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The Secretary General's New Initiative

Seminar on

"History Teaching and Education for Democratic Citizenship"

Tbilissi, Georgia,

19 – 20 November 1998

Report

Strasbourg

Seminar on
" History teaching and education for democratic
citizenship"

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Report by

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CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	5
II.	INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.....	5
III.	THE GEORGIAN SITUATION	6
IV.	THE WESTERN EUROPEAN CASE-STUDIES	8
V.	CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12

APPENDIX I

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR.....	14
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APPENDIX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	16
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I. INTRODUCTION

A Seminar on "History teaching and education for democratic citizenship" took place in Tbilisi, Georgia, from 19 - 20 November 1998. The Seminar was organised to provide an exchange of views between Council of Europe experts and participants from Georgia. The experts were:

- Arild THORBJORNSEN, Norway;
- Jan SNIKERS, Netherlands;
- Alan McCULLY, Northern Ireland.

Participants from Georgia represented:

- officials from the Ministry of Education responsible for history teaching and education for democratic citizenship in Georgia;
- authors of textbooks;
- curriculum specialists;
- teacher training specialists and teachers.

The aims of the seminar were to :

- 1) discuss how history teaching can contribute to education for democratic citizenship in present-day secondary schools in Georgia;
- 2) discuss how the curricula on history for secondary schools in Georgia should promote democratic values and strengthen democratic stability in the Caucasian region;
- 3) analyse the progress achieved, and perspectives in, the preparation of teaching materials for history including those relating to education for citizenship in Georgia;
- 4) review the ways in which the initial and in-service training of history teachers and specialists in democratic citizenship education are carried out in Georgia.

The working languages of the Seminar were Georgian and English, and simultaneous interpretation was provided during plenary sessions. Interpreters were present in discussion groups.

II. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In their introductory remarks the Georgian representatives stressed the significance of the seminar for Georgia. It marked a mutual step forward in the progress of the country towards involvement in Europe. From an educational

perspective, it was a recognition that citizenship cannot be separated from general education and that the subject of history has an important part to play in nurturing young people in the tradition of democracy.

In reply, on behalf of the Council of Europe, Gabriele MAZZA, highlighted the importance of the human rights and rule of law dimensions to citizenship education, and the centrality of the role of education in reconciling the individual with collective responsibility. The Council of Europe offers different experiences in a multilateral setting, which can be drawn on to meet the specific needs of individual countries. Georgia was already making progress in European cultural co-operation as illustrated by involvement in the Black Sea Initiative on History, as well as participation in language development and higher education programmes. Education for Democratic Citizenship is a major concern of the Council of Europe and the seminar should be the prelude to further involvement through teacher and student exchanges, co-operation in higher education and research and the development of new communication technologies. The Council is "not rich in money but tries to be rich in ideas". There is a strong link between citizenship and history teaching and the seminar can make a contribution to European discussion on the issue.

The report of the seminar which follows is in three sections.

Section one draws on the Georgian presentations to set the context for the work on history and citizenship.

Section two outlines the three Western European case-studies presented and draws out the issues they raise.

Section three identifies the issues raised in the discussion sessions and suggests guidelines for further development.

III. THE GEORGIAN SITUATION

The presentations of Nodar ASSATIANI, Merab MODABADZE and Zviad MIMINOSHVILI dealt with Georgia's past and its relationship with the school history curriculum, and with the practical constraints on implementing educational change.

It was stressed that Georgia has a long and distinctive past, and that, in the Soviet era this was suppressed in the interest of assimilation with Russia and the glorification and justification of Marxism. Georgian culture was portrayed negatively, and, to have it recognised, academics had to appeal to those outside the Soviet bloc.

Now, in a fledgling democratic society faced with the task of creating a new education system, particular Georgian traditions have much to offer. For

instance, with regard to Georgia's national role within the Caucasian region the notion of a "brotherhood of nations" extends back into ancient history. There are also strong examples of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Two thousand years ago the Georgians welcomed Jewish settlers and that toleration has been sustained through time. Conversely, the 20th Century gives insight into the practices of a totalitarian society. History teaching has a duty to unmask the past and to overturn falsifications. Whatever the contribution of history to the area of citizenship, it must be underpinned by objectivity and the pursuit of truth. Policy makers must be aware of the tension between nation building and the dangers of promoting a narrow nationalism on the one hand and the tendency to adopt western positions uncritically on the other. There is a need for more Georgian history but focused on Georgia and her neighbours, and her relationship with the wider world. Programmes should balance political with social history, reflect diversity and be the product of democratic debate. The positions of Georgia's many minority groups should be recognised.

The history curriculum, put in place since the end of the Soviet era, has two strands:

- one traces national traditions and achievements chronologically from the mediaeval to modern periods;
- the other provides a broad sweep of world history and considers Georgia's place within this.

Civics is a separate subject area but a clear vision has yet to emerge as to what a citizenship programme should entail.

Many constraints were identified which hinder the implementation of effective curriculum change:

- 1) There are very limited financial resources available to support the education system. Only 5% of the 1998 budget is available for education. Educational resources, including textbooks to support the new objectives of the curriculum, are in short supply.
- 2) Introducing new ideas to teachers is difficult. The previous system not only controlled knowledge but also stifled innovative pedagogy. Older teachers have little experience of encouraging critical thinking in their students. Present salaries make it difficult to attract more able young people into teaching. The systematic training of teachers in the methodologies associated with encouraging active citizenship are beyond the resources of the state.
- 3) Physical conditions within schools and large classes make it difficult to foster a climate of change.

IV. THE WESTERN EUROPEAN CASE-STUDIES

The three contributors each stressed that their presentations were case-studies, particular to their respective countries, and that participants should judge what was appropriate in Georgia's circumstances.

1) NORWAY

The Norwegian model, outlined by Arild THORBJORNSEN, treats history and civics as discrete subjects as a result of a decision taken in 1989. There is a common purpose in that the combined social studies area of the curriculum seeks to develop a broad range of knowledge, skills and values to prepare young people to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. A citizen should have:

- subject competence e.g. knowledge of certain topics or subjects;
- learning competence e.g. the ability to assimilate new knowledge throughout their lifetime;
- social competence e.g. the ability to co-operate, work in a team and solve conflicts
- methodological or creative competence e.g being analytical, creative and innovative.

To foster these, active learning and problem solving are essential in the learning process.

Civics was separated from history to ensure that it received proper emphasis, to enable all secondary students to experience it and to allow teachers to be recruited from a greater range of subject backgrounds, particularly those from the social sciences. While some history teachers committed to citizenship have found the new arrangements less flexible, the changes have allowed a greater concentration on the teaching of citizenship.

The civics course is broadly based. It examines democratic institutions and processes as well as a range of social, community, cultural, environmental and international issues. The process the students are taken through is more important than the knowledge learned. The course seeks to develop critical thinking and rational decision-making based on the examination of a range of sources of information. The resources used are both course-specific such as textbooks, or can come from the community. Textbooks include activities and tasks which embrace the methodology of enquiry, and information and communication technology is employed to further study. Project work which provides students with the opportunity to carry out their own research is an essential element of assessment, and steps are taken at initial training and in-service levels to equip teachers to supervise projects effectively. Above all, the

civics course seeks to prepare students for the challenges of adult life in a democracy by equipping them with the skills for life-long learning.

2) THE NETHERLANDS

Jan SNIEKERS, when outlining the Dutch curriculum, presented an alternative model of delivering citizenship education. In the Netherlands, the history and civics programmes are integrated in the early years of secondary education (the 12-14-15 age group). At this stage of development, Dutch students are required to follow a basic curriculum with a compulsory core. The introduction of the basic curriculum arose from the need for citizens to respond flexibly to the growing complexity of the social system, with its many social and ethical questions. Young people should:

- experience personal growth and development;
- learn to function meaningfully in society;
- make responsible choices for future study and work.

The emphasis across the curriculum is on fostering more autonomous learners.

The citizenship element of basic education is provided for in two ways through:

- social, political and ethical issues being raised in a range of subjects including geography, economics, biology and health education;
- specifically, a subject called history and civics.

Sometimes schools organise enquiry projects lasting several weeks which draw on the knowledge and skills of several subject areas.

The history component of this course selects themes from the past covering both national and international history which give insight into both democratic and counter-democratic movements e.g. democratic revolutions in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries, the period of colonialism, imperialism and decolonisation, especially with regard to the Dutch colonies, and communism and national socialism in the 20th Century. Social, economic and cultural, as well as political topics, are important. Historical themes are questioned in such a way that students better understand present-day life and the way it has been influenced by the past. They are encouraged to look at issues from different perspectives and to think about the impact they have on their own values.

In the civics part of the subject, the students acquire knowledge and skills to gain understanding of the structure and functioning of the present day Dutch political system. This is done as far as possible through engagement with issues which are within the interest and experience of young people such as the provision of cultural and sporting facilities for young people or the refugee problem within the European Union. Again, emphasis is placed on

understanding different perspectives and the influence value positions have on decision-making.

Therefore, the history and civics components support each other. History studies the development and functioning of the political system in the past, while civics enquires into its structure and functioning today.

At the post-15 age group examination level, students may choose to continue history and civics but, also, must follow a Social and Political Education course. Both courses deepen and broaden the approaches developed in basic education and both encourage students to reach their own conclusions and express their own opinions. There are some concerns that some overlap occurs as a result of the separate provision, and that preparation for citizenship suffers from history not being compulsory for all students.

3) NORTHERN IRELAND

The perspective from Northern Ireland presented by Alan McCully was different again. Whereas Norway and The Netherlands have well established citizenship programmes, that in Northern Ireland is still in an early stage of evolution and must be seen, hopefully, in the context of a society emerging from 30 years of community violence. That conflict has seen over 3,000 deaths and has its roots in differences in identity and allegiances between two main religio-cultural traditions. Popular selections and distortions of history are frequently used by both groupings to justify contemporary sectional interests. Any response of education to addressing the conflict must take account of the fact that over 90% of young people attend segregated schools.

Yet, since the outbreak of violence in 1969, education has been seen as one way of healing division and reducing conflict. When a new curriculum was put in place in 1989 two of its cross-curricular themes were Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. Jointly, these themes are about:

- fostering respect;
- understanding conflict;
- appreciating interdependence;
- cultural understanding.

The themes have no formal time-tabled space but are expected to permeate the curriculum. Every teacher and every subject has a statutory obligation to address the themes. Some subjects have a greater role than others and history is seen as a major contributor.

The history curriculum has been strongly influenced by the enquiry-based methods of the English curriculum with an emphasis placed on the inter-relationship between key skills and concepts, and knowledge. The curriculum

seeks to develop the skills of historical enquiry, chronological awareness, an understanding of different interpretations and the ability to organise and communicate ideas. It is envisaged that students will apply their developing critical skills to aspects of European and world history including key modules focusing on contested areas of Irish history. In turn, these skills should be transferable to other aspects of contemporary life.

In practice, EMU has succeeded in focusing educational thinking on community relations issues, but it has also had its limitations. The cross-curricular model has run up against the examination pressures of subject provision. By concentrating on relationships, EMU has often failed to address underlying structural inequalities in society. Teachers have been reluctant to engage with more controversial and divisive issues either through avoidance or because they feel ill-trained to do so. Practice in history has tended to follow a similar pattern. History teachers seem happier applying rational objectivity to the past rather than activating the emotional involvement of the present.

Research has indicated the need for a more structured intervention in the area of social, civic and political education in Northern Ireland. This, combined with the prospect of new democratic political structures as a consequence of the Easter 1998 peace agreement, and moves toward a defined citizenship programme elsewhere in the United Kingdom, have prompted the establishment of pilot projects at the University of Ulster which may evolve into a fully fledged social, civic and political programme after 2001. These have the key concepts of pluralism, justice, and democracy at the core of their thinking. The question remains as to whether history's role should be restricted to providing the historical background and thinking processes to inform contemporary debate, or whether it should adjust its content and perspective to engage directly with the values implicit in pluralism, justice and democracy?

In summary, the three presentations raised the issue of the relationship between history curricula and citizenship. Should the former incorporate the latter or should citizenship be free-standing? Whatever the model certain common characteristics emerged from discussion:

- effective citizenship education requires an enquiry approach which fosters critical thinking in young people;
- schools and classrooms should become more democratic in their organisation and approach;
- teachers require training to use a range of resources and employ active, experiential learning approaches.

VI. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Much of the second day of the seminar was given over to detailed consideration of the issues raised in the presentations. The following points emerged:

- 1) A citizenship programme should develop within the framework of clear objectives for the creation of an open society. The education system, schools and classrooms are a part of that society and should reflect those values.
- 2) The seminar recognised the very real problems facing educators in Georgia with regard to resources. It also took account of the country's special cultural and political circumstances. Any citizenship programme which emerges must reflect Georgia's needs and have the ownership of Georgian teachers.
- 3) The seminar presented two models for citizenship education. One was the discrete subject area as implemented in Norway, and envisaged for Northern Ireland. The other was The Netherlands model in which citizenship forms an integral part of the history curriculum. It was concluded that, whatever the model used, it was vital to recognise the complementary relationship between history and citizenship education. They share a common methodology of enquiry, and an understanding of democratic, and counter democratic forces in the past is essential to understanding the role of the active citizen in the present.
- 4) The seminar emphasised strongly the relationship between the methodological approaches, and the knowledge, of citizenship programmes. Enquiry, active learning and action projects within the community are key components. Teachers should ask questions and set problems rather than give answers.
- 5) The challenge that fostering thinking skills and critical reflection poses for Georgian educators used to imparting an imposed curriculum was not underestimated. Given the impact on teacher morale of working in very difficult conditions, the importance of creating partnerships was stressed. It was vital that government officials, teachers, teacher associations and NGOs formed networks and entered into co-operation to ensure that the limited resources available are used to their full potential.

- 6) The seminar revealed that several important innovations in the citizenship field are already operating in Georgia, particularly through the work of NGOs. The teachers engaged in these should be used by official channels to train colleagues and disseminate good practice.
- 7) The seminar warned against too great an emphasis being put on new textbooks as an agent of curriculum change. Textbooks are important but they must not be the only resource steering the direction of the course. Those that are used to support citizenship education should incorporate the enquiry philosophy but it is also crucial that teachers be encouraged to develop the autonomy to draw on a wide variety of sources to discuss contemporary issues.
- 8) It was suggested that the financial support available from outside Georgia might be best used to support the creation of effective networks amongst those interested in citizenship education, and to help produce magazines and journals which support the classroom teacher.
- 9) The Council of Europe might support training programmes which engage teachers in active learning approaches.

Concluding Remarks

In concluding the seminar, the Council of Europe officials and experts praised the enthusiasm and determination displayed by participants from Georgia to establish democratic principles within the education system. Council of Europe officials pledged their support to achieve this objective, and thanked representatives of the Ministry of Education for their outstanding hospitality.

APPENDIX I

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR

Thursday, 19 November

- 10.30 Opening session
- Mr Kakaha CHITAIA - Head of the Foreign Affairs Department, Parliament of Georgia
Mr Shota DOGHONADZE - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgia
Mr Gabriele MAZZA - Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe
- 11.30 Plenary Session.
- Presentations on:
- "The progress achieved and the main difficulties which exist in the preparation of new textbooks on history and civic education for secondary schools in Georgia" by Mr Nodar ASATIANI, Georgia.
- "The national curricula for history and education for citizenship for secondary schools in Norway: taught together and separately; advantages and disadvantages" by Mr Arild THORBJORNSEN, Norway.
- "History teaching and citizenship education: the case of Northern Ireland" by Mr Alan McCULLY, Northern Ireland.
- 14.30 Three parallel working groups

Friday 20 November

- 9.30 Plenary session.
- Presentations on:
- "History teaching and civic education: the example of the Netherlands" by Mr Jan SNIEKERS.

"How democratic citizenship education and history teaching can supplement each other in present-day secondary schools in Georgia" by Mr Merab MODEBADZE, Georgia.

"The progress achieved and main difficulties which exist in organising initial and in-service training for teachers responsible for history and civic education in secondary schools in Georgia" by Mr Zviad MIMINOSHVILI, Georgia.

- 12.00 Plenary discussion
- 15.30 Reports of the three rapporteurs of the working groups
- 16.30 Comments of the Seminar Rapporteur on behalf of the Council of Europe experts
- Closing remarks.

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Mr Alexander KARTOZIA, Minister of Education of Georgia.
2. Mr George SHARVASHIDZE, First Deputy Minister of Education of Georgia.
3. Mr Tamaz TATISHVILI, Deputy Minister of Education of Georgia.
4. Mr Mikhail MINDADZE, Head of the Department of Pre-school, Secondary Education and Children's Rights of the Ministry of Education of Georgia.
5. Mr Gabriele MAZZA, Head of the Education Department, Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe.
6. Ms Alison CARDWELL, Administrator, Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe.
7. Ms Tatiana MILKO, Administrative Assistant, Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe.
8. Mr Alan McCULLY, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland.
9. Mr Jan SNEKERS, National Institute for curriculum development, The Netherlands.
10. Mr Arild THORBJORNSEN, Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, Norway.
11. Mr Kote ANTADZE, Holder of the Chair of History of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.
12. Mr Nodar ASATIANI, Holder of the Chair of Georgian History of Ilia Chavchavadze State Institute of Western European Languages and Culture.
13. Mr Mikhail CHACHKHUNASHVILI, Fund "Open Society - Georgia".
14. Mr Irakli CHKONIA, Assistant Chairman of the Georgian Parliament.
15. Mr Zurab GAIPARASHVILI, Head of the Department of Young Cause.

16. Mr Mikhail GAPRINDASHVILI, Academy of Sciences.
17. Mr Koba GILASHVILI, Children's Federation.
18. Mr Irakli GOGAVA, Head of Department of the Georgian Parliament.
19. M. Tatuna GRADZELIDZE, Fund "Open Society Georgia".
20. Ms Nino GVARAMADZE, Red Cross.
21. Mr Givi INKSKIRVELI, Professor of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.
22. Mr Nugzar KANALAKI, Teacher of History.
23. Mr Giga Iomtadze, Teacher of History.
24. Ms Tamriko MEIPHARIANI, Scientist of the Teacher Training Institute.
25. Mr Tamaz NIKOLAISHVILI, Scientist of the Iakob Gogebashvili National Institute of Pedagogical Sciences.
26. Mr Paata RAMISHVILI, Scientist of the Institute of History and Ethnography of Georgia.
27. Mr Nicko SOSELIA, Deputy Head, Department of Education of Tbilissi.
28. Mr Irakli TODUA, Head of the Scouting Movement.
29. Mr Gocha TSKITISHVILI, Georgian Democratic Institute.
30. Mr Sergo VARDOSANIDZE, Holder of the Chair of Caucasian People's History of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani State Pedagogical University.
31. Ms Rusudan BERIDZE, Deputy Secretary-in-Chief, Security Council.
32. Ms Tsira CHIKVAIDZE, Scientist of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.
33. Mr Shalva DONDUA, Scientist of the Research Institute.
34. Mr Pharna LOMASHVILI, Professor of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.

35. Ms Mariam LORTKIPANIDZE, Holder of the Chair of Georgian History of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.
36. Mr Zara MARUASHVILI, Head of the Tbilissi Central Board of Education.
37. Mr Roin METREVELI, Rector of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.
38. Ms Irina NINUA, Council of Refugees.
39. Mr George NOZADZE, Officer of the Education programme, Council of Refugees.
40. Mr Alexander SHUSHANASHVILI, Scientist of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilissi State University.

