

MONITORING OF THE SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

GEORGIAN LITERATURE



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



The organization thanks

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The report is developed within the project "**Georgia as a Multi-ethnic and Multi-faceted Country**". The project is supported by the Georgian Center for Strategy and Development (GCSD) within the framework of the program "Enhancing the Capacity of Georgia in Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation", which is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. The content of the report is the responsibility of its authors and it cannot be perceived as the position or opinion of the donor.

Tbilisi

2023

SUBJECTS UNDER MONITORING - GEORGIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (7TH TO 12TH GRADES)

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INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the project "Georgia as a Multi-ethnic and Multi-faceted Country", we present the second consecutive monitoring report on the Georgian language and literature textbooks.

When examining Georgian language and literature textbooks, our main task was to evaluate:

- To what extent and how frequently are representatives of national or religious minorities living/active in Georgia found in literature textbooks;
- To what extent do the creators of school textbooks realize that for a diverse Georgia, a Georgian does not exclusively refer to "Georgian Orthodox man" and the Georgian literature encompasses all those authors and figures who have contributed to making literature texts in our country;
- To what extent the idea is implemented that the literary heritage of Georgia means everything created by writers living in Georgia, regardless of the language of the original text – considered and accommodated.

Therefore, our interest has been determined by this very fact. In this report, we will try to answer some fundamental questions. One of the assignments given in the chapter – "**Diverse Georgia**", the 7th-grade textbook (Diogene, 2019), well-combines the essence/purpose of these questions as well as the central idea of building a civic nation:

In Georgia, people of many different ethnic backgrounds have lived and worked together with ethnic Georgians since time immemorial. Therefore, what role have these people (let's say, Jews, Assyrians, Greeks, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Ossetians, Kurds, etc.) played in the advancement of the Georgian state?

Unfortunately, public school students in Georgia will not be able to answer this crucial question only with the knowledge obtained from school textbooks. It is even worse when the existence of textbooks in their current form puts ethnically non-Georgian children in a state of complete alienation.

The purpose of our research, basically, is to discover possible answers to the above question. Accordingly, our task was to explore:

- ? Particularly where, in which textbook, and during which lesson (course) the students should search (quest) for an answer to this very important and urgent question?
- ? When did we educate students about the role of diverse ethnic groups in building and developing the Georgian state?
- ? Are there any literary works written by ethnically non-Georgian or non-Orthodox Christian Georgians found in the literature textbooks?

- ? Does the textbook provide any information about them? If at all, how clear is it made that regardless of ethnicity, the author is a native of Georgia and his/her creation is our shared legacy?
- ? While we offer translations of O. Henry, Astrid Lindgren, or other rather prominent authors to schoolchildren, do we maintain a similar approach to the authors born in Georgia who have created their literature pieces in Georgian or other languages?

Similarly to history textbooks, Georgian literature textbooks require fundamental revision and alignment with time and context; Moreover, there is also a need for radical policy changes.

THE SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS – THE SUBJECT OF MONITORING:

GEORGIAN LITERATURE, 7TH GRADE, PART I

(author: Lia Tushuri, Diogene publishers, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia in 2019) - (hereinafter - Diogene, 2019, part I)

GEORGIAN LITERATURE, 7TH GRADE, PART II

(Author: Lia Tushuri, Diogene publishers, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia in 2019) - hereinafter - Diogene, 2019, part II)

GEORGIAN LITERATURE, 8TH GRADE, STUDENT’S BOOK, PART I

(Authors: Vakhtang Rodonaia, Nino Nakudashvili, Avtandil Arabuli, Marine Khutsishvili, Stavlani publishing, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia in 2021) - (hereinafter - Stavlani, 2022, Part I)

GEORGIAN LITERATURE, 8TH GRADE, STUDENT'S BOOK, PART II

(Authors: Vakhtang Rodonaia, Nino Nakudashvili, Avtandil Arabuli, Marine Khutsishvili, Stavlani publishing, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia in 2021)

GEORGIAN LITERATURE 9TH GRADE, STUDENT'S BOOK, PART I

(Authors: Maia Menabde; Natia Purtseladze, Nana Sakhechidze, Sulakauri Publishing, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in 2021) - (hereinafter - Sulakauri, 2021, Part I)

GEORGIAN LITERATURE 9TH GRADE, STUDENT'S BOOK, PART II

(Authors: Maya Menabde; Natia Purtseladze, Nana Sakhechidze, Sulakauri Publishing, awarded with approval by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in 2021) - (hereinafter - Sulakauri, 2021, Part II)

GEORGIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, 9TH GRADE

(Authors: Vakhtang Rodonaia, Nino Nakudashvili, Avtandil Arabuli, Marine Khutsishvili, Stavlani publishing, approved in 2012 by the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (Order #375, 18.05.2012) - (hereinafter - Stavlani, 2012)

GEORGIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, 11TH GRADE TEXTBOOK

(Authors: Nugzar Muzashvili, Nikoloz Chubinidze, Nino Sharashenidze, Diogene publishers)

GEORGIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, 12TH GRADE TEXTBOOK

(Authors: Nugzar Muzashvili, Ketevan Levanishvili, Diogene publishers, the textbook is awarded approval by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (Order #375, 18.05.2012) - (hereinafter - Diogene, 2022)

A BALANCE BETWEEN AUTHORS OF THE WEST AND THE EAST

The Georgian Language and Literature textbook, 12th grade (Diogene, 2022) offers different points of view, both on the followers of Western and European principles and values (like Davit Kldiashvili, Mikheil Javakhishvili, Philipe Gogichaishvili) as well as on the Asian culture (Vakhtang Kotetishvili's essay – “Toward Asia”, p. 143). The fact is very welcomed and accepted because a student has an opportunity to learn about different visions and cultures, draw parallels between them, provide a reasonable discussion on their strengths/weaknesses, and, most importantly, form independent concepts.

For example, let's consider the first chapter of the Georgian Language and Literature 9th grade Student's book (Sulakauri, 2021, Part I) – “The Path of Human Life”, dedicated to the autobiographical works of Georgian writers and poets of different times. Six Georgian authors are presented here (Guram Rcheulishvili's – “Now, I am a Happy Man”, Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili's – “The Gymnast”, Naira Gelashvili's – “Testimony (Fingerprints)”, Davit Guramishvili's – “Davitiani”, Shota Iatashvili's – “Friendship”) as well as Sara Schwardt's letter to Astrid Lindgren - "I keep your letters under the mattress." At the end of each lesson, there are summary/discussion questions.

In this textbook, we are also introduced to some non-Georgian authors and their works. In different chapters, under various topics and alongside the Georgian authors, we find Harper Lee's – “To Kill a Mockingbird” (**chapter:** Coexisting in a Society) and Daniel Pennac's - "Reads Like a Novel" (excerpt from the novel, **chapter:** Education and Books).

Naturally, we welcome and appreciate the idea of enriching the educational program with foreign authors, and we consider it a must and essential too, however, it is also very important to integrate into the book the works of representatives of ethnic or other minorities living in Georgia or somehow related to Georgia.

The chapter of the textbook –“Coexisting in a Society” - seems even more disastrous as there is no information on literary pieces, for example, by any Abkhazian or Ossetian author/authors and their literary work, which we believe is a significant problem, judging from the content of this particular chapter. This kind of attitude from the authors of the textbook undermines the very idea of "living together" and has a counterproductive effect.

EXAMPLES OF STIGMATIZATION

In the 12th-grade textbook of Georgian language grammar and literature (Diogene, 2022, p. 340), we encounter a poem by Ana Kalandadze - "Are you an Arab?" which is dedicated to a Yezidi girl selling roses.

*"Standing by the road,
Selling roses...
- Are you an Arab, my dear? - I ask.
-Yezidi - she answers.
Like a violat trembling under a bush...
You are modest, and it suits you very much.
- Tell me, dear, are you an Arab? – I persist.
- Yezidi - is her answer."
(1945)*

This poem is followed by this kind of analytical question:

after reading the poem, if you come across a Yezidi girl selling flowers, will you have the same attitude towards her you had before reading the poem? why?

We believe that the question has completely illogical and perplexing content. It allows for a wide variety of interpretations - among them is a probability of misinterpreting the poem, which may lead to the formation of stigmas. The content of the question - what feelings a student shall have upon seeing the Yezidi girl - needs to be clarified; what is the author's goal when asking this kind of question? If this feeling should be empathy, it is not clear why expressing empathy toward Yezidis should be normalized. By suggesting this line, we acknowledge the reality in which a humiliating and degrading environment is created towards the Yezidis, which in principle contradicts the goals of the nation's integration. Considering that there is no further mention of ethnic and religious minorities in the Georgian Language and Literature 12th-grade textbooks.

We think it is hazardous to introduce similar discussions in the educational process when there are practically no discussions in the school (per the textbooks) on equality and the country's cultural diversity when students do not have basic education regarding the most incredible

wealth of their country accrued precisely under the conditions of such multi-ethnicity and through the coexistence of so many religions.

It is very clear that the textbook authors themselves feel uncomfortable about these questions. Therefore, after the poem, they offer the children three different types of prefabricated interpretations for discussions, probably fearing that a reader will become a captive for stereotypes and stigmas. In particular:

"The following paragraph follows the poem. The poem can be interpreted in three ways:

1. The poet does not really care why this little girl sells flowers and does not care about her life, biography, or fate.

2. The poet may be more interested in all this than we are but does not consider them a subject of poetry.

3. The poet wants to present this "modest girl" to the public through her own eyes.

In your opinion, do these interpretations eliminate or complement each other? Provide arguments for your answer."

The situation is also different in the 8th grade Student's book of Georgian Literature (Staviani, 2020, Part I), where Nodar Dumbadze's work - The Gypsies, begins with the following phrase: "Gypsies in Guria are called "Didicoy" or "Ciganes" ... Then there is a story about the new world seen through the eyes of a child, about the state of affairs that existed in the gypsy camps and about the relations between the gypsies and the locals. The beginning, "the entry of gypsies into the village seemed like an invasion of raiders", is followed by a change in the attitudes/mood of the local population towards the gypsies to positive. The piece talks about many stereotypes and presents gypsies from different angles.

After that, the textbook explains what a stereotype and *stereotypical thinking* (p. 96) are:

ეს საინტერესოა!

რა არის სტერეოტიპი?

გავიხსენოთ, როგორ იწყება მოთხრობა. როგორ აღიქვა მოთხრობელმა სოფლის მიდამოებში ბოშების დაბანაკების ამბავი? რა იყო ამის მიზეზი, რა წარმოდგენა არსებობდა იმ დროს გურიაში ბოშების შესახებ?

რწმენა-წარმოდგენებს კონკრეტული სოციალური ან ეთნიკური ჯგუფის შესახებ, რომელიც ძირითადად ნეგატიურ ხასიათს ატარებს, **სტერეოტიპი** ეწოდება.

სტერეოტიპი წარმოქმნის გარკვეულ მოლოდინს ამა თუ იმ ჯგუფის ქცევის მიმართ და, შესაბამისად, არასასურველ გავლენას ახდენს ჩვენს აღქმასა და ქცევაზეც. გაიხსენეთ, როგორ მოემზადა მოთხრობის პერსონაჟი ბოშათა ბანაკის დასაზვერად.

სტერეოტიპების კვლევებმა აჩვენა, რომ მხოლოდ ჩვენ კი არ ვიქცევით სხვანაირად იმ ჯგუფის მიმართ, რომლის შესახებაც სტერეოტიპული შეხედულება გაგვაჩინია, არამედ თავად ის ჯგუფიც, რომელმაც იცის, თუ რა შეხედულება არსებობს მის შესახებ, ამ შეხედულების შესაბამისად იქცევა.

დიდი ხნის წინ დაწყებითი კლასების ერთმა ამერიკელმა პედაგოგმა ასეთი ექსპერიმენტი ჩაატარა: კლასში მოსწავლეები თვალის ფერის მიხედვით ორ ჯგუფად გაანაწილა. ცისფერთვალებიან მოსწავლეებს უთხრა, რომ ისინი კარგები არიან და მკერდზე შესაბამისი ეტიკეტი მიამაგრა; თაფლისფერთვალებიან მოსწავლეებს კი

"The existence of negative stereotypes contributes to the establishment of hostile attitudes between different ethnic, religious, and social groups, and may even become the reason for exclusion and discrimination of one or the other group. Results of the studies show that an effective mechanism for changing such attitudes and breaking stereotypes between groups is bringing them together and indeed, this was reflected in Nodar Dumbadze's story - The Gypsies."

The inclusion of this literary work in the textbook and the discussions it provokes is a welcomed step. However, in order to better understand and fight stereotypes, it is necessary to offer similar specific and multifaceted examples.

"COEXISTING IN A SOCIETY" AND "BENEFACTORS OF THE HOMELAND"

The second chapter of the Georgian Literature 9th-grade textbook (Sulakauri, 2021) is called – Coexisting in a Society, and the fourth chapter is called - Benefactors of the Homeland. At first glance, the chapters are connected in terms of their content, and there has to be a logical bond between them so that after reading them, a student has a clear picture of who is a benefactor of the homeland, what are the grounds for characterizing a person in this way, and how to ensure that people live in harmony in a society.

The monitoring has revealed that there is a problem in linking the selected works with their titles. The chapter – “Coexisting in a Society”, includes three Georgian (Goderdzi Chokheli’s – “Letters from a Fish”, Ilia Chavchavadze’s – “On the Gallows”, Chabua Amirejibi’s – “Data Tutashkhia”) and one American writer (Harper Lee – “To Kill a Mockingbird”). The works deal with the difficulties of an individual being a member of a society. Here, it is worth noting that questions at the end of the texts are neutral and serve the purpose of promoting discussions, although they are less adapted to the Georgian reality.

In the present chapter, we find two types of questions. Most of the questions concern specific literary works and characters/their specific actions and require accurate answers. Also, here we find more general, abstract questions. Lastly, the questions are selected in such a manner that they do not allow a student to discuss/think about issues that are relevant to Georgian reality, to see them from a Georgian perspective, or adjust them to the current time. We believe that this is very important as the issue is delicate because it is hard for the country to ensure that people of different nationalities/religions live together harmoniously in a society, regardless of the formal consensus that exists in the society.

To illustrate this:

- **What do you think a person should do to convince others of the fairness of his protest? (p. 92)**

- Do you think, it is possible in modern society, one cannot ask questions because of feeling embarrassed or for the fear of ridicule? (p. 118)

- How can a society be responsible to an individual? (p. 126)

In general, in this chapter, there is a paucity of questions tailored to specific issues and the current time. We encounter these types of questions in just a few places. For example:

"Flip back and reread lines 182-195 and explain what problem of that particular society is exposed with such an attitude towards women. How relevant do you think this problem is in the modern world? (Story – "On the Gallows", p. 118)".

We consider asking questions with wording that focuses on the current issues, presents the underlying context, and talks about the characteristics and organic features of the Georgian reality, will be very productive and informative for students and will expand their viewpoint.

There are also several foreign authors and their literary works in the same chapter. There is a description of the American film culture, and they talk about the feature film, *"The Great Dictator"*; they cite "The Monologue of a Jew Barber" and several other pieces, although none of them mentions the representatives of ethnic or religious minorities living in Georgia and thus require more effort to make connections with the Georgian reality. However, it is crucial to connect students with the Georgian perspective, which is to the issues unique to our nation, during such comparisons and contrasts and through open discussions in order to strengthen their understanding of issues and increase their resistance to stereotypes.

Finally, it must be noted that the literary works are offered chaotically, with no connections to each other, and they cannot fully resonate with the idea of "Coexisting in a society". At the same time, the sources do not fit the Georgian reality; after reading the chapter, the student does not have an understanding of how different members of society can live together. For this purpose, the authors should talk more about the Georgian reality to make the state of affairs more natural for the student.

As for the fourth chapter - the "Benefactors of the Homeland", according to the title, the chapter should have been the main educational target of the project. This chapter is best suited for carrying out our idea of equally appreciating people of all nationalities and showing their role in the process of building our country. However, the monitoring showed that in the fourth chapter, the reader is introduced to five Georgian figures (Erlom Akhvediani, Nikoloz Baratashvili, Akaki Tsereteli, Rezo Gabriadze, Nutsa Ghoghoberidze) and one American author (Edward Hale). The questions at the end of the text are of a general nature, and the chapter does not reflect the Georgian reality at all, does not specifically mention examples of any other states, and therefore, does not mention the minorities and/or their contributions of any type.

At the beginning of the chapter, there is a flash fiction by Erlom Akhvediani – "The Story of a Man Who Loves His Homeland Very Much", Nikoloz Baratashvili's poem – "Fate of Kartli", Akaki

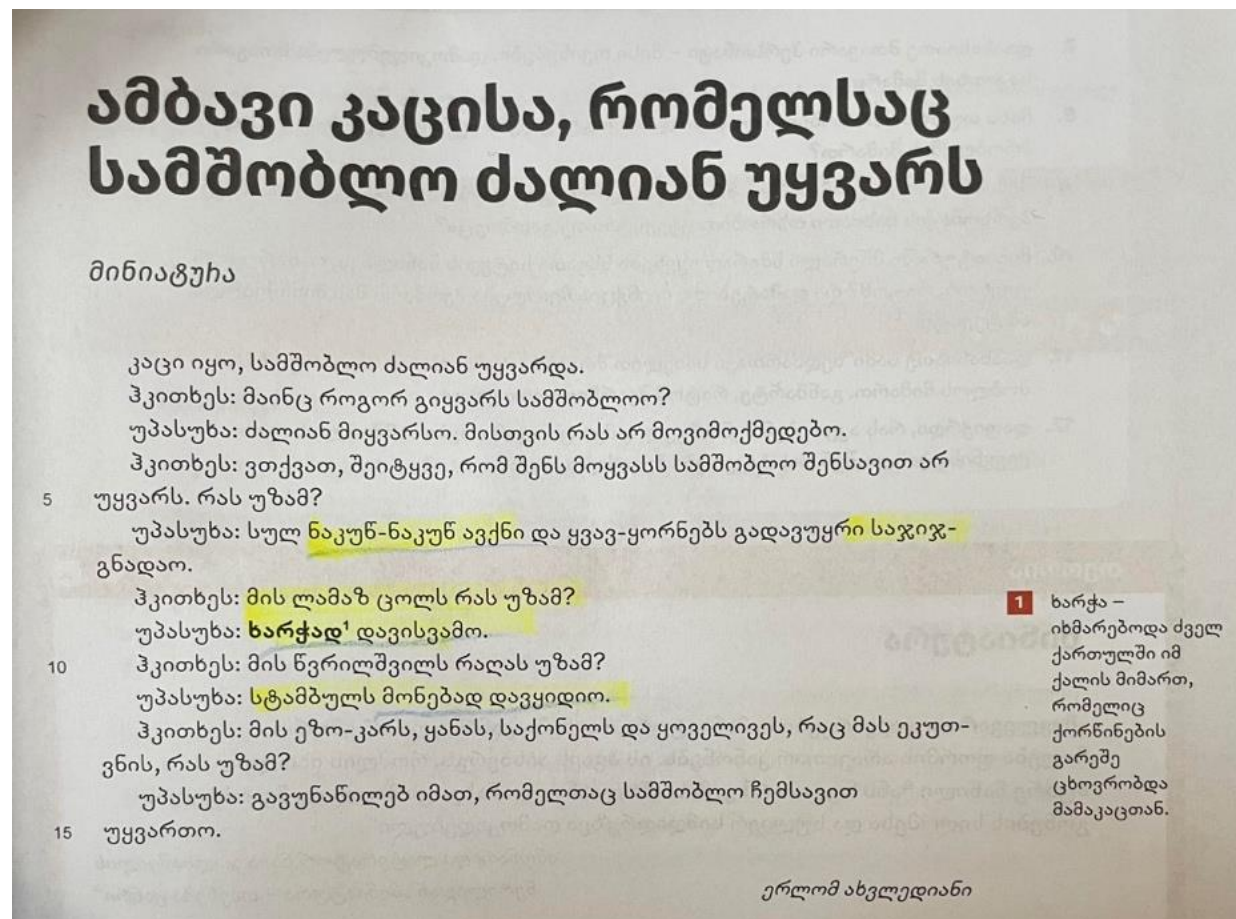
Tsereteli's poem – “The Dawn”, Rezo Gabriadze's excerpt – “GEDEVANI”. There is also a brief talk about the first democratic republic of Georgia, about the events taking place on February 25, 1921. The textbook introduces us to the first Georgian female film director - Nutsa Gogoberidze, and finally, the textbook offers Edward Hale's – “The Man Without a Country”. As a result, the chapter primarily explores a number of significant turning events in Georgian history and includes a general discussion of what it means to love one's motherland. No matter how strange it may sound, the chapter does not contain any information on specific personalities, and specifically in the case of Georgia - those who can be considered its benefactors. Accordingly, there is no discourse on the fact that nationality, ethnicity, and/or any other terms do not define the love for the motherland, which we believe is a very important point and at least one separate sub-chapter should have been dedicated to it.

In the chapter introduction (p. 6), there is a question:

"How do birth and upbringing in a particular country determine our personalities?"

followed by Erlom Akhvlediani's flash fiction –

“The Story of a Man Who Loves His Homeland Very Much”.



We think that this question is confusing and ambiguous, especially considering that the addressees of the question are the 9th grade students, as it may mean that birth in a particular country defines whether a person will become a good person or a bad one. During discussions, it is also possible for students to base their arguments on stereotypes, and to try to generalize their personal experiences and perceptions; Therefore, we should avoid asking similar types of questions in textbooks. However, this is nothing compared to what the authors offer us in the 9th-grade Georgian Literature textbook with the above flash fiction by Erlom Akhvlediani.

Even though the theoretical explanation quotes the literary critic Maia Jaliashvili, who informs us that "the flash fiction is a defiant genre", where she seems to be reassuring us that the mentioned text is included in the textbook in order to demonstrate the instance of such "defiance", it is still unacceptable that "The Story of a Man Who Loves His Homeland Very Much", is included in the educational process. The work offers a subjective version of one's personal perceptions and feelings regarding the "love for the motherland", and in case one does not accept or share the same feelings, it exhibits violence. This flash fiction is an attempt to compel a "popular" or "dominant" thought when individualism is suppressed due to fear of retribution or violence.

This is not the first time the Soviet narrative of the clampdown on individualism is introduced in twenty-first-century Georgian school textbooks. On page 8 of the same 9th- grade textbook (Part II, Sulakauri, 2021), there is another excerpt from Erlom Akhvlediani's book, *The Struggle Continues*, where we read the following:

"If someone else does what you want to do better than you, and you admit it, that's one victory over yourself! "

"To be original shall not be your goal, because nothing is more unoriginal than this desire itself. Don't lose your essence in search of a form of expression."

"If you sincerely acknowledge that you are nothing special, that's another victory over yourself - the final victory that will reward you with an innate peace."

First of all, it has to be noted that the given excerpt is not complete, and a few sentences are removed from the original text. The text is very specific and describes with all clarity and convincingness the author's assessment of how a person can win over himself. It is worth noting that the excerpt is given in the 9th-grade textbook, which is when students are psychologically vulnerable and, as a rule, do not have solid self-esteem and constantly question their own views/personal skills.

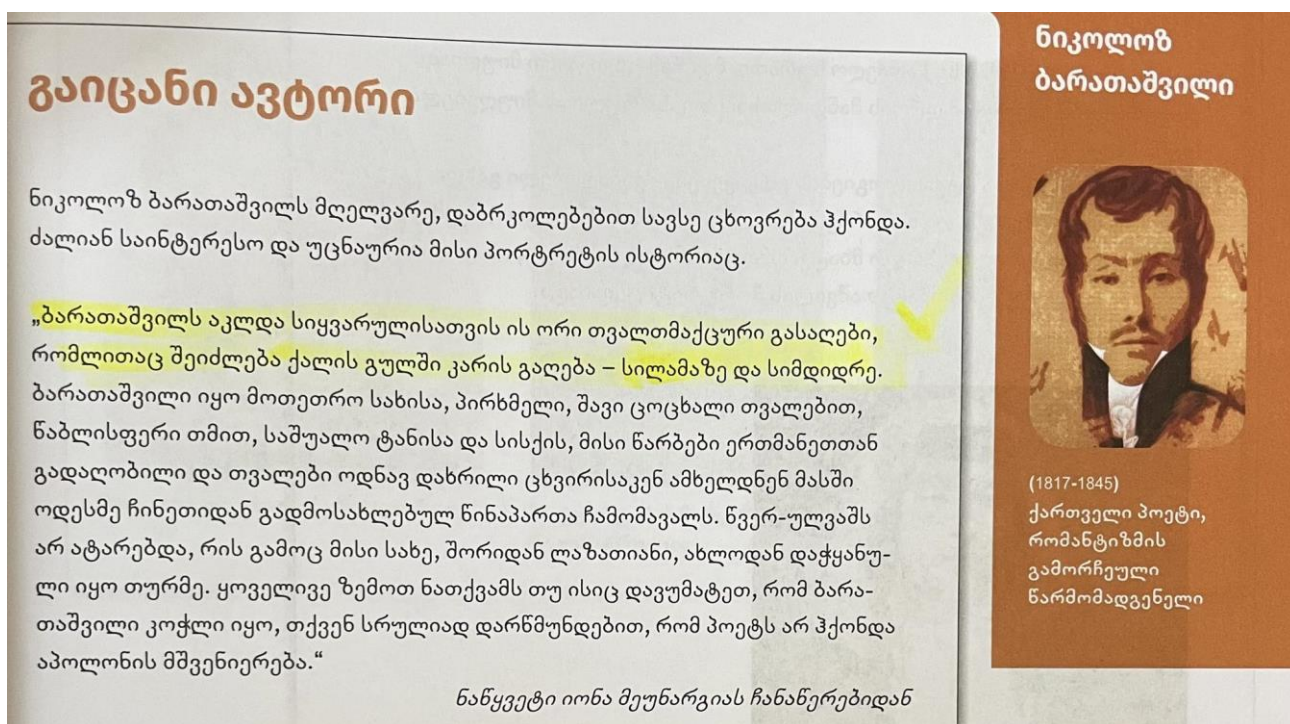
The textbook points out that "not being original" is a natural thing and even necessary for all individuals to fathom in order to win over themselves. According to the author, a person saves time and energy with this kind of thinking and perspective and avoids many disappointments in the future.

We believe that the existence in the textbooks of phrases with similar content - telling children they cannot be original and distinctive, and therefore, shall not desire it, as they will permanently lose until they admit it - is very discouraging for a teenager and is destructive for self-esteem. On the contrary, schools should motivate teenagers to be original and different. Schools should promote individualism, tell students that each of them is gifted with different talents, and offer the best environment and conditions for young people to realize these talents.

SEXIST NARRATIVE/REASONING IN A NON-GENDER-NEUTRAL WAY

On page 13 of the 9th-grade textbook of Georgian Literature (Sulakauri, 2021, part I), there is a piece of information about Nikoloz Baratashvili. In the notes by Iona Meunargia, we read the following:

"Baratashvili lacked the two sorts of lockpicks for love, with which you can open the door to a woman's heart – the good looks and wealth."



We believe that the existence of the above quote in the textbooks is fundamentally wrong. It is sexist and stereotypical. We assume that these are real notes from the author's memoirs; however, the quote is essentially incompatible with modern standards. It is not supplemented with any type of explanation that may serve as a subject of critical discussions in the learning process. The phrase does not convey anything particularly special about Baratashvili's personality

that would render it absolutely necessary for inclusion in the textbook in order to describe the writer. Accordingly, the existence of phrases carrying such contradictory meanings in the textbooks which are approved for 2021 and which have to meet modern standards and use gender-neutral language – is extremely problematic.

Another sexist insert in the same textbook can be found on page 66. In the chapter –The Benefactors of the Homeland, there is the following question:

"Do you think the first Georgian female film director is a benefactor of her homeland?"

In this case, it is clear that the emphasis is on gender, and the same question would not arise in the case of a male film director. If the author of the question wanted to expand the topic and prompt students to discuss the merits of a person in more detail, this could have been achieved by asking the question in any other form. For example – "Why do you think the first Georgian female film director is a benefactor of her homeland?" Here, it is important to note that the textbook should mainly use gender-neutral language and may not contain discriminatory insertions.

DISTORTION OF FACTS / ESTABLISHING THE WRONG PERCEPTIONS

The textbooks from different grades mention the Abkhazian topic many times. Here, the great pain associated with its temporary loss is conveyed, and at the same time, there are several open conversations about the special relations between the Georgian and Abkhazian people. **Despite this endless talk about the importance of Abkhazia, no Abkhazian author found a place in any textbook. Aside from a sentimental political application, textbook authors do not believe it is necessary to establish a more fundamental and firm foundation for the significance of Abkhazia and Abkhazians for Georgian statehood.**

The 7th-grade textbook also deals with the topic in the II part of the Student's book (Diogene, 2019). In one of the chapters – “The Grief of the Motherland”, we have a poem by Murman Lebanidze - My Abkhazia (p. 14), where we read the following:

*"He has his eyes fixed on Abkhazia
– He's probably of **Turkish descent...**
And I scream: - He will drink my blood first!
Then I sing: - Abkhazia is mine!
Once, Argo came this way (and another ship, only yesterday!)
thrusting through the waves by beating them with oars... "*

The work is accompanied by the following question:

Whom does the poet blame for the confrontation between Abkhazians and Georgians?

According to the poem, the man of "Turkish descent" who has his eyes on Abkhazia is declared as an outside enemy. Besides, no additional analytical question is asked on the issue, and the authors of the textbooks provide no explanation. The materials are not supplemented with any alternative information or additional source which would talk about the real outside enemy - Russia and its guilt.

Because of a clarifying question regarding Murman Lebanidze's poem and the "Man of Turkish descent", a 7th-grade student who has not yet thoroughly studied these topics in the history textbooks and does not know the context may hold wrong ideas about actual circumstances about the status quo. It is completely incomprehensible, oppressive and misleading to have such material in the manual and it is not clear what purpose it serves.

Here we must remember that the poem is followed by Goderdzi Chokheli's short story – "From a Georgian Perspective". In the quoted section of the story, we come across this dialog:

- *Grandma, Abkhazia is Georgia, right?*
- *Of course it is!*
- *Then why can't we go there and find Dad's grave?*
- *Because they won't let us in.*
- *Who won't?*
- *Enemies, our enemies.*

In this case, unlike Murman Lebanidze's poem, the authors of the book no longer consider it necessary for students to specify who the enemy is, whom Goderdzi Chokheli sees as an enemy. Throughout this extensive lesson, Russia is not even mentioned once.

The correct understanding of the poem will depend significantly on the teachers, how they explain the context, which they declare as an outside enemy, how they assess the role of the enemy in the loss of Abkhazia, etc. To make it even easier:

- At the beginning of the chapter, the man of "Turkish descent" is declared to be an enemy, and logically, in the next paragraph, we must accept that it is the same enemy because the book does not allow for the opposite argument;
- The author clearly avoids mentioning Russia and therefore uses the term - "outside enemy" where he asks a clarifying and leading question regarding the "Turkish man";
- The argument that everyone knows that Russia is an enemy and losing Abkhazia temporarily is linked to them is already fundamentally wrong since the 7th-grade students know almost nothing about the history of modern Georgia or sometimes even about the existence of Abkhazia.

THE SYNDROME OF THE COERCED

The 7th grade Georgian Literature Student's book (Part I, Diogenes, 2019) deals with sensitive topics where we encounter the following chapters:

- 1) On the Path of our Lives;
- 2) Few Points on Love;
- 3) Friendship;
- 4) Me and Us;
- 5) Heroes, the Glorifiers of the Homeland.

In several paragraphs of the textbook, there are attempts to open a conversation about bullying, coercion, and violence, followed by condemnation of their expression in any form. For this reason, many literary works in the textbook are devoted to the topic.

For example, in the textbook, we find the following discussion questions (p. 113):

- ? *Have you ever felt unfairness and coercion when left alone in the street?*
- ? *What was the feeling like?*
- ? *How can we oppose violence?*
- ? *What do you think the "Law of the Jungle" is? Can it be the law of the street life too?*

Various chapters of the textbook talk about violence in the family, on the street, against women, talk about different types of conflicts. To give a sense of this, one of the chapters offers a story by Revaz Inanishvili - Let the Birds Over-winter, which is replete with violence and offensive vocabulary.

Example:

- That retard! That looney?

..The hell with him!

..Where is your degenerate son at?

The hell with him, the dumbest one in the world. He has gone to his auntie...

Do instill fear in children

If they don't do it – I'll slit their throats open....

Step aside, or I'll crack your head.

In general, we consider it important to openly talk about these topics and condemn them, although accentuating this topic in such a large dose, introducing and emphasizing slang terminology in the 7th-grade textbook is wrong while the book does not talk about other virtues like equality, tolerance, liberal values; but **when making a choice, we think that focusing on**

positive narratives is much more beneficial. The book has many technical issues, although, dealing with them is well outside of our task.¹

DIVERSE GEORGIA

One of the sub-chapters of the 7th-grade textbook (Diogene, 2019, part I) is called - **Diverse Georgia** (p. 156). There is a hint in the chapter that in the paragraph, students will be able to get to know how Georgian writers and poets write about Georgian cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition, it is noted that the goal of the paragraph is to introduce students to the traditions, life, culture, etc., of any ethnic group of their choice. Although the goals of the paragraph are quite ambitious and cover extensive topics, the paragraph only takes up four pages. There is also a feeling that the information contained in the paragraph is messy and inconsistent.

At the very beginning, one of the questions points out: *in Georgia, many people of other ethnicities lived and worked together with ethnic Georgians*. After that, there is an assignment question: **"What role have these people (say, Jews, Assyrians, Greeks, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Ossetians, Kurds, etc.) played in the progress of the Georgian state?"**

Here is another assignment: When preparing presentations, you can use knowledge and experience gained in history and other subjects (for example, the myth of Medea and the Greek-Georgian relations or the legend of Svetitskhoveli and the relations between Jews and Georgians living in Mtskheta at that time, etc.).

This assignment is given in the "Before Reading the Basic Material" section in the form of general questions. In terms of content, we consider the assignment very important, and it also develops the central idea of our project; however, in practice, its role is ignored. When the sub-chapter title is **"Diverse Georgia"**, its content should describe the contributions of people of different nationalities to prove that this fact makes the country diverse. In fact, this fundamental issue is only one of the tasks of the paragraph, and reading the mentioned paragraph itself leaves the impression that when talking about diversity, the authors do not mean the diversity of the country anyway. It is vague what is the purpose of introducing, for example, the myth of Medea, or ancient Greek-Georgian relations into the material, which is about diverse Georgia.

Several photographs are given in the text to demonstrate ethnic and religious diversity, for example, photos of the Orthodox and Catholic Church, Synagogue, Mosque, and Armenian Apostolic Church; Traditional dances are also shown to demonstrate ethnic diversity. In general, introducing photographs when discussing diversity is welcomed; however, it is natural that this

¹ As an example, we can cite a title in the book - A few minutes at the Computer. In particular, for additional information, they provide links (e.g., pp. 17, 34, 59). However, in some cases, these links consist of three lines of text, which is an additional technical discomfort for the child - to type symbols one by one. It is desirable that relevant materials are already provided in the textbook in some other way or be offered to students by some alternative means, otherwise, they become useless in practice.

will only give shallow knowledge to a 7th-grade student on this matter. A diagram is showing ethnic composition in Georgia (p. 158), but from a practical point of view, it is not readable/discernable.



A single-page Literary Mosaic follows the above paragraph with a quote from Akaki Bakradze, giving us information about Davit Agmashenebeli and tolerance (e.g., he allowed Muslims to build a mosque, laid down fewer taxes for Muslim settlements, etc.). There is an inscription on the cover of Iakob Gogebashvili's book - Mother Language: "For Georgians of all faiths". There is also, The Ottoman Georgia - an excerpt, from the newspaper "Iveria", 1877 (excerpt from the letter):

"We are not afraid of faith differences; a Georgian crucified for his faith also knows the honor of other people's faith. That is why there is no case in our history where a Georgian wants to oppress and persecute other people's faith."

Armenians, Jews, and even Muslims are living among us. They cannot blame us for anything. We are not afraid of the fact that our brothers living in Ottoman Georgia are of the Muslim faith today; if this brings those happy days closer when we can join each other again to care for each other, Georgians, to our pride, will prove to the country that they are not against other man's conscience, and will embrace the long-time estranged brothers...."

In fact, only this one page in the entire guide speaks positively and discusses the core of our research, diversity, and tolerance, and contains fundamentally sound information. We would definitely like to see a more in-depth examination of these topics in other textbooks, however as was already mentioned, this is only one page among the whole textbooks.

In the same chapter, we also read an important text:

One of the characters from Nodar Dumbadze's story, an Armenian resident of one of the Tbilisi yards, says:

"My son is so smart; he's going to be a Foreign Minister, I reckon.

- Does he speak Armenian? – Of course, he does,

- Does he speak Georgian? Sure thing,

- Does he have an English language teacher? He sure does.

- Does the Daughter of our yard sweeper, Pisuli teach him some Kurdish? – she does..."

This is what Georgia is like, but unfortunately, 12 years of school education does not serve as an appropriate means for it. If there were no other social environment, families, very diverse neighborhoods and other circumstances, the majority of teenagers with an education based only on these school textbooks not only would not become tolerant or honorable citizens respectful of each other's differences, who know and appreciate each other's contribution to the building of a common Georgian state, but just like the hero from Erlom Akhvlediani's flash fiction, they would be a group capable of violence against those who think differently; they would be devoid of individualism.

Similarly to history textbooks, Georgian literature textbooks require fundamental revision and alignment with time and context; Moreover, there is also a need for radical policy changes.

The organization thanks
the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
and Virtual Academy of Democracy
for the institutional support

