insufficient knowledge of state language, and less access to the media. The research confirmed that the intercultural and civic competencies of students are mostly influenced by the cultural characteristics of the living and school environments. The role of formal teaching is relatively minor in the process of successful civic integration of culturally diverse students.

**Subjects:** Educational Research; Education Studies; Multicultural Education; Secondary Education

**Keywords:** intercultural competence; civic competence; school culture; formal education

1. **Theoretical foundations of intercultural and civic education**

Given the scale and pace of globalization, teaching peaceful coexistence in a diverse society is an accompanying and constant process of general education. Therefore, it has become the essence and purpose of intercultural education to equip students with intercultural competencies (Gay, 2010), thanks to which students will develop better skills for navigation in various social, academic and professional fields (Gollnick & Chinn, 2016). Intercultural education involves the teaching of cultural diversity, cultural interaction and interchangeability in human societies, as well as the transformation of cultures initiated by intercultural relationships (Bleszynska, 2008).

The main goal of intercultural education is to create the equal learning opportunities so that all students can develop the personal competencies needed to implement democratic changes in society (Banks, 2017). Intercultural education, as an integral part of democratic citizenship, is based on civic values (Starkey, 2008) and includes unity of rights and freedoms, obedience to the law, a certain emotional attachment to democracy and skills necessary for active membership of a democratic society (Valey, 2011).

Several interrelated factors can be distinguished in the planning and implementation of intercultural education:

- **School Curriculum**—where in academic disciplines the multiculturalism of society should be presented in a positive context (Banks, 2018; Grant & Gillette, 2005; Grant & Sleeter, 2008).
- **The role of the teacher and the pedagogical approaches used by them** (Gay, 2010). It is important to have such practice of school education when teachers fit learning/teaching approaches (styles, methods) to the needs for development of students’ individual skills and intercultural competencies. Students’ personal and school achievements improve only in this case and teaching increasingly becomes a cross-cultural phenomenon (Gay, 2010). Banks believes that in order to use diversity creatively and effectively, an educator must necessarily be aware of the concepts, principles, theory, and practice of intercultural education (Banks, 2017). They should also define their own cultural sensitivity and acquire such knowledge and skills that will enable them to work effectively with students of different cultural identities.
- **A fair and equitable school environment that promotes positive interrelationship between members of different cultural groups** (Banks & A., 2012), ensured by the transformation of all variables and factors of school culture considering intercultural challenges.

The concept of interculturalism makes some kind of basis for civic education, because the appreciation and acceptance of diversity are the factors contributing to the civic integration and engagement of different groups. Scientists (Grant & Gillette, 2005; Grant & Sleeter, 2008) believe that when students learn about the world from the perspective of diverse groups, they are better
able to engage in civic activities and ultimately, actively participate and contribute to the sustainable development of the civil society.

Civic education is not a field of abstract knowledge, a form of social action, political or value education, but rather, it is the collective goal of educational policy, which is created in the teaching-learning process and combines all the above-mentioned dimensions. Civic education enhances democratic culture, understanding of one's obligations and responsibilities to the society, mutual understanding, tolerance and peace, reduces and/or resolves disagreements.

The main tasks of civic education are: to develop the skills for critical thinking, problem solving, multifaceted interpretation, effective communication, participation, etc. in students (UNESCO, 2014), to equip students with responsibility and personal commitment to the community, solidarity and respect for different groups (Albulescu & Ion, 2015). The development of the above-mentioned skills and abilities is due to the democratic environment of the school, encouragement of student participation and initiatives, content and style of learning and teaching (Flanagan et al., 2007). All this ensures the transformation of the society—the transition from passive to active, from national to global citizenship; formation of inclusive societies; development of effective and democratic citizenship (Schugurensky & Myers, 2008).

Studies also confirm that in order to enhance democratic principles, it is not enough to know only the issues of democracy and the mechanisms of its functioning; it is also necessary to have a complex and multi perspective education system based on the goals and methodology of “democratic education”, which leads to the transformation of society for the better through the engagement of citizens (Banks, 2002; Giroux, 2004).

Therefore, the training of active citizens requires both a school curriculum fitted to the changing sociocultural environment and an effective learning practice (Albulescu & Ion, 2015).

The school curriculum should be focused on the development of civic values (rights, pluralism, participation and decisions), social and personal abilities (responsibility, social skills, participation in public life, etc.) in students (Birzea, 2000).

The effectiveness of the school curriculum focused on civic education is determined by the cooperative culture between the members of school community as well as between school and the community; democratic regulations for the functioning of school and authorized representative bodies; motivating environment for students’ civic actions; also, focusing on the issues developing civic competencies in the formal and informal learning process and the use of appropriate strategies (Allan, Charles, 2015).

Curriculum, which is based on the above principles, and effective school practice, on the one hand, develop students’ new democratic experiences (Young, 2006), on the other hand, enable them to develop personally (Abdi & Richardson, 2008).

Analysis of the scientific literature shows that democratic engagement is a global challenge of the XXI century, which cannot be solved by civic education alone (Runciman, 2018). All the more so as the concept and practice of civic education is still in the process of development (Grayling, 2017). Most schools do not consider goals of civic education to be a priority for their own educational practice; in addition, teachers’ willingness to link teaching of their own subject to the development of students’ civic competencies is quite low (Peterson et al., 2014).

Such a complex approach to modern education, which will be based on intercultural and civic overlapping and complementary competencies, leads to the concept of intercultural citizenship (Wagner & Byram, 2017). According to this concept, it is important to promote the development of
students' knowledge, skills and attitudes; based on it, they will have the competence to act actively in a multicultural society.

2. Background information and challenges in Georgia

Georgia has long been a bridge connecting Asia and Europe. Its close connection with different cultures and civilizations to some extent was ensured by the Silk Road which crossed Georgia. Geographical location of Georgia and historically established relations with different cultures have led to its multiculturalism, which, with the rise of globalization scales, is becoming increasingly diverse with new cultural identities (namely, migrants from China, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Arab countries, etc.).

Despite the historical experience of cohabitation in a diverse society, civic integration of different ethnic and religious groups is still a problem in Georgia, which is impeded by the stereotypes about each other's cultural heritage and national traditions, little interest in each other's cultural peculiarities, feeling of the cultural superiority by the dominant ethnic group. All of this reinforce mutual alienation and the seclusion of ethnic minorities, deficiency of their civic identity and civic activism (GedevaniSvili et al., 2014; Javakhishvili & Sarjveladze, 2007; Malazonia, Maglakelidze, Chiabrisvili, Gakheladze et al., 2017; Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2014).

It remains a challenge for Georgia, as a country of “new democracy”, to form a single civil society from a culturally diverse and differentiated society by promoting intercultural relations, civic integration and engagement. All the above, puts on the agenda the need for intercultural and civic education in secondary schools of Georgia.

The development of civic values is a task of state significance, which is declared in the documents defining education policy:

- “School should develop an adolescent's ability to protect human rights and respect the person” (Government, o. G, 2004)
- “The goal of general education is to form the civic awareness based on democratic values …” (Law of Georgia on General Education, 2005)
- “The learning process should develop students’ respect for human dignity, freedom and equality. Based on these values, it should promote forming of students’ ethical and responsible behavior ”(National Curriculum, 2018–2024).

In the first phase of the reform (2006–2011), the responsibility for achieving the goals declared in the education policy documents, was mainly imposed on civic education as an independent subject. In the second edition of the National Curriculum (2011–2018), intercultural and civic education emerges as a pervasive competence for general education, however, it was only reflected in the results to be achieved by the subject standards of the social sciences and humanities. In the third edition of the National Curriculum (2018–2024), the development of intercultural and civic competencies was reflected in the results to be achieved in all subjects:

- Forming a positive attitude towards the representatives of different linguistic and cultural identities and the ability to establish a multifaceted relationship
- Knowledge of one's own country, society and the culture of reference community and understanding of cultural diversity as a human value;
- Respect for the rights of others, compassion, care, love of the homeland, equality and tolerance, which in turn is the basis for the formation of state thinking (National Curriculum, 2018–2024).

Despite the above-mentioned reforms, development of the intercultural and civic competences in students remains a serious challenge for Georgia, which is confirmed by the results of the
studies conducted in Georgia: the majority of the surveyed students has stereotypical attitude towards different cultures, and the majority of Georgian students has the feeling of superiority over the cultural minorities, which restrains the intercultural relations and civic integration; deficiency of extracurricular activities in students’ intercultural and civic education makes the role of school less effective, which hinders the transfer of existing knowledge into action and the development of appropriate values (Malazonia & Chiabrisdili, 2019); Most of the teachers are focused on school textbooks, the content of which sometimes instills in students even a negative attitude towards certain cultures and promotes the formation of stereotypes (Malazonia et al., 2015).

Thus, the general education school fails to properly prepare students for active citizenship in a diverse society due to the lack of competence in teachers for teaching in a diverse classroom, on the one hand (Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2017) and insufficient educational resources, on the other hand (Malazonia et al., 2017).

3. Research aim and hypothesis

3.1. Research aim
The aim of this research is to determine the impact of intercultural competencies of High School\(^2\) students on the degree of their civic activism and integration in multi and monocultural regions of Georgia.

3.2. Research questions
To achieve the research aim, we have formulated two main research questions:

1. What factors contribute to the development of students’ intercultural and civic competencies?

2. What impact do students’ intercultural competencies have on their civic activism and integration?

Hypothesis. Based on the research aim and the research questions, a research hypothesis has been formed:

- Formation of intercultural and civic competencies in students is mainly conditioned by the formal educational process (classroom management style, school textbooks and pedagogical approaches) and the cultural diversity of the school environment.
- There is a positive correlation between the students’ intercultural competencies and the civic action (activity and integration).

4. Theoretical framework for the research and research instruments
Based on international experience, the criteria for determining intercultural and civic education have been developed.

We have taken three components recognized by the international experience in education (Council of Europe, 2016, UNESCO, 2013)—intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills and intercultural attitudes as the general criteria for intercultural education. Researchers (Banks, 2018; Bennett, 2013; Cushner et al., 2014; Gorski, 2017) believe that the unity of these three components is the basis for intercultural competence.

The following criteria have been selected for the research as criteria for intercultural competence:
• Knowledge of different cultures and recognition of the importance of diversity
• Communication with different cultural groups and their acceptance
• Usage of language as a means of communication
• Understanding of the importance of cultural diversity for the development of the person and society
• Understanding of the importance of peaceful cohabitation in a multicultural society

As for the civic education research framework, it is based on international practice (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 Technical Report), relevant experience of different countries (civic education models and school curricula) and main landmarks of the education policy of Georgia. Based on the above, the components of civic education are knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and engagement.

The following criteria have been selected for defining the civic activism and integration of the students in our research:

• Community services
• Participation in school/classroom management
• Participation in school/classroom initiatives
• Consideration of different opinions when making decisions
• Non-school activities (membership of public associations/clubs/groups)

Based on the identified criteria for intercultural and civic education, we have developed a questionnaire for the student. The questionnaire envisaged obtaining the information on the respondents’ basic demographic data: gender, age, nationality, religious affiliation, mother tongue, place of residence, country of birth.

We studied the intercultural competencies of students according to the following levels:

a) Knowledge at the personal level: the connection between culture, personality and society;
   Different rules, values, and behaviors; Respect for different cultures
b) Skills at the personal level: identification of similarities and differences between cultures;
   Usage of a variety of tools to explore culture
c) Attitude at the personal level: acceptance of different behavior; respect for human beings of any cultures; the willingness to share their own culture with others; interest in humans cultural diversity
d) Learning-teaching at school: the introduction to different cultures; teaching of cultures via a variety of means.
e) School environment: the mutual care; preparation for living in a culturally diverse society;
   respect for different norms and traditions; the impact of school culture on the students’ behavior; the improvement of school culture by the students.

We have also studied the civic competencies of students by the questionnaire according to the following levels:

a) Knowledge: human rights and duties, elections, community, gender and equality, media and communication, volunteering.
b) Skills: the usage of civic knowledge in reasoning and formulating one’s own positions/conclusions, as well as in a variety of life contexts.
c) Attitudes: the evaluation of individual ideas, personalities, cases, situations and relationships; Trust in democracy, citizenship and civic institutions.

d) Involvement: participation in public life and school activities.

5. Methodology

5.1. Target group

Multicultural urban (Tbilisi, Rustavi) and rural (Kvemo Kartli) regions were selected as target regions by target selection;

Also, there were selected monocultural urban (Zugdidi, Akhalkalaki) and rural (Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti) regions. As for schools of the defined regions, they have been selected at random.

The target group includes high school students and teachers of Georgian and non-Georgian-speaking schools of multicultural and monocultural rural and urban regions.

The target schools and respondents were selected on a nonrandom and random basis. In selecting schools, we used the nonrandom principle to select mono and plurilingual schools in order to maximally present the impact of the living environment on the civic competence of different cultural groups, as it is one of the markers of civic identity. Three Georgian-speaking and three sectoral schools were selected in multicultural urban regions (Tbilisi and Rustavi); in the multicultural rural region (Kvemo Kartli)—two sectoral (Georgian-Armenian and Georgian-Azerbaijani) and one Azerbaijani-speaking school. Three Georgian-speaking schools (town of Zugdidi, Samegrelo region) and the same number of Armenian-speaking schools (town of Akhalkalaki, Samtskhe-Javakheti region) were selected in monocultural urban and rural regions. The random lottery method was used directly in the selection of schools, taking into account the above criteria.

A key prerequisite for selecting teachers was working full-time in middle school. Also, teachers of different subjects had to be represented in the study in order to cover a diverse range of subjects. Considering the size of the school, we selected 3–5 teachers from each school. Due to the limited number, we used the lottery method in selecting teachers who wished to participate in the study.

The study involved middle school students from the schools identified in the first stage of selection (High school covers X–XII grades with students of 16–17-year-olds). Gender, ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the respondents were taken into account in their selection. The number of students from each school was determined based on the size of the school (22 students on average in large schools; 15 students on average in medium schools; 11 students on average in small schools). According to these requirements, the students for study participation, were selected on a random basis (lottery method) against the background of a fairly large number of applicants.

The selection of middle school students was conditioned by the fact that students of this age group:
(a) have formed certain intercultural and civic competencies based on different educational sources (school, media, environment, family, etc.); (b) have more or less experience of conscious participation in various educational activities and relatively high motivation; (c) have more or less developed skills of reflection and feedback, and (d) have critical approach towards new ideas and suggestions.

As for the teachers of the target classes, their intercultural and civic competencies and the pedagogical approaches used in the teaching process are some of the important factors in the development of the relevant competencies of the students. A total of 254 students and 57 teachers of 15 High Schools were surveyed within the scope of this research.
5.2. Research methods

Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been selected to answer the research questions.

Questionnaires have been used to determine students’ intercultural competencies and the degree of civic activism and integration (see Appendix N1 and N2). In the development of these questionnaires we have relied on the theoretical framework for intercultural and civic education developed by us (see section “Theoretical Framework for the Research”).

The coding of the respondents responses included four main stages: 1. Writing a code to each response; 2. Making an online data system; 3. Creating a book of codes. 4. Checking the codes and clearing the data. Each respondent was included in a single category of variables. A separate code was developed for a specific response.

Questionnaires were translated into the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages to avoid errors caused by language barriers in respondents’ responses. Prior to commencing the survey process, students were informed about the structure of the questionnaire and the procedures for working on it. The survey process was supervised by the authors of the present study and the teachers of non-Georgian-speaking schools, who provided relevant explanations in case of students asking questions.

The data was processed by statistical software package R. The associations between categorical variables were tested by Chi-Square Test of Independence and contingency tables (cross-tabulations) were used to analyze the data and display the results.

With the teachers of the target classes, we conducted six focus groups according to the regions and settlement types selected for the research. Focus groups (see Appendix N3) defined teachers’ professional readiness to develop students’ intercultural and civic competencies in formal and non-formal learning processes. 9–10 teachers were participating in a Focus Group. Focus Group teachers were provided with the detailed information about the research objectives and group interview procedures. An audio recording of the process was done in agreement with them, to avoid subjective perceptions and provide inter-judicial reliability in classifying the responses. An analytical report was prepared based on the transcript, which formed the basis of the correlation analysis. By the correlation analysis, we determined: (a) Relationships between students’ civic activism and degree of integration with their intercultural competencies, and (b) Relationships between students’ intercultural and civic competencies, and relevant teacher attitudes and existing pedagogical practices.

5.3. Methodological limitations of the research

The scale of the quantitative research (survey) does not allow us to generalize the obtained results, as the number of regions as well as the target schools and respondents was limited.

The results of qualitative research (focus group with teachers) reveal only the main trends, and also do not allow us to generalize the obtained results.

In the case of a student’s questionnaire, we have tried to reduce the number of insincere answers from our respondents by maintaining the anonymity and by entering the scale of sincerity into the questionnaire. We have measured the sincerity scale using the cross examination method. In the case of qualitative research, we have been able to solve the problem of insincerity by a good moderation between the interviewer and the respondent.

6. Data analysis and main results

Correlational analysis of the results of the research of students’ intercultural competencies and civic activity, revealed the following picture:
6.1. Teaching approaches vs students' intercultural and civic competence

(for visualizations see Tables N1-4 and Charts N1-2, in Appendix 4 and 5). 42% of the surveyed students are actively involved in the lesson process, which is conditioned by both internal and external motivators. In particular, 47% of students explain their active involvement with internal interest and desire to acquire new knowledge, and 53%—indicate the demonstration of knowledge and external stimuli as the reason for their active engagement. Students who are actively involved in the learning process emphasize the importance of the teacher’s ability to conduct varied and student-centered lessons.

The majority of students (64%) positively assess the experience gained by participating in intercultural and civic projects. They believe that such projects have a positive impact on the understanding of their own cultural identity (56%), as well as the desire to get acquainted with the other culture (52%) and integration (62%); They become accustomed to creative work, independence, learn argumentative reasoning, listening to others, and respecting their opinions; they develop the sense of responsibility and teamwork skills. In the context of the discussed issue, the majority of respondents’ consented to the following provisions, which should be considered a positive trend: “Teacher encourages students to make their own decisions” (27%—often; 31%—sometimes; 42% answered negatively (rarely or never)) and “Students are free to express their own opinions, even if they differ from the opinions of the majority of students” (often—41%; sometimes—24%).

The majority of students (63%) believe that lessons oriented on a transfer of passive, factual knowledge, do not contribute to the formation of healthy relationships between them. This problem is much more exacerbated in students of non-Georgian-speaking schools, in particular, 67% emphasized the difficulties caused by the language barrier in terms of communication and integration.

According to the most of students, teachers do not/or rarely use the diverse and interactive methods of intercultural education in school practice. The self-assessment of intercultural competencies in these respondents is low, while the self-assessment of intercultural competencies in students, who confirm the usage of diverse and interactive approaches by their teachers, is noticeably high.

The analysis of the focus groups of teachers also showed that participation in projects develops the system of values of students, promotes the formation of healthy relationships between them and integration. The frontal/lecture style of teaching has been named as a deterrent to students’ engagement in the learning process, which is a fairly common method in their practice. Respondents explain this circumstance by overloaded curricula, which do not allow them to use interactive teaching methods flexibly and systematically—“With a method of lecture, I can transmit the large amount of information in a short time, while using the interactive methods takes much more time” (L.S., Biology teacher, Samegrelo). The language barrier factor was also noted—no or poor knowledge of the state language by teachers and students in compact settlements of ethnic minorities, creates a serious obstacle in terms of teaching-learning and integration—“How can you think about the equal involvement of students in the discussions and debates when there are the students in my class, who do not even understand the simplest routine everyday Georgian Language” (N. N., History teacher, Rustavi); “The language barrier prevents us from implementing joint activities with the involvement of students from the Azerbijani and Georgian sectors” (B. Sh., Civic Education teacher, mixed school of Kvemo Kartli).

Based on the above, it can be noted that the respondents of the target groups understand the impact of student participation in various forms of active learning on the formation of healthy relationships and the development of intercultural and civic competencies. However, their expectations are not always realized due to: (a) the teaching style offered by the teacher/school (mostly monologue, passive) and (b) the lack of implementation of projects and their nonsystematicity. All this hinders, on the one hand, the formation and development of intercultural competencies in students, bringing different cultural identities closer together, and, on the other hand, the understanding of civic responsibility by students and civic engagement.
6.2. Intercultural competence of students vs. participation in classroom/school management and initiatives

(for visualizations see Table N5 and Chart N3, in Appendix 4 and 5). Students with a high level of consent to the provisions of the questionnaire on intercultural knowledge (see Appendix N1, Provisions 1–6) consider their own and peers’ initiatives to be important in classroom/school life. When talking about initiatives, they highlight the skills of responsibility, teamwork, mutual respect and healthy competition. 71% of students think that initiative is important in classroom/school life because it helps them to become active citizens. At the same time, respondents (61%) believe that the school initiatives of students are encouraged insufficiently. The survey shows that the rate of taking students’ opinions into account when selecting study materials is low (“never”—36%; “rarely”—39%). The majority of respondents (67%) think that students’ opinion is never taken into account when compiling the lesson schedule. 41% of students think that their opinion is not taken into account when developing school/classroom rules (27% think that it often happens). The picture is relatively positive in terms of taking into account students’ opinions when planning extracurricular activities (36%). The majority of respondents (57%) also indicate that teachers themselves are insufficiently involved in school/classroom activities, which has a negative impact on student motivation and engagement.

Respondents who also have a high level of consent in relation with intercultural skills and attitudes (see Appendix N1, Provisions 7–17) consider having a voice/opinion when making decisions about classroom/school management important. 72% of students agree with this opinion, however, 67% of them do not have the feeling that their opinions are taken into consideration when making school/classroom decisions. Respondents also unequivocally (92%) acknowledge the need to listen and consider different opinions in school/classroom management process. However, a large proportion of them (66%) believe that it is not always possible. The reasons for it may be the following: non-acceptance of different opinions by the teachers themselves (44%); fear of being expelled from the group and aspiration to belong to the majority (32%); influence of power of majority (24%).

It is noteworthy that the relatively low rate of possession of intercultural competencies is revealed in students of schools with monocultural environment, which is explained by the lack of current and daily relationships with various groups in the school and in the community in general.

When talking about the importance of student initiatives, teachers also point out the same skills (responsibility, teamwork, mutual respect, and healthy competition) that students emphasize. They agree that the implementation of student initiatives in classroom/school life helps them to become active citizens—“Any classroom/school activity planned at the initiative of students is important in terms of playing their role of citizens in the future” (I.M. Mathematics Teacher, Tbilisi). At the same time, most teachers also believe that student initiatives are not encouraged enough in schools. Most of them indicate that family members do not participate enough in school/classroom activities, which also has a negative effect on students’ relevant motives. This, in turn, can be considered as an attempt of teachers to avoid their portion of responsibility, as the full involvement of the parent in school/classroom initiatives is the result of the teacher’s competence.

The positions of teachers and students regarding the basic provisions of intercultural and civic education are mostly consistent, however, it should be noted that such consistency is only evident at the level of knowledge rather than at the levels of attitudes and actions. For instance, most students name the non-acceptance of different individual/opinion by the teachers as the main reason for not considering different opinions.

Thus, it is confirmed that the intercultural competence of students is positively correlated with their willingness to participate in classroom/school management, to take initiatives and to take into consideration different viewpoints when making decisions. In turn, this is logical, because the students’ engagement in a variety of activities helps to develop a tolerant attitude towards diversity.
At the same time, it is important that the teacher sets an example to students. Teacher’s knowledge may frequently go beyond their practice and attitudes, which often leads to the students’ heterogeneous assessments.

6.3. School vs. intercultural and civic education

Among the sources of information about different cultures, students name: school (21%), media (32%), community (29%) and family (18%). For the respondents, who study in a culturally diverse environment, school as an objective factor, is the preferred source of intercultural knowledge acquisition (41%), while only 16% of students of monocultural schools, consider school as a major source of their intercultural competence.

Negative attitudes of students towards the fact that at their school different norms and traditions have been treated with less respect, reveals the minor role of schools in the process of introducing intercultural education,14 school environment does not reflect the cultural diversity of Georgia and does not contribute to the deepening of knowledge about it (64% of respondents agree with it). Students’ critical attitude towards school is topped up with their negative attitude towards such an important provision as: “Students’ behavior is determined by the school culture” (24% of respondents fully or partially agree with it).

Influence of monocultural school on the development of students’ intercultural competence is mainly limited to the teaching process, which does not affect the development of students’ intercultural competences, as the majority of the respondents noted in their answers. It can be explained by the less relevance of the content of subjects, teaching methods, teaching resources and teachers’ competence to intercultural education goals. In multicultural schools, in addition to the teaching process, we should consider a diverse environment as an important factor for the development of intercultural competencies, which increases the range and experience of personal relationships. Having considered these circumstances, can be explained why a significant proportion of students in multicultural schools recognize the role of school for the development of their intercultural competencies.

School as an institution determining students’ civic activity is assessed by the respondents in the following way—the majority of respondents (62%) believe that the participation of students in cultural, environmental, social, charitable and other events is not encouraged by school. Students’ participation rates in school self-governing bodies elections (positive response—38%) and in decision making related to school management (positive response—29%) are also low. Moreover, a significant number of respondents (46%) believe that they are not encouraged by the teachers to make decisions independently.

The skepticismism of the majority of students towards school as a source of intercultural and civic education is due to the fact that:

a) The school environment (symbols, excursions, discussion topics, extracurricular activities) does not reflect the cultural diversity of Georgia and does not contribute to the deepening of knowledge about it (64%);

b) Teachers do not devote enough time to teaching different cultures (57%) and discussing important political and social issues (61%);

c) In teaching various cultures and issues related to citizenship, the majority of teachers do not/ or rarely use a variety of approaches which are motivating for students (62%);

d) Students are less encouraged to express their opinions freely, including different opinions (68%).

Focus Groups with teachers revealed that they find it difficult to relate the objectives of teaching their subjects to the development of intercultural and civic competencies in students. Most teachers
believe that taking care of these competencies is the prerogative of the subject “Citizenship.” Thus, they rarely attribute the lack of intercultural competences in their students to the shortcomings of their own practice. They believe that the lack of the above competence is also due to inadequate school textbooks and the lack of methodological resources to assist teachers. Some teachers believe that the development of students’ intercultural and civic competences is mainly prevented by the intolerant impulses coming from their families; however, students are focused on the shortcomings of a mentoring process, the deficiency of intercultural communication in school environment, the dysfunctional school self-governing bodies and fragmented civic activities.

Based on the above, it can be said that the abilities of schools are not used effectively in terms of development of students’ intercultural competences. School as a leading agent of intercultural education must take responsibility for the development of its students’ intercultural and civic competences. It will be resulted in: (a) the promotion of successful integration of culturally diverse students and (b) their active and meaningful participation in school institutions, which are important for democracy and the implementation of the school/classroom initiatives by the students.

6.4. Civic activities vs. school culture
(for visualizations see Tables N6-7 and Charts N 4–5, in Appendix 4 and 5). The survey showed that students are largely aware of the importance of engagement in community service for their personal development: they become accustomed to hard work, compassion, and develop a sense of responsibility. However, few are aware (57%) of the public purpose of such activities.15

One of the main initiators of the involvement of students in community service should be the student self-government. Students understand the function of the self-government as follows: ensuring students’ participation in the learning process and school projects, planning classroom/school activities, protecting the rights of peers, a sense of responsibility for the class and school, personal development, etc. However, only 24% of respondents linked the role of school self-government to community service.

A thought-provoking trend has emerged among students of non-Georgian-speaking schools—they are mostly skeptical of students’ self-government and point out that they are less or not involved in school management and decision-making process at all.

Surveys show that the majority of students (68%) did not participate in the work of self-government. And 54% of respondents believe that school (administration, teachers) does not encourage them to take part in school/classroom management.

In addition, there was a positive attitude of students towards the provision—“We can improve school culture” (68%). This position is especially noteworthy if we consider that school culture is formed by students’ conscious participation in: (a) community service, (b) student self-government, and (c) planning and implementation of classroom/school initiatives. Unfortunately, the participation of students in all three aspects is passive, despite the fact that their readiness and self-evaluation for improving school culture are significantly high.

For achieving students’ participation in improving school culture, formalistic attitudes of school and teachers towards community service, student self-government, and classroom/school initiatives need to be changed with the conscious and active participation of students in these processes.

7. Key findings
The study revealed the following trends:

a. In schools where the frontal style of teaching or teacher-centered approach dominates, the development of intercultural competencies in students and the integration of different cultural groups are hindered, and civic activity is weak. However, when the student-centered approaches are used, the above relevant indicators are noticeably higher. Such a correlation is explained by the fact that in
interactive teaching the student is actively involved in the decision-making process, in taking initiatives, they take responsibility for themselves, they are not afraid to deal with challenges, and so on. This experience gained in the learning process helps them to develop the skills needed for an active citizen (for visualizations see Tables N8-11 and Charts N6-9, in Appendix 4 and 5):

b. Knowledge of different cultures and recognition of diversity by students impact their willingness to engage, appreciate and take into consideration different opinions when making decisions. This relationship and mutual causality can be explained by the fact that the intercultural education helps students to overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and consequently, it helps them to accept people of different cultures, to develop the sense of empathy towards them and, ultimately, to form the skills which are necessary for peaceful co-existence (for visualizations see Table N12 and Chart N10, in Appendix 4–5).

c. The analysis of the research results refuted our assumption that the formal educational process would have a leading role in terms of developing students' intercultural and civic competencies. It has been proved that the impact of experience gained through informal communication in a diverse school environment is much higher on students' intercultural competence than the direct impact of the learning process.

d. Students in both multicultural and monocultural environments, who believe that the learning process is not tailored to their interests and individual needs, are less likely to trust school in terms of developing intercultural competencies. They also recognize the media and the living environment as the primary sources for civic education. That can be explained by the fact that differentiated approaches are less implemented in schools, which makes the learning process uninteresting and unreliable for some students. That in turn increases the degree of influence of the media and the environment.

e. In the monocultural environment, the benchmarks of students' intercultural competencies are low. In addition, compared to Georgian-speaking schools, the civic activism and integration of students of non-Georgian-speaking schools are visibly weak, which is due to the exclusion of minority communities, lack of civic identity, insufficient knowledge of the state language and less access to the media.

f. The intercultural competencies of the students of monolingual schools of multicultural environment are noticeably high, as well as their levels of civic engagement (volunteering activities, participation in social projects, relations with local self-government, etc.) and identity levels. This is facilitated by interactions with diverse groups in informal settings, better knowledge of the state language by ethnic minorities, and access to the media. These competencies are even higher in multilingual schools in the multicultural urban environment, which is enhanced by the cultural diversity of the school environment and the experience of peaceful coexistence (for visualizations see Tables N13-19 and Charts N11-14, in Appendix 4 and 5).

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The intercultural and civic competencies of students are mostly influenced by the cultural characteristics of the living and school environment (diversity/monotony). These competencies are essential in development of acceptance of, support for and participation in the culturally plural composition of societies at large (Celenk & Van De Vijver, 2014). All the above-mentioned is especially important for a multicultural Georgia in the process of developing democracy and civil society, where despite the long traditions of intercultural relations, the integration of different cultural groups and their active citizenship remains a problem.

A study showed that the role of formal teaching in the process of successful civic integration of culturally diverse students is relatively low, while international studies confirm that it is formal education as a process with strong valuable influence (Banks, 2018) that is crucial for the development of students' intercultural and civic competencies. The following factors ensure the impressive effectiveness of the formal education: a fair and equitable school environment (Global Citizenship in the Classroom, 2015), a participatory curriculum (Kennedy, 2019), a learning practice tailored to sociocultural environment (Civic Education in the 21st Century,
2016), and tolerant attitude to diversity (Weinberg & Flinders, 2018). The above factors are not very much taken into account in Georgian educational practice, where intercultural education is dominated by a contributory rather than participatory, especially, social action-oriented approach (Bank, 1988). The role of textbooks as a key learning resource should be considered in the formal education process (according to TIMMS 2019 more than 70% of students were taught by using textbooks as the basis of instruction), while the Georgian textbook often does not contain sufficient information and methodological tools to form intercultural and civic competencies.

The above can explain indeed the different effects of the role of formal education in the development of students’ intercultural and civic competencies within international and our research.

The fact that in Georgia, as well as in the Western educational space (Peterson et al., 2014) a significant part of teachers do not perceive intercultural and civic competence as pervasive competence and consider it the duty of one subject—Citizenship and its teacher, also remains one of the main problems. However, according to the requirement of the National Curriculum (2016), the above-mentioned competencies are pervasive and taking care of their development is the duty of teachers of all subjects and steps.

Recommendations based on the results of the study can be formulated at several levels:

**At the individual level**—acting teachers should necessarily take care of their professional development, which will make the learning process student oriented and, consequently, interesting and trustworthy.

**At the school level**—school should take care of the development of school culture, which will facilitate the involvement of students in decision making. This will be the prerequisite for their civic activism in the future. School should offer students a variety of formal and informal learning experiences. School should develop a curriculum tailored to its needs, which will ensure the development of intercultural and civic competencies in students.

**At the state level**—a) state should provide a variety of learning resources to promote intercultural and civic competencies. b) state should create more efficient conditions for the study of the state language (prepare teachers for non-Georgian-speaking schools, create a variety of resources, etc.) for non-Georgian-speaking students; c) state should encourage school/community projects aimed at integrating different cultural groups; d) state should provide equal access to the media in both monocultural and multicultural environments.

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### Notes
1. According to the data of 2014 general census of population (census 2014 [http://census.gov/files/results/Census%20Release_GEO.pdf], 86.8% of population of Georgia are Georgians; followed by Azerbaijanis (6.3%); Armenians (4.5%); Russians (0.7%); Ossetians (0.4%) and others. 83.4% of the population is Orthodox Christians; 10.7% of the population is Muslim; 2.9% of the population is Armenian-Apostolic believers; Catholics make 0.5% of population.

2. High school covers XI-XII grades with students aged 16-17.

3. This is an adapted version of the questionnaire that we used in the study: Factors of students’ intercultural competence development in the context of Georgia (Malazonia, et al., 2017). Cogent Education. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1302867

4. There density and interaction of culturally diverse populations are high in Tbilisi and Rustavi.

5. Ethnically diverse populations (Georgians, Azeris, Armenians, Greeks) live in Kvemo Kartli (Eastern Georgia). Its religious map is also varied. There are settlements where compactly live culturally homogeneous and non-homogeneous groups, there are Georgian-speaking, Azerbaijani-speaking, Russian-speaking and Armenian-speaking, and also mixed schools.

6. The population of Zugdidi is ethnically Georgian and religiously Orthodox, while Akhalkalaki is
populated by ethnic Armenians and religiously the members of Armenian Apostolic Church.
7. It is located in Western Georgia; it is inhabited by a culturally homogeneous (Georgian) population and has a low intercultural communication rate.
8. It is located in Southern Georgia. It is mostly inhabited by a culturally homogeneous (Armenian) population and has a low intercultural communication rate.
9. Two or several language sectors are functioning in a sectoral school.
10. 1000 and more students
11. From 400 to 1000 students
12. Up to 400 students
13. The majority of respondents (47%) were Georgians, followed by Armenian (22%), Azerbaijani (24%), Russian (5%), and Greek (2%) respondents. 48% of the surveyed students for democratic culture, 52% were girls. Georgian was the mother tongue for 51% of the respondents, Armenian for 21%, Azerbaijani for 14%, and Russian for 4%.
14. Negative response to this provision prevails among the students of monocultural schools (58%), attitudes of students of multicultural schools are relatively positive (negative response was given by 45% of respondents).
15. Students prefer to participate in activities related to human rights (54%) and environmental issues (62%). However, most of them never participated in the activities planned by the youth organization (62%); in community-initiated social and charity projects (58%) and in awareness-raising campaigns (International AIDS Day, World No Tobacco Day) (54%).
16. Of the intercultural school activities, students and teachers mostly name introductory ethnographic events, which are mainly related to the contributory approach to intercultural education.

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Appendices
Appendix N1. A Questionnaire Defining Intercultural Competencies for Students

| Provision                                                                 | I disagree | I partially agree | I agree | I do not have an answer |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1. Different cultures are characterized by different rules, values, and behaviors |            |                   |         |                         |
| 2. Familiarity with other cultures changes human values                   |            |                   |         |                         |
| 3. Cultural diversity may lead to difficulties in a relationship          |            |                   |         |                         |
| 4. Culture is taught in society                                            |            |                   |         |                         |
| 5. All cultures are equally respectable                                   |            |                   |         |                         |
| 6. Human culture is conditioned by many factors (language, age, social status, gender, abode, education, religion, etc.) |            |                   |         |                         |
| 7. I can identify similarities and differences between cultures           |            |                   |         |                         |
| 8. I use a variety of tools to study culture (e.g., relationship with people, literature, movies, history, etc.). |            |                   |         |                         |
| 9. I have always been interested in the cultural diversity of people      |            |                   |         |                         |

(Continued)
| Provision                                                                 | I disagree | I partially agree | I agree | I do not have an answer |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 10 I am aware of the fact that there are connections between cultures (e.g., borrowing words, common or similar rituals, etc.). |            |                   |         |                         |
| 11 I respect people of any cultures                                      |            |                   |         |                         |
| 12 I am ready to share my own culture with others                        |            |                   |         |                         |
| 13 I would like to observe and analyze unknown cultural events            |            |                   |         |                         |
| 14 I am ready to help a representative of another culture                |            |                   |         |                         |
| 15 I wish to overcome cultural contradictions                             |            |                   |         |                         |
| 16 I control my own negative reaction to cultural differences (e.g., fear, insult, irritability, sense of superiority, etc.). |            |                   |         |                         |
| 17 At our school, teachers introduce us to different cultures            |            |                   |         |                         |
| 18 Teachers teach us different cultures by varied means                  |            |                   |         |                         |
| 19 The interaction of cultures in school is beneficial for everyone       |            |                   |         |                         |

(Continued)
Appendix N2. Questionnaire for students to define civic activism and integration

| Provision                                                                 | Never | Rarely | Often | I do not have an answer |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| a) Community services                                                     |       |        |       |                         |
| 1 Have you ever participated in the community service? (E.g., cleaning a school, yard, classroom, or other area, helping to a nursing home, an orphanage, volunteering, etc.) |       |        |       |                         |
| If so, for what purpose? How important was this experience?               |       |        |       |                         |
| 2 How actively are your peers involved in the community service?          |       |        |       |                         |
| 3 Is the community service encouraged by your school/family?               |       |        |       |                         |
| b) Participation in a school/classroom management                         |       |        |       |                         |
| 4 Have you ever participated in student self-governance?                  |       |        |       |                         |

What do you think is the purpose of student self-governance?

(Continued)
| Question                                                                 | Provision                                                                 | Never | Rarely | Often | I do not have an answer |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| 5 Does the school management take into consideration the opinion of the students when making decisions related to the class/school? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| 6 How much do you agree with the idea that students are able to improve school/class culture (relationships at all levels, discipline, mutual care, hygiene, school care, etc.)? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| 7 Do you think that respecting and considering different opinions are important for participating in school/classroom management? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| Participation in school/classroom initiatives                           |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| 8 Have you done any activities in the classroom/school on your own initiative? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| What was the result of any initiative by you or your peers?             |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| 9 Are you going to take any initiative in the future as well?           |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| In your opinion, is student initiative important in classroom/school life? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |
| 10 Are your or your peers’ initiatives encouraged by your school/family? |                                                                           |       |        |       |                         |

Civic integration:
Where and how do you get information about people from different cultures and experience of interacting with them? Which source is more important to you (school, family, neighborhood, friendship, media, etc.)?
|   | Provision                                                                 | Never | Rarely | Often | I do not have an answer |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| d) Participation in the learning process                                   |       |        |       |                       |
| 11 | Have you ever participated in the team/group study or research project?  |       |        |       |                       |
|    | What kind of projects are being implemented at your school? In your class?|       |        |       |                       |
| 12 | Have participating in such projects made it easier for you to interact with people? |       |        |       |                       |
| e) | Engagement in the learning process                                        |       |        |       |                       |
| 13 | Do you participate in the lesson process?                                 |       |        |       |                       |
|    | Name a few reasons for your activity/passivity that you consider important.|       |        |       |                       |
| 14 | Does the lesson process promote healthy peer relationships?               |       |        |       |                       |
| 15 | Are your school achievements encouraged/recognized at school?             |       |        |       |                       |
| f) | Participation in non-school activities                                     |       |        |       |                       |
| 16 | Do you take up any extracurricular activities (sports, arts, crafts, etc.)?|       |        |       |                       |
| 17 | Are you a member of any public association/club/group?                    |       |        |       |                       |
| 18 | Is your participation in non-school activities encouraged by your school/ family? |       |        |       |                       |

In your opinion, is it important for your peers to participate in public associations/clubs/groups? What for?
Appendix N 3. Teachers' Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Do you introduce students to the culture of all groups existed at school?

2. Do you teach students to perceive the world from the perspective of different cultural groups?

3. Do you teach other cultures based on a culture familiar to students?

4. Do you use a variety of intercultural education methods?

5. Does the school prepare students for living in a culturally diverse society?

6. Does the school care about enriching the intercultural experience of teachers?

7. Do you consider the cultural foundations of the specific behavior of your colleagues, students, and their parents?

8. When managing educational processes, how much does the school take into consideration the cultural diversity of the school community?

9. How much do students participate in community services?

10. To what extent are community services done by students and student initiatives encouraged at school?

11. How much do students participate in school/classroom management?

12. To what extent does the school leadership take into consideration students' opinions when making class/school related decisions?

13. Are students able to improve school/class culture (relationships at all levels, discipline, mutual care, hygiene, school care, etc.)?

14. To what extent do students participate in a group study/research project and how does this process affect their culture and value system?

15. To what extent are students involved in the learning process (name some of the reasons for their activity/passivity that are important to you)?

16. To what extent are students' academic achievements encouraged at school?
