

ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA (1918-1921)⁴

Irakli Iremadze

*PhD Candidate in History, Faculty of Humanities,
Ivane Javakhisvili Tbilisi State University*

Irakli.iremadze@tsu.ge

ORCID ID 0009-0002-4222-3918

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Abstract

The access to education as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of social and political rights represents one of the most significant achievements for the contemporary world. However, until 1917 citizens of Georgia and the broader Caucasus region were denied access to these fundamental rights.

After the declaration of Georgia's independence in 1918 efforts were initiated to establish the universal education system within the newly formed state. This research aims at studying and analyzing the multifaceted process of educational reform during a period marked by military, political, and economic instability. This research addresses the following questions: How were such reforms implemented within the conditions of instability? What forms of political and economic will, as well as the financial resources were requisite for the introduction of a universal education system?

Drawing upon archival materials and existing scholarship, this article seeks to explain the dynamics of educational reform, not merely as the construction of an autonomous system, but as an integral component of broader social policymaking. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the historical evolution of education policy in the Caucasus region, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in the pursuit of universal education.

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Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Georgia, founded in 1918, has been widely regarded by both Georgian and foreign scholars as a pioneering laboratory for reforms across various dimensions of social and political life. Among these reforms, the transformation of the education sector stands out as particular for its scale, systemic nature, and success.

Scholarly literature, both local and international, has extensively documented the educational reforms undertaken during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. Notable works include Dodo Chumburidze's book *Ganatleba 1918-1921 Ts'lebshi* [Education in 1918-1921] (2000), which provides a detailed examination of the educational reforms implemented during this era. Similarly, Aleksandre Bendianishvili's *Sakartvelos P'irveli Resp'ublik'a (1918-1921)* [The First Republic of Georgia 1918-1921] explores the challenges and deficiencies encountered in the reform process.

This research aims to analyze the broader context of reform within the Democratic Republic of Georgia, focusing specifically on the political instrumentalization of the universal education system and its integration into the social and political fabric of the nation. Employing a content-analysis methodology, the study refers archival materials from the Central Historical Archive, as well as approximately 500 articles from periodical press sources. By engaging with a diverse array of literature, including scholarly articles and monographs, the research seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the educational reform during this period.

Through addressing these key issues, research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding educational reform in the Democratic Republic of Georgia and its broader implications for the social and political landscape of the time.

Russian Imperial Education Policy in its imperial peripheries

During the 19th century, Western and Central European countries had largely completed the establishment of universal education systems. However, the literacy rate in the Caucasus of the Russian Empire remained significantly low. According to the 1897 census only 26% of inhabitants reported as literate [16: 245].

In the Georgian context, widespread educational initiatives began to take shape in the 1860s and 1870s, driven by the advocacy of intellectuals such as Niko Nikoladze and Ilia Chavchavadze, alongside ideological counterparts known as the *Tergdaleulebi*.⁵ Recognizing education as crucial for regional development and the consolidation of Caucasian nations, these intellectuals advocated concrete policy measures to promote literacy and access to education [2: 82].

Official efforts to formalize educational initiatives commenced in 1879 with the establishment of the *Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians*. Over the four decades, this society succeeded in opening numerous schools, providing thousands of young individuals with primary and secondary education opportunities. However, access to basic education remained large upon the state funding and political support [11: 292].

The pursuit of universal education and accessibility was inspired by the activities of social-democratic groups and political movements. Notably, these movements were often spearheaded by educators who were aware of the challenges within the education system. A prominent publicist Giorgi Tsereteli highlighted the efforts of social democrats in 1894, underscoring their commitment to educating the illiterate masses and disseminating scientific knowledge.

⁵ *Tergdaleulebi* –the term refers to young Georgian intellectuals and public figures who graduated from various universities of the Russian Empire in the 1860s-1870s. They left Georgia, crossed the Caucasus Mountains - the "Terek" River, and traveled to get an education.

*The Third Group (Mesame Dasi)*⁶ includes village teachers, intellectually advanced seminarists [students of the religious school] and graduates of the Pedagogical Institute, which have set themselves an objective to teach the uneducated people how to read and write, to acquaint them with the clear and argumentative views of scientists and to teach them how to follow the world developments”[4: 2-4].

From 1890s the social democrats established informal and underground educational institutions, including literacy, and reading circles in cities such as Tchiatura, Batumi, and Tiflis. Additionally, after the 1905 revolution systemic reforms were initiated, and legal people’s universities and theaters were established by the Trade Unions of the Workers and other institutions affiliated with social-democratic party.

Under Russian imperial governance, the dominance of the Russian language within the education system was mandatory. Despite the existence of small national schools, Russian-language institutions predominated, particularly in the peripheries. From September 1917 the OZAKOM (Special Committee of Transcaucasia), created by the Provisional Government of St. Petersburg, made some efforts to encourage opening national schools for the Caucasian nationalities. As a result of this activities, local language schools have been established, Russian-language institutions were transformed into

⁶ *The Third Group (Mesame Dasi)* – Political group: The journalist Giorgi Tsereteli (1842-1900) classified the social and political groups that emerged in Georgia from the 1860s into three distinct categories. The “*First Group*” represented the initial generation of “*Tergdaleulebi*” primarily dedicated to cultural and educational activities. This group was led by prominent writers and public figures such as Ilia Chavchavadze, Jacob Gogebashvili, etc. Their political outlook was largely aligned with cultural nationalism. The “*Meore Dasi*” comprised a radical-democratic faction within the first generation of *Tergdaleulebi*, focusing primarily on the economic and political development of Georgian society. Ideological leaders of this group included prominent publicists and public figures like Niko Nikoladze, and Giorgi Tsereteli. The “*Third group*” consisted of young individuals who emerged in the public sphere around the 1880s-1890s. They were influenced by the cultural and educational ideals of the *First Group* while sharing the economic development and radical-democratic political ideas of the second troop. Members of the *Third Group* were politically aligned with European socialists.

Georgian ones, as well as Georgian and Armenian sectors were introduced in gymnasiums [23: 4].

However, significant educational reforms were impeded by the bureaucratic inertia, and the OZAKOM, the Transcaucasian Commissariat⁷, and the Transcaucasian Sejm⁸ failed to implement profound reforms. Until May 26, 1918, the official declaration of Georgia's independence, the eclectic nature of governance in the region rendered substantial reforms unattainable.

During this transitional phase, educational institutions and schools struggled with severe financial constraints. Data from October 1917 indicates that the average monthly salary for teachers was insufficient, with primary education teachers receiving no more than 80 Ruble, while seminary schoolteachers earned a mere 40 Ruble per month, and village teachers a paltry 100 Ruble. Against the backdrop of escalating inflation, these inadequate salaries left educators unable to meet even their basic needs [7: 3].

Ministry of Public Education: Pioneering Educational Reform Initiatives

On May 26, 1918 declaration of Georgia's Independence was a watershed moment for the development of Georgian education system. The establishment of the Ministry of Public Education in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, under Giorgi Laskhishvili, a prominent figure within the Social-Federalist Party, signified the government's commitment to developing a universal education system. Laskhishvili played a central role in spearheading educational reforms during his tenure from May 1918 to March 1919. Subsequently, from March 1919 to December 1920, Laskhishvili was

⁷ Transcaucasian Commissariat was founded by Transcaucasian political forces in November 1917, in the wake of the Russian October Revolution. This entity served as a de facto replacement for the Provisional Government, as the authority of St. Petersburg did not reach into the Caucasus.

⁸ The Transcaucasian Sejm was founded in February 1918 by the political factions of the region as a temporary representative legislative body. It was predominantly composed in proportion to the outcomes of the Constituent Assembly elections held at the end of 1917. The Sejm functioned as the legislative authority of the region until May 26, 1918.

succeeded by Social-Democrat Noe Ramishvili, who, alongside his party mate Noe Tsintsadze, continued to advance educational reforms and oversee administrative duties. The appointment of Grigol Lortkipanidze, a teacher and Social-Democrat, as the new Minister Public Education on December 3, 1920, underscored the government's commitment to education reform [26: 248].

During the period from 1918 to 1921, the Ministry of Public Education comprised three principal structural units: Higher and Secondary School Departments, the Public-School Department, and the Vocational School Departments. These entities worked in tandem to address various facets of educational development. Despite the significance of educational reform, salaries within the ministry and other associated entities remained disproportionately low. For instance, in September 1918, the Minister's salary stood at 1500 Ruble, while the Deputy Minister received 1350 Ruble, and the lowest-paid position, that of the housekeeper, was remunerated with 350 Ruble [32: 1].

Wage growth has been prevalent since 1914. Between 1914 and 1920, workers' wages increased on average by 50-100 times. However, this apparent increase was effectively nullified by the enormous rise in food prices. For instance, between 1914 and 1920, the prices of essential food products increased by 100-300 times [12: 8]. Financial allocations for education witnessed a notable increase over the period, with expenditures from the state treasury rising from 2.73% of the total budget in 1918 to 4.7% (approximately 37.6 Million Ruble) in 1919-1920, and further to 5.2% in the budget plan of 1921 [12: 172]. This resulted in doubling the expenditures on education underscored the government's growing commitment to the sector amid broader economic expansion [12: 177-178].

The Genesis of the Development of National School

In June 1918, the question arose regarding the ideal educational paradigm for Georgia: what kind of schools did Georgia need? One of the initial responses posited that the new Democratic Republic should be grounded on the principles of equality and egalitarianism, as well as should confront the colonial legacy and experience inherited from the Russian Empire. This legacy was characterized by systemic constraints on social mobility, limited access to education, and institutional closure, and incompatible to the principles promoted by the new republic [11: 292].

The imperial regime's legacy manifested in the scarcity of educational institutions and a correspondingly low literacy rate, with estimates suggesting that no more than 20% of the population possessed basic literacy skills in regions such as Tbilisi and Kutaisi Governorates (Batumi and Sokhumi Provinces are included), and there were only 864 schools during the period spanning 1914 to 1917 [1: 266]. By 1917, Kutaisi and Tbilisi Governorates collectively accommodated nearly 80,000 enrolled school students [1: 266-267].

In the summer of 1918, the Ministry of Public Education issued a statement evaluating the imperial legacy, articulating the imperative for transformative change. However, a more detailed examination of the statement's content and context is warranted to elucidate its academic significance further.

Our Education system should be changed in parallel with the inequality-based authorities. All the barriers, which hinders the primary school students continue their education after the graduation, should be abolished and the school should be socially united [34: N/A].

The imperative to fundamentally reorganize the education system necessitated thorough planning and the development of comprehensive political documents, a process inherently time-consuming. Consequently, to expedite progress, incremental reforms were initiated within schools during the summer of 1918. Among these reforms was the transition of the majority of schools into state institutions, with religious schools reconstituted as public schools. Despite encountering some discontent from Russian and Armenian

National Assemblies,⁹ the Ministry affirmed the rights of ethnic minorities to pursue education within the state's framework [18: 4]. Notably, the Ministry embarked on a robust initiative to nationalize schools, a cornerstone effort aimed at transforming them into public entities [25: 112]. Throughout the summer of 1918, the Ministry swiftly collaborated with local governments to establish new schools.

The primary objective of the school reform initiative was the implementation of a universal and free primary education system, necessitating the creation of over 1500 new schools [3: 8-9]. The principal obstacle hindering the establishment of a universal education system in the republic was the scarcity of teachers, school supplies, and textbooks [10: 7]. To facilitate the realization of this ambitious goal, the Minister of Public Education convened a special council comprising representatives from the Ministry, professors from Tiflis State University, schoolteachers, members of self-governing bodies, and members of parliament (MPs) [3: 16].

In the fall of 1918, the Ministry published a report detailing the geographical distribution of schools, revealing significant disparities between regions. Notably, Kutaisi Governorate featured a substantially higher number of primary schools compared to Tiflis Governorate, underscoring the urgent need for equitable resource allocation. This disparity was particularly pronounced concerning higher-ranking schools, with Kutaisi Governorate exhibiting a far more favorable ratio of upper primary schools to the population compared to Tiflis Governorate [30: 6-8].

⁹ Prior to 1917, the majority of schools operating in Tbilisi were predominantly Russian- and Armenian-speaking. From 1918 Tbilisi City Hall initiated the introduction of Georgian sections within these Armenian and predominantly Russian-speaking schools, the majority of which were designated as state schools. The Armenian and Russian national councils protested the decision of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry assured these councils that ethnic groups would retain the legally guaranteed right to be instructed in their native languages. Furthermore, the establishment of Georgian sections was intended to fulfill the demands of the citizens, as the existing Georgian-language schools and separate sections were insufficient to accommodate the increasing Georgian-speaking population of the city.

Amidst challenges related to the inadequate school infrastructure and financial resources, a critical impediment to introduction of universal education was the shortage of qualified teachers. To address this shortfall, the Union of Teachers and the Ministry jointly embarked on teachers training initiatives. Beginning in the summer of 1918, comprehensive teacher training courses were established in Tbilisi, led by esteemed professors such as Ivane Javakhishvili, Dimitri Uznadze, and Giorgi Akhvlediani [15: 3]. These courses continued in subsequent years, with special decrees issued to expand their scope. Moreover, these training programs covered diverse linguistic communities within the republic, encompassing Armenian, Turkish, and Greek-speaking schools [22: 3]. By August 1920, teacher training courses were extended to numerous cities across the republic, reflecting a concerted effort to address the multifaceted challenges impeding the introduction of universal education [14: 2].

Preliminary Results of the Eclectic Reform

During the transitional period of 1918-1919, the curriculum in Georgian-language public two-years schools encompassed a range of subjects, including arithmetic-geometry, Georgian language, science, the Motherland, History of Georgia, singing, drawing, physical training, and handicrafts. Higher primary schools, meanwhile, offered additional courses such as foreign languages, including Russian, Algebra, World History, Physics, and Geography alongside the fundamental subjects [31: 18].

Schools covered ethnic minority languages followed a similar curriculum, with the substitution of Georgian language with the native languages of the minority groups. Additionally, students in these schools were required to study Georgian language and history, reflecting the state's emphasis on fostering national cohesion and cultural integration [29: 5]. Despite aspirations for free and universal education, students were still obliged to pay annual tuition fees averaging 400-500 Ruble during 1918-1920, although these fees became largely symbolic in light of rampant inflation. Notably, tuition fees and

donations collectively covered only a fraction of school expenses, with the majority of funding from central and local government budgets [35: 17].

Efforts to introduce free education intensified from 1919 onward, with market and city self-governments assuming pivotal roles in this endeavor. A meeting convened in May 1919 underscored the collective commitment to accelerate the transition to free universal education.

Social-economic conditions of the teachers

In the Fall of 1918, Social Revolutionary Party's newspaper, *Shroma (Labour)* discussed the severe conditions of the schools teachers:

Everyone should acknowledge the fact that teachers have a greater impact within rural communities than both the commissars and five militiamen combined, who collectively receive an allocation of approximately 1850 Ruble per month. While the village militiamen command a salary of 220 Ruble and commissars are afforded 300, the remuneration for teachers stands at a meager 210 Ruble. Amidst the myriad deviation prevalent within our republic, the plight of teachers emerges as particularly dire. Hence, it is imperative that adequate attention be directed towards addressing this issue, akin to dismantling the proverbial 'wall of Jericho [24: 3-4].

In 1919, there was a substantial increase in teachers' salaries, with monthly earnings ranging from 1,600 Ruble to 3,800 Ruble, depending on the caliber and level of the educational institution. By the spring of 1920, teachers' wages saw an average increase of 30-50%. It is interesting to compare the salaries of teachers with those of individuals employed in other sectors. For instance, in 1920, a metal worker in Tbilisi earned an average of 4,650 manats, a woodcutter 4,140, a railway worker 2,630, a builder 3,330, and a tailor 4,350. Consequently, the salaries of educators, varying depending on their position, averaged around 4,700 Ruble [9: 531]. Moreover, teachers working in marketplaces typically received salaries ranging from 2,000 to 2,500 Ruble on average.

Fundamental school reform

June 17, 1919, marks the inception of the new Georgian school system, with Deputy Minister of Public Education Noe Tsintsadze submitting the Ministry of Education's program for school reorganization and reform to the government.¹⁰ In the report and document "On the Reorganization of Secondary Schools," Tsintsadze articulated on the very first page:

The old school, in its direction and content, is the offspring of the old reality, and it cannot meet the current challenges and its goals. It needs to be transformed, reorganized [36: 6].

The essence of the reform was encapsulated in the following paragraph: *Democracy intertwined with social inertia serves as the foundational principle upon which our new school system must be built, aiming for the holistic development of individuals, and nurturing their potential. In a democratic state predicated on the principle of equality, it is inconceivable that each societal segment, socially and hierarchically segregated, pursues an independent trajectory of development. Equality transcends merely a legal concept; it inherently entails cultural parity, demanding equitable opportunities and conditions for societal advancement. Hence, a single educational institution is imperative, standardized both in curriculum and composition [37: 6-11].*

According to the reform, the unified school system comprised of three layers. The first level was the public school, akin to preparatory (primary) classes. The second level included upper primary schools encompassing four grades, while the third level comprised four-class secondary schools, commencing from the fifth grade. Initially, the secondary school level adhered to a uniform curriculum, with provisions for future differentiation based on student preferences. From 1920 onwards, students could pursue further studies in agricultural (science) high schools, specializing in specific disciplines. Agricultural secondary schools fell under the jurisdiction of the

¹⁰ Noe Tsintsadze was appointed as a Deputy Minister of Public Education on the 10th of April 1919.

Ministry of Agriculture, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, with their purpose delineated by specific legislation [17: 433].

The reform stipulated that secondary schools would adopt a bifurcation method, fostering individual talent development. Drawing upon European educational models, the document underscored Georgia's aspiration to adopt best practices. Spanning four years, the secondary school reform aimed for implementation from 1919 to 1923. Classical language instruction (Latin, ancient Greek) was eschewed in favor of intensive study in German, French, and English languages, with an emphasis on bolstering natural sciences education. The curriculum also incorporated psychology, political economy, logic, legal history, physical education, and handicraft courses [37: 6-11].

The government endorsed the reform introduced by Noe Tsintsadze, forwarding it to the Constituent Assembly for approval. The draft law "Regulation on Reorganization of Secondary School" stipulated that all government-funded secondary schools in Georgia adhered to a uniform standard, while those established with external support required specific charters approved by the Ministry of Education. The primary objective of general education secondary schools was to provide comprehensive secondary education and prepare students for higher learning [33: N/A]. Subsequent to regulatory approval, efforts focused on implementation. A dedicated department—a study committee—was established within the Ministry, chaired by renowned psychologist Professor Dimitri Uznadze, tasked with orchestrating reform initiatives. For realization of the method the Ministry aimed to introduce Montessori methods, prompting official correspondence with Maria Montessori in 1919. In the summer of 1920, Georgia hosted its first Montessori student cohort, initiating specialized teacher training courses [5: 2].

Between 1919 and 1921, in collaboration with numerous educators and scholars, new textbooks and curricula were developed [21: 2]. For the first time, the Georgian language, along with the languages of ethnic minorities (with the exception of Russian), became the medium of mass education. Georgian literature, spanning from hagiographical works to contemporary literature, took precedence in the newly devised curriculum for Georgian-

language schools. Textbooks for various subjects were systematically produced in the Georgian language on a large scale. Furthermore, a commission for terminology development was established, initiating the translation of scientific and terminological literature. Concurrently, with the establishment of Georgian as the language of education and academia, the history of Georgia was integrated into school curricula, becoming mandatory for ethnic minorities.

By September 1919, educational programs were refined, facilitating structured instruction [40: 4-5]. Pressing issues such as insufficient learning facilities and infrastructural challenges persisted, with reports indicating inadequate heating during winter months, resulting in student illnesses and health concerns for educators [13: 52-53]. To mitigate these challenges, central and local governments often requisitioned properties formerly owned by nobility to establish new schools.

From the fall of 1919 onwards, the majority of primary schools were established and materially supported by local self-governing bodies, albeit with educational oversight and partial funding from the Ministry. Community announcements in central press outlets sought teaching staff for Georgian, Armenian, and Turkish-speaking primary schools [6: 1]. However, due to financial constraints, communities often struggled to employ suitable personnel, leading to teaching quality issues. Since 1919, the Ministry of Public Education initiated evaluations of operational schools, establishing a dedicated auditing institute. Auditors assessed Georgian, Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani, Ossetian, and Greek language schools across the country evaluating school administrations and teaching processes [38: 4].

Results of the Education Reform

Until January 1921, comprehensive reports from the Ministry of Education were absent, yet glimpses of educational developments can be pieced together from scattered reports preserved in the press and archives. Individual schools also furnished reports to the Ministry. For instance, in March 1920, the high-primary school in the village of Bakhvi, located in the *uezd* of Ozurgeti,

disclosed a tuition fee of 400 Ruble, with a total enrollment of 221 students [39: 32]. In Tskhinvali tuition fee was 200 Ruble for 97 students although these fees were nominal considering the prevailing inflation, with the price of 1 British pound sterling ranging from 900 to 1400 Ruble between March and May 1920 [39: 53]. In October 1920, 1 Pound equaled to 4400 Ruble, while in December it increased to 18 000 Ruble [12: 72].

At a teachers' congress in Tbilisi in January 1921, Minister of Public Education Grigol Lortkipanidze hailed schools and teachers as pivotal to state and nation-building:

For many centuries, there existed the Georgian tribe, a state of Georgia ruled by Georgian kings and chieftains, a Georgian culture, and Georgian people who lived, fought, and thrived. However, despite these historical realities, there was no Georgian nation in the true sense of the word. This is because in ancient and medieval times, there were people, not nations. The true Georgian nation began to form in our contemporary historical era. We are witnessing the greatest event of our lives - the transformation of the Georgian people. One aspect of this significant event is the empowerment of the entire populace, the creation of a unified body politic that embraces democracy. Yet, the second and more crucial half of this historical transformation remains incomplete. To achieve this, it is imperative to fully develop Georgian science, education, and culture, thereby shaping the Georgian people not only as bearers of political power but also as vessels of cultural heritage. When every member of society, not just rulers and intellectuals, but the entire population, becomes a custodian of culture, then the Georgian people will truly embody the spirit of the Georgian era. The cultivation of national identity and the realization of genuine national culture form the cornerstone and main foundation of this endeavor. Indeed, a new, robust, and beloved Georgia is emerging today, and the architects and artisans of this vital transformation are the Georgian teachers [27: 3].

At the same congress, Noe Tsintsadze delivered a comprehensive report detailing the reform's progress and geographical impact:

Universal education is becoming standard in Guria, Senaki, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi markets, albeit less so in Sukhumi district. In Eastern Georgia, school expansion is notable in the markets of Gori, Telavi, and Signaghi. However, despite increased enrollment, teacher shortages persist [28: 3-4].

In January 1921, Tsintsadze presented statistical results to the teachers' conference, revealing that excluding Batumi Province, 1,924 schools served 162,342 students. Western Georgia housed 1,261 schools with 110,375 students, while Eastern Georgia had 663 schools with 51,967 students. By comparison, August 1918 figures indicated 790 teachers in East Georgia and 1936 in West Georgia [19: 1-2]. In February 1921, statistics indicated 2,034 functioning schools nationwide, including Batumi Province. During the Democratic Republic of Georgia's 1028-day tenure from May 26, 1918, to March 18, 1921, over 1100 new schools were opened [19: 3]

Following the statistical presentation, Tsintsadze outlined plans for new schools in the coming years:

If we calculate an average of 100 students per school, about 2,100 schools would be needed to implement universal education in the Republic (excluding Batumi District). Thus, if the growth of the public school system proceeds at the same rate as it has during the last two years, the system of schools for universal compulsory education by 1923, as projected, must be considered accomplished [19: 3].

According to Ministry reports, by the end of 1920, the Democratic Republic of Georgia had schools operating in various languages, including 60 Russian-speaking, 81 Armenian-speaking, 31 Turkish-speaking, 66 Greek, 48 Ossetian, and 20 Abkhazian. Additionally, there were Estonian, German, and Assyrian schools established within the republic [20: 3-4].

The Republic of Armenia faced a shortage of schools, exacerbated by the use of existing schools as temporary shelters for citizens displaced by war and forcibly expelled from the Ottoman Empire. Around 300 schools began operating in September 1919, but according to the plan of Minister of Education Nikol Aghbalian, the republic needed over 900 primary schools to achieve universal education [8: 310]. Despite challenges, the Republic of

Armenia expanded its educational system somewhat by 1920. Professor Hovanisian's data showed that in 1920, Armenia had 420 Armenian-language primary schools with approximately 1,000 teachers and 38,000 students. This represented a significant increase compared to 1919, with 14,000 more students enrolled. By 1920, there were also 25 Muslim, 22 Russian, and 10 Greek schools operating in the Republic of Armenia [8: 311]. Articles 110 and 111 of the Constitution of Georgia, ratified on February 21, 1921, delineated the fundamental principles of universal education and the state's responsibility toward education. Specifically, Article 110 stipulated that primary education was universal, free, and mandatory. It emphasized the interconnectedness of the public-school system, where the primary school serves as the foundation for middle and high school education. Additionally, it underscored that education at all levels in schools is non-religious. Article 111 outlined the state's commitment to providing free food, clothing, and educational materials to the neediest children attending primary school. To achieve this objective, both the state and local self-governments allocate a portion of their annual income [17: 476].

Conclusion

The reform of universal school education in the Democratic Republic faced constraints that prevented its full implementation within the allotted time. However, reports from early 1921 indicated substantial progress toward achieving the reform's objectives. Despite limited resources, the republic's government diligently pursued the goal of establishing a system of universal and free school education.

Fundamentally, the reform aimed not only to elevate the overall education level of society but also to fulfill a crucial social function: eradicating existing systems of educational inequality and introducing a framework that would afford all citizens equal opportunities for development and social advancement. Central to the new education system was the principle of accessibility and the aspiration to build a more egalitarian society. Education

was no longer viewed as a privilege but rather as an inherent right for all, with the state assuming responsibility for its provision and safeguarding.

The success of the reform can be attributed to several factors: the comprehensive nature of the reform program itself, the mobilization of intellectual resources, and a willingness to embrace contemporary global practices. The reform's architects demonstrated ambition and adaptability in introducing and implementing innovative approaches that were prevalent worldwide at the time.

The reform of the education system, like other transformative initiatives, took into account the local context and the diverse composition of the state. It addressed the multi-ethnic nature of the Republic, considering the interests of national minorities, the status of their native languages, and the broader state objectives related to the teaching of the national language and core subjects.

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**ՎՐԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԺՈՂՈՎՐԴԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՈՒՄ
(1918-1921ԹԹ.) ՀԱՄԸՆԴՀԱՆՈՒՐ ՆԱԽՆԱԿԱՆ ԿՐԹԱԿԱՆ
ՀԱՄԱԿԱՐԳԻ ՁԱՎՎՈՐՈՒՄԸ**

Իրակլի Իրեմաձե

Հիմնաբառեր. Վրաստանի ժողովրդական Հանրապետություն, կրթական համակարգի բարեփոխում, համընդհանուր կրթական համակարգ, սոցիալական քաղաքականություն, Կովկաս, Ռուսական հեղափոխություն

Ամփոփում

1918թ. մայիսին Վրաստանի անկախության հռչակումից հետո քայլեր ձեռնարկվեցին հանրապետությունում համընդհանուր կրթական համակարգի ստեղծման ուղղությամբ: Բարեփոխումներն ընթանում էին բարդ ռազմաքաղաքական և տնտեսական խոր ճգնաժամի պայմաններում: Հոգվածում ներկայացվում է բարեփոխումների ընթացքը և ծագող խնդիրները:

Բարեփոխումների նպատակը համընդհանուր անվճար կրթական համակարգի ձևավորումն էր, որը խիստ բարդ գործընթաց էր պայմանավորված հանրապետության ֆինանսական ծանր վիճակի հետ: Հիմնական բարդություններից էր երկրում գոյություն ունեցող ոչ միօրինակ կրթական համակարգերի գոյությունը, կայսերական կրթահամակարգի հետ մեկտեղ ազգային դպրոցների առկայությունը, դրանցում գործող կրթական ծրագրերի բազմազանությունը:

Նոր համակարգի ներդրման նպատակը կրթությունը սոցիալական և ազգային սահմանափակումներից դուրս բերելն էր, բոլոր քաղաքացիների համար հավասար հնարավորությունների ներդնումը: Այսուհետև կրթությունը չէր դիտվում որպես այս կամ այն սոցիալական խմբի մենաշնորհ, այլ յուրաքանչյուր քաղաքացու անվիճելի իրավունք: Այդ գործում իրենց խոշոր ավանդն ունեցան հանրապետության կրթության նախարար Գ.Լասքիշվիլին, հասարակական-քաղաքական գործիչներ Ն.Ռամիշվիլին, Ն. Յինցաձեն, Գ.Լորթքիփանիձեն և այլք:

Հաշվի առնելով հանրապետության բազմաէթնիկ կառուցվածքը, բարեփոխումներում կարևոր տեղ էր հատկացվում արդեն գոյություն ունեցող ազգային փոքրամասնությունների շահերին, նրանց լեզուների կարգավիճակին: Չնայած ակնառու հաջողություններին, կրթական բարեփոխումների ամբողջական ներդրումը մնաց անավարտ պայմանավորված հանրապետության գոյության կարճ ժամանակահատվածով: