



The Evaluation of the New School Model in the Context of Educational Reform

RESEARCH REPORT



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The Evaluation of the New School Model in the Context of Educational Reform

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Foreword

This report presents a comprehensive evaluation of the “New School Model,” developed within the framework of Georgia’s general education reform and the implementation of the third-generation National Curriculum. It is based on a multifaceted analysis of the New School Model and includes an assessment of the educational system’s transformations and strategic approaches between 2019 and 2024. The primary aim of the report is to examine the significance and impact of the New School Model initiative.

The first chapter outlines the major ongoing and recent reforms in Georgia’s education system, highlighting their chronological, conceptual, and thematic connections to the philosophy, rationale, and implementation of the New School Model. The second chapter details the research methodology, explaining the logic behind the design and structure of the study.

Chapters three and four present a thorough description and analysis of the qualitative data collected during the research. These chapters explore the conceptual foundations of the New School Model, its alignment with other directions of general education reform, and the specific characteristics of its priority areas. They also incorporate perspectives from school communities, supported by extensive quotations that reflect their views on the reform.

Chapters five and six focus on the practical analysis of the school curriculum and the theoretical foundations of its implementation, particularly the constructivist principles underpinning the New School Model.

Chapter seven examines the integration of complex tasks into the learning process and the practical assessment of both process and outcomes.

Chapter eight interprets the results of teacher surveys, offering insights into their perceptions of the ongoing processes within the New School Model.

Chapters nine and ten present the key findings of the research and the resulting recommendations. These recommendations offer both strategic and practical proposals for improving Georgia’s education system.

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We wish to express our deep appreciation to the exceptional groups of teachers, school principals, and parents who participated in the research. Their expertise, knowledge, experience, and diverse perspectives significantly enriched the depth and multidimensionality of the analysis.

Special thanks are due to the research data analysts whose professionalism and tireless efforts ensured the collection and interpretation of high-quality, reliable data. We also extend our gratitude to Professor Francisco El Rivera-Batiz of Teachers College, Columbia University, for his valuable consultation during the development of the research design.

Finally, we thank the public officials and school leaders who provided critical data for the study, despite professional constraints and administrative pressures. We hope this report will serve as a meaningful contribution to shaping a long-term vision for educational reform and guiding the logical development of the system.

We trust that the findings and recommendations will be of value to those involved in education policy development—individuals who are qualified, professional, and committed to progress. We also hope that these efforts will be free from narrow partisan interests and will reflect a responsible approach to the needs of the educational community, in line with the perspectives of a democratic and developed society.

The Research Team

Chapter 1. Introduction/ Description of Educational System and Reforms in Georgia

The New School Model from the Context of System Management

Academic literature and international practice indicate that a systemic vision of education reform, coupled with its inherent complexity, necessitates the integration of several principles. Among these, scholars and education professionals generally agree on a few key aspects:

First is the **holistic approach**, which asserts that any systemic reform efforts must address the entire educational ecosystem, including curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and relationships between education and the community. While isolated changes may lead to temporary improvements, they cannot ensure long-term systemic impact (Fullan, 2007; Nadarhutse et al., 2019).

The second principle is the **cooperation and involvement of stakeholders**, wherein management at all levels, teachers, students, parents, and civil society actively participate in implementing the reform. Stakeholders share a collective vision, with a clear plan outlining the degree of involvement and the specific importance and contributions of each participant to the reform process (Senge, 1990; Duffy, 2006).

A third crucial principle is **the incorporation of feedback loops and the pursuit of continuous improvement** (Leithwood & Earl, 2006), which entails ongoing monitoring and evaluation of key milestones and progress. Data collected through this process informs decision-making, facilitating revisions and improvements to current practices. This fosters a culture of continuous enhancement and the cultivation of best practices.

Another essential element is the focus on **equity and inclusion**, which requires that reforms address the diverse needs of all actors and institutions involved. Planning in alignment with these needs is integral to the reform's vision. Ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities is paramount for systemic reforms, as it involves addressing and eliminating systemic inequities (Gay, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

A vital component of successful reform is the **promotion of progressive professional development** systems, which involves appropriate investment in the growth of education professionals. This ensures alignment with the reform's vision, systematic management, and comprehensive support (Carless, 2012). Such an approach strengthens instructional leaders and teachers within a broader professional context, viewing their roles not as preparation for a specific task, but in terms of compatibility and relevance within the education system as a whole (Joseph & Greer, 2020).

In recent years, the cycle of reforms in Georgia's school education system, including the introduction of a New School Model, has focused on several key areas. These include the professional development of teachers, textbook evaluation, public school authorization, and the reform of bilingual education in non-Georgian (native language of ethnic minority) schools. Below, we briefly discuss the vision and progress of each reform initiative.

New School Model

As part of the general education reform program, the Ministry of Education and Science launched the implementation of the New School Model (NSM) in 2019. The primary goal of NSM was to develop a holistic school concept within Georgia's general education system. Based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, the new third-generation curriculum emphasized active learning, building on students' prior knowledge, exploring learning, organizing interconnected knowledge, and developing critical thinking, as opposed to mechanistic rote learning (Andghuladze, 2020). This approach aimed to help students engage with the real world and construct knowledge independently through practical examples.

According to Erickson (Erickson et al., 2017), this kind of knowledge construction involves a gradual transformation of facts into topics, then into concepts, and eventually into more general principles and theories. To enhance the teaching and learning process, the new curriculum promoted problem-solving, collaboration, and information exchange. It also emphasized the importance of spatial and temporal orientation, and accountability, strengthened literacy (including ICT literacy), and ensured its integration into the learning process.

NSM encouraged the development of independent learning and inquiry-based decision-making skills among students (New National Curriculum, 2016), serving as a practical tool for implementing the principles of the National Curriculum (Silagadze, 2021).

To achieve the goal of introducing the new curriculum, the New School Model served four main purposes:

- 1) **Adapting the third-generation curriculum at the school level to introduce constructivist educational principles.** A review of Georgian policy documents (Order N40/N2016; Order 100/N 2020) shows that schools were given the opportunity to develop a school curriculum based on the national curriculum, organize and implement compulsory and optional courses, and select from approved textbooks. This was viewed as a mechanism for increasing school autonomy. The school's adapted curriculum had to align with constructivist principles, promoting the development of students' analytical skills, encouraging them to discover new knowledge, and applying it to real-life experiences. This approach also aimed to develop students' complex, critical, and creative thinking skills (General Education Reform Support Concept, 2019).
- 2) **Improving school management approaches through the involvement of the wider educational community.** Among the approaches used by NSM was the creation of regional support groups ('National Curriculum Adoption Support Groups') (MoES, 2020). These groups, along with the training of teachers and school management, helped develop necessary competencies. The groups assisted school principals in identifying and solving school-level problems related to institutional development and supported teachers in implementing student-centered teaching

methods. These groups were composed of specialists selected and trained by the Department of Preschool and General Education Development of the Ministry of Education and Science, in collaboration with the Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC). The support groups consisted of the following experts: (1) a school curriculum development expert and assistant; (2) a technology expert to help teachers integrate digital tools into the learning process; (3) an educational leadership expert who worked with the school administration to foster a healthy school environment; (4) an inclusive education expert who supported schools in implementing inclusive education principles; and (5) implementation coordinators who helped coordinate the reform's execution at schools (MoES, 2020).

The regional support groups, known as coaches within the school community, worked across different municipalities, assisting a number of schools. A total of 24 support groups operated throughout the country, providing targeted assistance to 597 schools during the pilot phase from 2019 to 2022. In the next phase, as the NSM expanded to all schools in Georgia, the work of the support groups and the program's impact was extended to all schools. Simultaneously, teachers from other schools were informed of the new practices and introduced to these reforms.

3. **Integrating Digital Technologies into Teaching and Learning to Improve Equity.** Schools involved in the NSM from its inception had better technical infrastructure and were more equipped to conduct online learning than other schools (Kadagidze, 2021). The model viewed digital technologies as an effective tool to support student-centered learning and teacher training. Within the framework of the New School Model, the development of digital technologies at the school level was pursued in two main ways: (1) integrating digital technologies into teachers' daily practices (e.g., lesson planning, communication with colleagues); and (2) the effective use of electronic learning resources in the teaching-learning process, which encouraged teachers to help students master digital technologies (e.g., search engines, Microsoft cloud services). Students also learned to use resources such as Minecraft Education Edition and Scratch. This process helped students develop digital skills as well as algorithmic and creative thinking.

As part of the New School Model, several key digital advancements were introduced: (1) an electronic journal, which facilitated the administration of the learning process and enhanced communication between members of the school community (students, parents, teachers, and school administration); (2) technology equipment for schools, including laptops and projectors. In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Science spent more than 14 million GEL on the purchase of electronic technologies, installation of Wi-Fi, and the development of electronic resources as part of the New School Model; (3) the Ministry replaced netbooks for first-graders to ensure the smooth operation of electronic learning resources; and (4) the Ministry developed a range of electronic educational resources (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021).

4. **Development of an Evaluation System to Measure Student Academic Achievement** (Concept - "Supporting the Reform of General Education 2019"). Within the framework of the New School Model, both internal and external school evaluation mechanisms were created to support the development of a school-level evaluation system. This process aimed to help teachers assess students' academic achievements and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The system consisted of two main components: (1) the study of school culture, and (2) the assessment of student achievement and academic performance. The data obtained from these evaluations

contributed to the development of the school's institutional development strategy and allowed the Ministry of Education and Science to create individual support mechanisms tailored to the needs of each school. According to the plan, schools participating in the New School Model were also required to administer annual literacy and math assessments to students in grades 4 and 6. Other subjects, such as social and exact sciences, were to be evaluated every other year (Aptarashvili, 2022).

Reform of Teacher Education and Professional Development

Significant changes in teacher professional development began in 2005 with the issuance of the Law "On General Education." This law defined the key components of general education, including teacher professional development. In 2006, the government adopted Resolution N29, which approved the professional development framework for teachers. Since then, the process of teacher development has undergone numerous changes. To ensure a high standard of teacher qualifications, the conditions for the teacher certification exam were established by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2009 (Order No. 1101). By 2014, all teachers were required to pass certification exams, but the deadline was extended several times due to low pass rates and many teachers failing to meet the minimum threshold.

Over the following years, the certification process continued to evolve, primarily to make the requirements more accessible, allowing teachers to either remain in the system or advance to the next level of professional development. By 2020, Order No. 67/N introduced new standards, extending minimum competency requirements to all teachers while abolishing subject-specific requirements. This version of the scheme also established specific statuses and competency levels for special education teachers. The National Center for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC) played a key role in coordinating teacher training and career advancement.

Since its inception in 2006, TPDC has implemented a variety of programs aimed at professionalizing teaching staff and school leadership. Between 2006 and 2015, TPDC experts developed 139 training modules and conducted 1,320 workshops, training up to 26,000 teachers (Andghuladze, 2016). Despite these statistics, a 2021 report by the State Audit Service of Georgia indicated that the professional development of teachers lacked consistency, and resources were not effectively or productively distributed. Teachers did not have equal opportunities to participate in professional development activities, particularly in trainings. Data from 2017-2019 showed that about one-third of teachers did not participate in TPDC-organized training sessions, with significant disparities based on region and the language of instruction in schools (World Bank, 2019).

Additionally, it was unclear whether the professional development activities effectively promoted teacher advancement within the career development scheme. For example, despite the simplification of mechanisms for confirming professional qualifications, by 2020, 21% of teachers were still classified at the lowest professional development level (practitioner). Nonetheless, significant contributions to professional development reform were made by international programs, particularly those implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Teacher Education Excellence (TEE) program, which was jointly implemented by the Millennium Challenge Corporation and TPDC.

Alongside the New School Model, a teacher pension scheme was introduced in 2019. This initiative aimed to gradually replace older teachers with younger, more qualified staff. Simultaneously, the Seeker Program was launched to prepare prospective teachers for independent teaching through school-based training. Although these initiatives positively impacted the overall age of teachers and helped reverse the downward trend in the number of young teachers entering the system (Bochorishvili & Peranidze, 2020), the overall reform did not yield the expected results. Despite the initial success, the number of teachers of retirement age eventually returned to pre-reform levels, and the influx of new staff into the education system was delayed (CCIIR, 2023).

Licensing of School Textbooks

The process of school textbook licensing began in 2006 with Minister's Order No. 428, titled "On Approval of the Recommended Textbook Licensing Procedure." Since its inception, the criteria and management of textbook grading, including the vision and weight assigned to learning resources, have undergone multiple changes. The purpose of the textbook licensing process was to ensure that schools had access to recommended textbooks that were created in alignment with the national curriculum and its subject programs. These textbooks were intended to support students in achieving the outcomes specified by the national curriculum (Order 428, 11/05/2006).

The responsibility for granting licenses initially fell under the National Curriculum and Assessment Center, a legal entity of public law, which was later incorporated into a department within the Ministry of Education. In 2011, following the approval of the second-generation national curriculum, the licensing process for primary-level textbooks was revised according to the new rules. These changes posed significant challenges for publishers and authors, who had to navigate new mechanisms for copyright transfer to the state. The professional development opportunities for expert groups and evaluators involved in the assessment process were also significantly restricted (CCIIR, 2013).

In subsequent years, several shortcomings were identified in the textbook evaluation process, particularly concerning transparency, comprehensiveness, and compliance with international standards. These challenges also extended to the validity of the criteria used for evaluating the content and teaching-learning aspects of the textbooks. Delays in the evaluation process frequently affected the timely distribution of textbooks to students. For example, the 2017-2018 academic year started with outdated textbooks due to delays in licensing.

During the implementation of the New School Model, some of these issues were more effectively managed, and textbook distribution was generally completed on time. However, as of 2024, some 12th-grade textbooks remained unlicensed, despite the approaching deadlines. Additionally, in February 2024, the Ministry of Education allowed both private and public schools to use non-licensed textbooks, following specific procedures.

According to information published on the Ministry's official website, "In 2024, a new document outlining the National Goals of General Education was approved, leading to the revision of all subject standards. Regardless of the textbooks used in schools, Teacher's Guides were created for all 12th-grade subjects, including Georgian history. Once the new national curriculum is approved, the process of updating all subject textbooks will commence."

Thus, starting in 2025, the development, approval, and evaluation of textbooks aligned with the next-generation national curriculum and relevant subject standards will begin.

School Authorization Process

The authorization process for public schools in Georgia was initially planned to start in 2015, but due to insufficient preparedness, the reform was postponed multiple times. "In 2023, the gradual authorization of public schools began. Currently, the administrative procedure for authorizing approximately 320 schools is underway at the National Center for the Development of Education Quality. The full authorization process, originally intended to include 2,086 public schools by 2026-2027, has now been extended to 2030-2031."

The ultimate goal of this authorization process is to ensure that the education provided by authorized institutions aligns with their mission and offers students a quality education that meets the standards set for general educational institutions. The process involves establishing quality assurance mechanisms for the independent evaluation of schools, gathering feedback within the authorization framework, and supporting continuous development. Since public schools are state-funded, the focus of this accreditation process is developmental rather than punitive—emphasizing school improvement over the mere granting or denial of accreditation.

The accreditation process aims to set a baseline for school quality, involving both external and internal evaluations, and interventions based on those assessments. According to the reform's concept, the results of the authorization process are intended to benefit the school community by addressing the specific needs of each educational institution. This process includes:

- **Setting Standards:** Defining general education standards based on the school's mission (or, in the case of public schools, a collective mission).
- **Collaborative Work:** Working directly with school directors and teachers to assess school activities and future plans in line with established standards.
- **On-site Evaluations:** Conducting school visits, possibly with the involvement of resource centers and school boards, to better understand each school's challenges and strengths.
- **Public Reporting:** Publishing evaluation results to inform the Ministry of Education, the community, and schools themselves about areas that need improvement or warrant further development, with continuous monitoring and re-evaluation as needed.
- **Institutional Development Plans:** Creating development plans that enable schools to pursue greater independence and foster continuous improvement.

As of September 2024, authorization has been granted for the next nine years to 387 schools (about 16% of all public schools), which serve approximately 194,202 students—roughly 25% of the total student population across 2,086 public schools.

Bilingual Educational Reform in Non-Georgian Language Schools

Since 2005, Georgia's education system has implemented focused interventions in non-Georgian language, where the main language of instruction is the mother tongue—primarily Armenian and Azerbaijani. These interventions aim to strengthen the teaching of the Georgian language, facilitating the socio-economic, cultural, and political integration of ethnic minorities into Georgian society while also preserving their linguistic and cultural identity (Wheatley, 2009; Tabatadze, 2019; Kharatishvili, 2020).

Georgia's commitment to this dual approach is reflected both in international agreements and in state policy documents and legislation. The State Strategy of Civil Equality and Integration 2015-2020 sought to increase Georgian language proficiency among ethnic minorities and improve access to quality education. The new State Strategy for Civil Equality and Integration 2021-2030 places even greater emphasis on these goals and plans more comprehensive interventions to achieve them.

However, efforts to implement bilingual education, seen as a key tool for achieving these goals, have been fragmented and inconsistent. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science, with support from international experts and the OSCE, initiated a Multilingual Education Program. The program launched in 2010 in approximately 40 schools in the Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. Despite initial enthusiasm, the program faced systemic challenges and was not extended. Numerous attempts to promote bilingual education in subsequent years also failed to establish it as a central pillar for the education of ethnic minorities.

In 2018, an important regulatory change occurred with the addition of Article 81 to the national curriculum (Ministerial Order No. 32/N), which officially recognized bilingual education as a priority for students from national minority backgrounds. This change allowed schools greater flexibility in their curricula to implement bilingual education. However, these changes were often inconsistent with the General Education Law and other regulations, resulting in confusion and difficulties in applying bilingual education effectively.

A significant contribution to the field has been made by the Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC), which has run various programs aimed at staffing non-Georgian language schools with qualified personnel. These programs, in place since 2009, have had a notable impact on both professional qualifications and the school culture in minority regions. A key initiative involved sending Georgian-speaking teachers on extended assignments to regions with high concentrations of ethnic minorities and integrating them into local schools. Additionally, bilingual education assistant teachers have been deployed to support this effort.

The third wave of bilingual education reform began in 2020 and was initially piloted in 20 schools. This phase focused on bilingual education in the 3rd and 4th grades, specifically in the natural and social sciences. Assistant teachers specializing in Georgian as a second language were brought in to support bilingual subject instruction. Intensive training was provided to these assistant teachers, and special materials were developed to plan and monitor the implementation of bilingual lessons.

By 2024, the reform had expanded to 187 schools, and new subjects such as art and mathematics were added to the bilingual curriculum. However, the program continues to face challenges. There is considerable variation in the readiness and motivation of subject teachers and bilingual assistants, logistical delays in the provision of teaching materials, and inconsistent support from school

administrations. Moreover, awareness of the goals of bilingual education remains low within school communities, contributing to fears of cultural assimilation, concerns about job security among subject teachers, and limited involvement from parents.

Another key issue has been the diminishing role of teachers of Georgian as a Second Language within this framework. While 22 experienced teachers were involved in the bilingual program in 2023, However, in 2024, the program ceased involving these experienced teachers. This situation highlights two significant issues: first, the irrational use of qualified and experienced resources, and second, the lack of coordination and preparedness among the various stakeholders and agencies within the system.

Chapter 2. Research Methodology

The methodology of the presented report is grounded in the descriptive-analytical approach to education policy research, which entails a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the program implemented under the third-generation national curriculum reform—the New School Model—aligned with defined criteria for measuring effectiveness. This study employs a multi-component, mixed-methods design that integrates various research methods and data sources.

The curriculum serves as a vital instrument that fosters unity and coherence between the policies set by governing bodies and the individual actors responsible for policy implementation (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). In line with this vision, the research framework categorizes the development and implementation of the curriculum into three significant levels: **Political Level:** This level addresses the normative and ideological foundations of what education should encompass. **Programmatic Level:** This includes the writing and development of curriculum documents, as well as the establishment of expectations at the institutional level. **Practical Level:** This level focuses on the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom, encompassing teachers' interpretations of the learning material and the necessary learning experiences (Wermke, Jarl, Prøitz, & Nordholm, 2022).

This three-level frame was used for the analysis of the objectives of the New School Model: (a) Development and implementation of the school curriculum based on the constructivism approach; (b) Integrating digital technologies in teaching and learning; (c) Advancing School leadership; (d) Expanding the assessment system to understand student progress. Based on the framework the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. To what extent does the New School Model align with other educational reforms and initiatives implemented by the Government of Georgia?

RQ2. What challenges, obstacles, and shortcomings have been identified in the design and implementation of the New School Model?

RQ3. What best practices and successful policy measures have emerged during the design and implementation of the objectives of the New School Model?

The research employed a mixed methodology, incorporating both primary and secondary data. Several methods and tools were combined to achieve a comprehensive analysis:

1. **Desk Research:** Public and solicited statistical data were processed and analyzed according to the research methodology. This data encompassed both quantitative measures and specific trends at various levels, including institutional, settlement, municipal, regional, and national.
2. **Media Interpretation:** Materials published in print and social media were analyzed to gauge awareness, opinions, perceptions, expectations, and ideas regarding the current

reform. This content included a mix of textual data (such as posts, comments, articles, press releases, and blogs) and audio-visual data (including presentations, social ads, online meetings, and dialogues). Precise codes and categories were developed for analysis, following the main methodological framework of the study. Content analysis was employed to examine the diverse information messages and perspectives that exist among different societal groups outside the formal context, thereby allowing for a broader evaluation of the data collected within the research.

3. **Qualitative Empirical Data Collection:** Qualitative primary data were gathered through focus groups and in-depth interviews, conducted following a specially developed protocol and interview guide. The interviews included: 2 interviews with policymakers and decision-makers; 3 interviews with coaches involved in the New School Model; 10 interviews with principals from schools participating in and not participating in the New School Model; 2 interviews with education experts and project stakeholders
4. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs were conducted with teachers (10 groups) and parents (5 groups).

For in-depth interviews, principals were selected using purposive sampling based on geographic location, status, and demographics. Focus group participants were chosen using targeted cluster sampling, where specific regions were represented by clusters, and schools were purposefully selected. Teachers were recruited by the principals for the discussions, taking into account the number and proportion of schools in each regional district, as well as their characteristics (size, geographic location, and language of instruction).

Audio recordings of the primary data were transcribed and processed using the MAXQDA program, utilizing predefined thematic directions, codes, and sub-codes. This approach facilitated the identification of qualitative trends and special cases (outliers). The "whole-part-whole" principle was applied for qualitative data processing.

5. **Curriculum Analysis:** The analysis of school curricula was conducted using content analysis, a systematic method for interpreting textual data. In this case, content analysis enabled the categorization of curricula and the comparison and summarization of various elements, such as originality, formal and informal components, and the incorporation of constructivist principles that reflect the visions of the national curriculum. In line with the purpose of the content analysis, our objective was to determine how well schools have been able to plan the learning process in accordance with the New School Model's approaches. To this end, we addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is the school curriculum an original, direct reflection of the developmental path of students, offering a variety of educational experiences through formal (in-class) and informal (extracurricular) components?

RQ2: What changes have occurred in the new school curricula compared to the old national curriculum?

RQ3: How do the school curricula of pilot schools in the New School Model differ from non-pilot schools in terms of originality, ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) goals, and conceptual and methodological approaches?

RQ4: To what extent does the school curriculum incorporate the constructivist principles of the national curriculum?

RQ5: How thoroughly are the new structural units of the curriculum—concepts, indigenous ideas, themes, and key questions—reflected in the school curricula, considering the conceptual and methodological approaches of the national curriculum?

RQ6: How well does the school curriculum integrate digital technologies into the educational process, based on the approaches and activities of the New School Model?

To answer these questions, school curricula were used as the primary data source. 425 schools were requested to submit their curricula, including 310 schools that participated in the pilot phase of the New School Model and 115 schools that did not receive any special training for its implementation. Out of these, 150 schools provided their curricula, and through random sampling, 60 schools were selected for analysis, equally divided between pilot and non-pilot schools.

This selection aimed to uncover any differences between schools that received support at various stages of the process and those that did not, and to carry out a comparative analysis of curriculum development readiness according to school status. When selecting schools, we also ensured a balance between urban and non-urban locations. Thus, 28 schools were in urban areas (cities), and 32 schools were from rural or township areas. This distribution ensured that the analysis was not skewed towards one type of settlement. More specifically, the selected schools were distributed as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of Schools Selected for Analysis

| School Status | City | Village | Town |
|------------------------|------|---------|------|
| Involve in Pilot Stage | 18 | 11 | 1 |
| Not Involved | 10 | 19 | 1 |

To compare the situation after the introduction of the New School Model with the situation before its implementation, we asked schools to submit their curricula from the period of the second-generation curriculum. Schools primarily provided their 2015-2016 and 2022-2023 curricula. Accordingly, the analysis was conducted by comparing each school's second and third-generation curricula to identify differences, taking into account the status and location of the schools.

6. Teachers' Survey Quantitative Teacher Research - Questionnaire

A total of 632 teachers participated in the survey, selected through convenience sampling. To recruit teachers, we utilized social platforms and groups, along with existing organizational and professional-personal ties within the school community, which are based on mutual respect and trust. We did not receive support from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth, which in previous years had facilitated the distribution of an information letter to resource centers and municipal schools. Nevertheless, the survey was conducted at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 3.88 and a sample proportion of 50%. According to the 2023-2024 Saxstat data, $P=55,689$, excluding teachers from schools operating in ethnic minority languages ($\neq 6143$), leaving $P=49,536$. Based on sampling principles, demographic

interpretations of the data were not considered. Instead, we focused on analyzing the data of teachers from schools involved and not involved in the New School Model, specifically on issues where this distribution was critical and where the tool allowed for such differentiation.

We used a universal survey form distributed among teachers via the Google platform. The tool allowed us to study public school teachers' experiences in implementing the general education reform, as well as their perspectives and perceptions on related issues. The questionnaire consisted of 78 main questions divided into eight sections:

1. **Teacher Profile:** Demographic information, teaching experience, subject areas, and professional status.
2. **General Information about Education Reform:** Assessment of school readiness, the importance of the reform, and various aspects of its implementation.
3. **Teacher Autonomy:** Evaluation of changes in teachers' roles, responsibilities, and degrees of autonomy.
4. **Learning Resources:** Assessment of the availability, relevance, and use of various learning resources.
5. **School Environment:** Evaluation of school infrastructure and technological capabilities.
6. **Teacher Motivation:** Exploration of motivations for adopting new teaching approaches.
7. **Student Attitudes and Academic Achievement:** Teachers' assessment of students' perspectives on the implementation and impact of new teaching methods on academic achievement.
8. **School Culture and Assessment Mechanisms:** Self-reports on teacher involvement in school strategy, extracurricular activities, and different methods of student assessment.

In addition to nominal "yes/no" options, the questionnaire predominantly used a five-point Likert scale to assess attitudes and experiences. Teachers were also asked some open-ended questions, though these were optional and did not affect the quality control of the questionnaire completion. Answering all other questions was mandatory, and respondents could only proceed to the next question after completing the current one. Overall, the survey covered a broad range of topics related to education reform, including curriculum changes, professional development, technology use, and assessment practices. Data were processed using SPSS software and appropriate statistical models, allowing for univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses according to the categories outlined in the methodological framework.

To synthesize the data, we used the triangulation method (Denzin, 1978), combining various data sources. Triangulation is a research technique used to verify data by integrating different perspectives or methodologies. It enhances the validity and reliability of results by using diverse data sources, research methods, or theoretical frameworks. In mixed-method research, triangulation allows for the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data, deepening the analysis. The main advantage of triangulation is its ability to reduce bias that might arise from using a single method, resulting in more robust conclusions. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) note, "Triangulation increases the reliability of results because it captures the complexity of social phenomena from different perspectives."

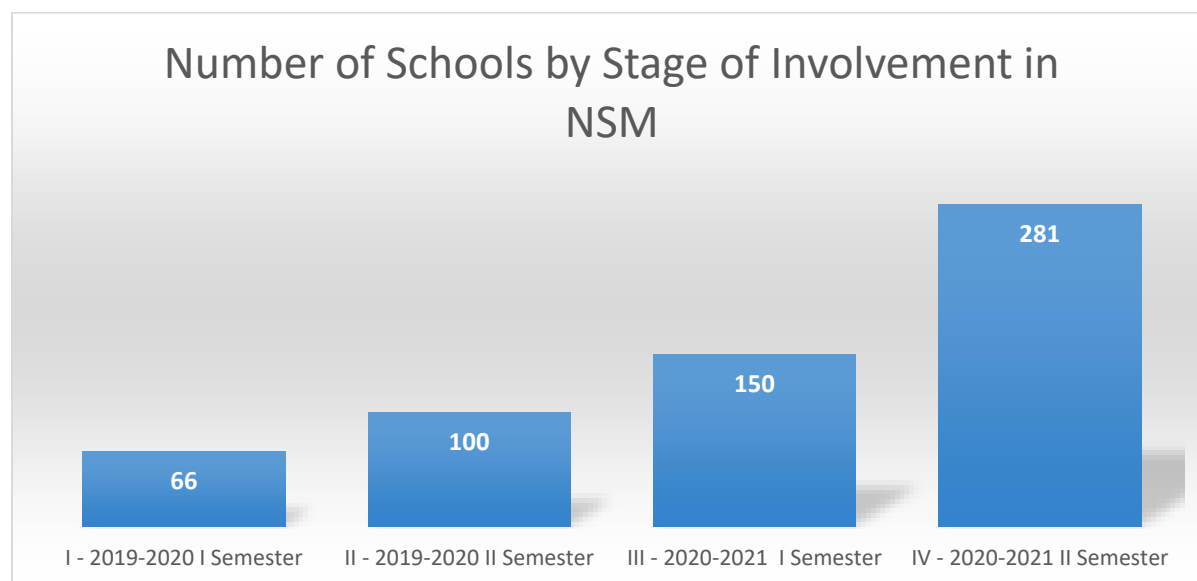
We interpreted the results based on detailed and key findings, which were subsequently translated into relevant policy recommendations.

Chapter 3. The Description of New School Model: Analysis of the Data in the Context of General Educational Reforms

The New School Model, an important sub-program for advancing general education reform, was introduced following the adoption of the New National Curriculum (2018-2024) and served as a tool for its implementation. The sub-program's active implementation began in 2019 and was carried out in four stages. Initially, it was determined that within the framework of the "Promotion of General Education Reform" program, more than 100 public schools would adopt the constructivist principles of teaching and learning in 2019, with the aim of gradually extending this to all public schools in Georgia by 2023.

In reality, 597 schools participated in the implementation of the New School Model. As of 2022, it was officially announced that all schools were involved in the reform. However, the remaining 1,489 schools did not receive support from the Ministry of Education and Science for the introduction of the new school curriculum. The distribution of the 597 schools involved in the New School Model, based on their inclusion in the program, is as follows:

Figure 1. Number of Public Schools by stage of involvement in NSM



From the program's inception in 2019 until 2023, its financing was covered through budget allocations. According to the available data for program planning, these allocations were made based on the following projected budget amounts (the figures presented are based on the budget indicated in the program description and not on the actual allocated or disbursed funds).

Table 1: Budget of NSM 2019-2022

| | Budget of NSM Program 2019-2022 |
|---------------|--|
| Year | Amount |
| 2019 | 19 354 000 |
| 2020 | 7 455 626 |
| 2021 | 9 815 485 |
| 2022 | 7 337 370 |
| Total: | 43962481 |

It should be noted that the component of providing schools with equipment under the New School Model was financed through the World Bank program "Innovation, Inclusivity, and Quality." Under this initiative, equipment was purchased for schools participating in the project in 2021. In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Science directly purchased the equipment. A total of 77 schools received charging cabinets in 2019, but the purchase of these cabinets was discontinued in subsequent years. Additionally, 469 schools were provided with projectors, and 420 schools received laptops. However, it should be noted that some of the 597 participating schools did not receive the appropriate equipment, and once all schools were included in the reform, no further equipment was provided.

Table 2. Number of School Received Equipment in the framework of NSM

| Year | Charging Cabinets | Projector | Laptop |
|--------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| 2019 | 77 | 165 | 100 |
| 2021 | 0 | 304 | 320 |
| Total | 77 | 469 | 420 |

Based on the purchases made in 2019 and 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science acquired a total of 77 charging cabinets, 1,830 projectors, and 6,764 portable computers for schools involved in the reform, with a total expenditure of 12,257,072 GEL.

Table 3. Equipment purchased for schools and related expenses by year.

| Year | Charging Cabinets | Total Amount | Projector | Total Amount | Laptops | Total Amount | Total Costs |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2019 | 77 | 113 190 | 522 | 393327 | 1983 | 2388523,5 | 2 895 041 |
| 2021 World Bank) | 0 | 0 | 1308 | 1438002,12 | 4781 | 7924029,4 | 9 362 032 |
| Total | 77 | 113 190 | 1 830 | 1 831 329 | 6 764 | 10 312 553 | 12 257 072 |

It is important to note that the Ministry of Education and Science carefully monitored the infrastructure and technical equipment of schools at the initial stage of the New School Model reform. According to information provided by the Ministry, the reform team assessed the infrastructural condition of schools

at the time of their inclusion in the New School Model. As a result, schools with newly built, rehabilitated, or well-maintained infrastructure were selected, and 37 schools underwent rehabilitation. However, it is worth noting that no additional efforts were made to improve the infrastructure of schools involved in the 3rd and 4th stages of the reform.

Table 4. infrastructural condition of schools involved in NSM in I and II stages of the program

| | The school was rehabilitated within the framework of the program, | The school was newly built, newly rehabilitated or infrastructurally well developed | The local municipality had to carry out the rehabilitation of the involved school | involved school |
|-----------------|---|---|---|-----------------|
| I Stage | 15 | 35 | 15 | 65 |
| II Stage | 21 | 100 | 1 | 122 |
| Total: | 36 | 135 | 16 | 187 |

In total, 6,496,311.97 GEL was spent on the rehabilitation of 15 closed schools under the New School Model, while **11,948,663.40 GEL** was allocated for the rehabilitation of 21 schools involved in the second stage.

Program participants also discussed the changes in financial and political support for the New School Model during interviews and focus groups. One participant stated, 'In this case, the change in top management led to a decrease in ambitions. The last announcement indicated that 1,000 schools should be built; however, this was not connected at all with the New School Model. The situation differs greatly between those involved in the reform and those focused on content. Not a single announcement has been made, and there is no continuation of that. Something new has emerged from school reform. I believe this caused the issue. In the first stage, it was a project supported by the Minister; in the second stage, it was recognized by the Minister but not actively supported. It was supported in a limited sense—one of the activities—but the authorization is also a formality, and now it seems to anger the Minister. Changes are happening" .

Schools, Students, and Teachers Involved in the New School Model: Issues and Risks Related to Selection

It is important to note that the selection and phasing of schools for the New School Model contain significant flaws and may pose challenges from an educational policy and reform perspective. International studies and national assessments highlight that inequality is a serious issue in Georgia, with the greatest challenges found in schools with small student populations, rural areas, and minority communities (TIMSS 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019; PISA 2015, 2018; PIRLS 2006, 2011, 2016; National Assessments in Mathematics 2015 and 2018; National Assessment in Science Subjects 2016; Certificate Examination Results 2011-2018). The Ministry of Education and Science, along with the Georgian government, has publicly committed to addressing these inequalities and improving educational outcomes in all schools, particularly those with the most disadvantaged results (Education and Science

Development Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2030). In this context, the introduction of the New School Model is worth analyzing in terms of the schools and teachers involved.

Our analysis focuses on schools participating in the program by region, accommodation type, school size, and language of instruction—key factors that influence differences between schools and are often reflected in academic performance or success.

From a regional perspective, the distribution of schools involved in the program is uneven. For instance, 116 out of 178 public schools in Tbilisi are already part of the program, while in Adjara, only 45 out of 229 schools have been included. Detailed information on the schools participating by region is provided in the graph below.

The violation of the regional principle is evident in the uneven distribution of schools participating in the program across different areas. For instance, over 65% of schools in Tbilisi are involved, while participation in other regions ranges from 15% to 30%. The highest regional involvement, up to 30%, is observed in Imereti, whereas the lowest levels, not exceeding 20%, are found in the schools of Abkhazia, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Adjara. Detailed information is presented in the chart below.

Figure 2. Number of Schools involved in NSM compared total number of schools by regions

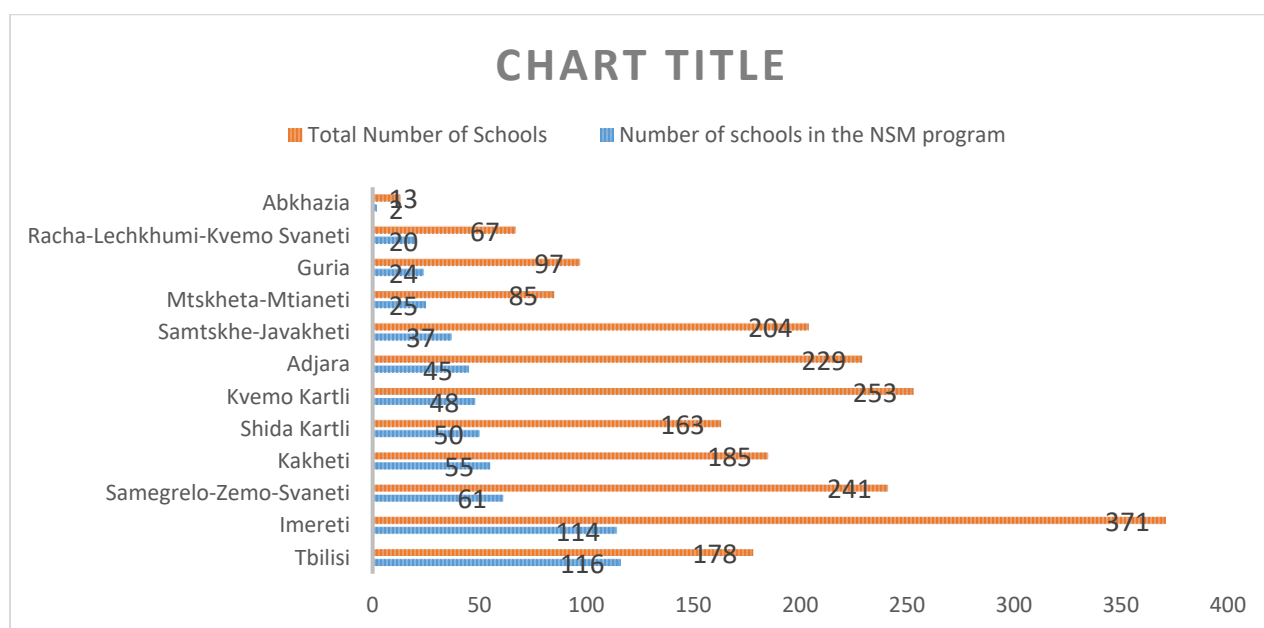
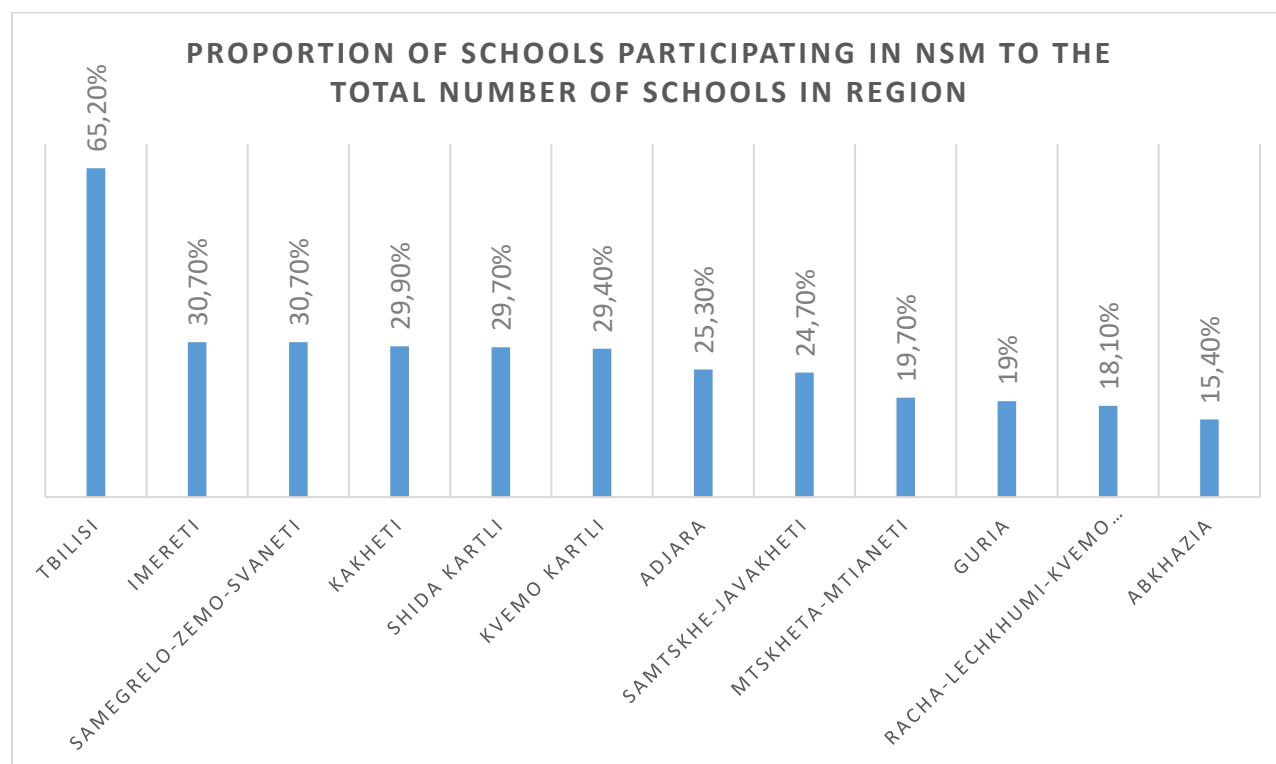


Figure 3. Proportion of Number of Schools involved in NSM compared total number of schools by regions



The Benefits of School Involvement: Regional Disparities in Teacher Participation

Schools participating in the New School Model gain access to several benefits, including professional development opportunities for teachers, improvements in school management, enhancements to school culture, access to modern technical equipment and technology, and the implementation of advanced assessment systems. Consequently, it is important to explore which schools and which teachers, regionally, are receiving these advantages.

If we analyze the data of teachers involved in the program, out of the 51,325 teachers working in public schools across Georgia, 21,302 teachers are employed in schools participating in the New School Model. This means that more than 41% of Georgia's teachers are currently involved in the reform process. However, the level of involvement varies significantly across regions. For example, 69.1% of public school teachers in Tbilisi are part of the New School Model, while in regions like Samtskhe-Javakheti, only 23%

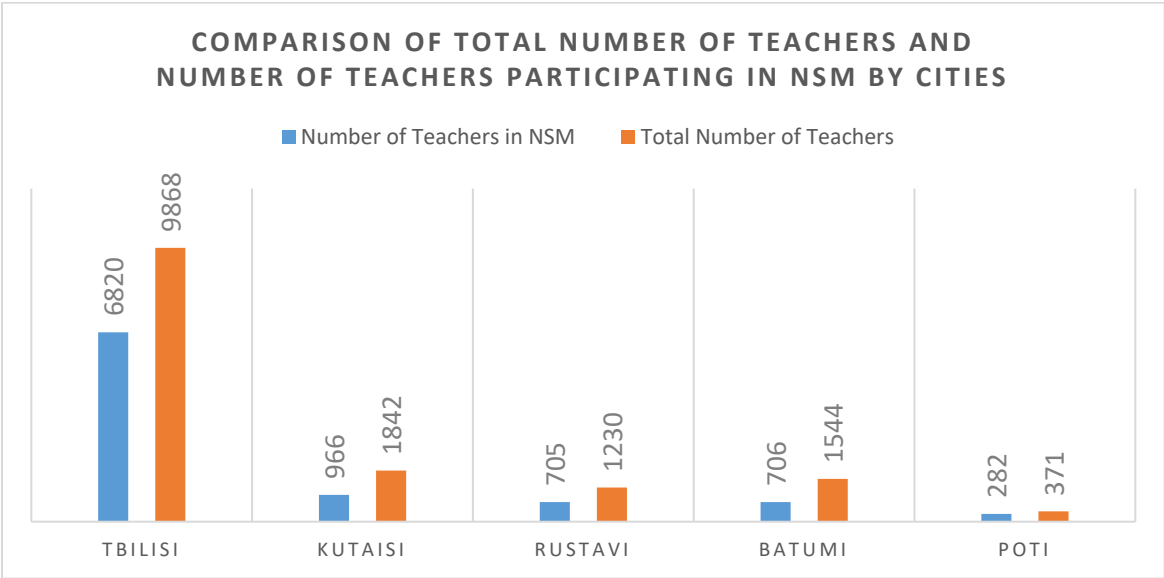
of teachers are involved, 25% in Kvemo Kartli, 32% in Adjara, and so on. Detailed information regarding the teachers involved and their regional representation is provided in the table below.

Table 5. Number of Teachers involved in NSM by region and proportion of teachers participating in NSM to the total number of teachers in regions of Georgia

| Regions | Involved Teachers | Total Number of Teachers | % |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------|
| Abkhazia | 67 | 289 | 23,2 |
| Ajara | 1747 | 5346 | 32,7 |
| Guria | 638 | 1834 | 34,8 |
| Tbilisi | 6820 | 9868 | 69,1 |
| Imereti | 3577 | 8013 | 44,6 |
| Kakheti | 1543 | 4466 | 34,5 |
| Mtskheta-Mtianeti | 690 | 1492 | 46,2 |
| Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti | 348 | 842 | 41,3 |
| Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti | 1723 | 5063 | 34 |
| Samtskhe-Javakheti | 936 | 4004 | 23,4 |
| Kvemo Kartli | 1623 | 6463 | 25,1 |
| Shida Kartli | 1590 | 3645 | 43,6 |
| Grand Total | 21302 | 51325 | 41,5 |

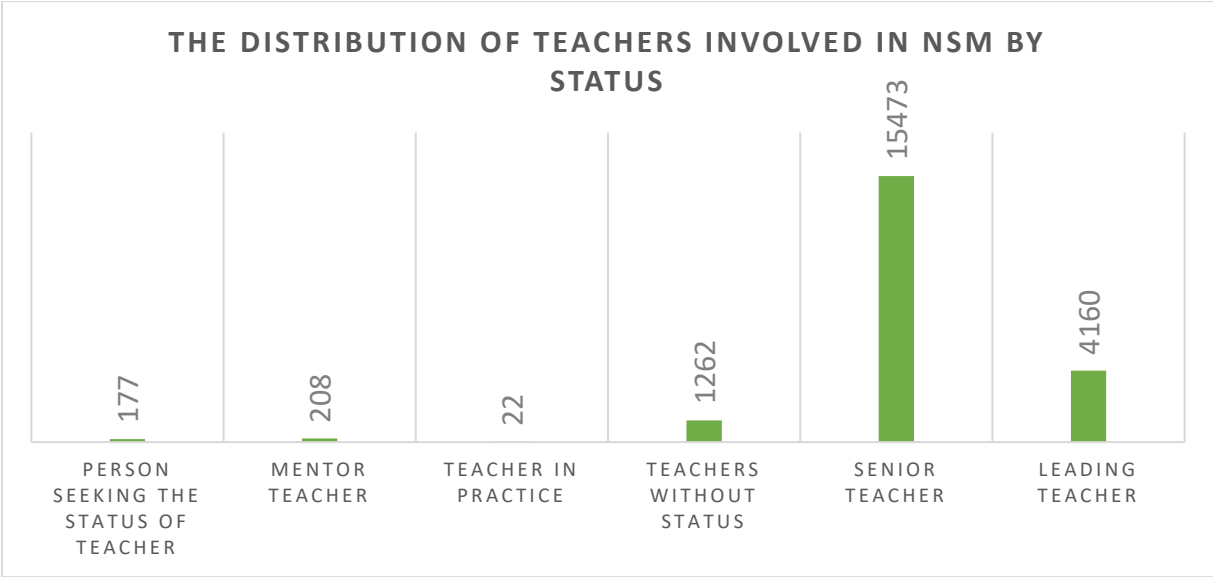
It is important to note that not only Tbilisi, but other self-governing cities also exhibit high levels of teacher involvement in the reform, as measured by the proportion of participating teachers. In addition to Tbilisi, the teacher participation rates in cities like Poti (76%), Kutaisi (52.4%), and Rustavi (57.3%) are notably high. Although Batumi has a comparatively lower rate (45.7%), it still exceeds the participation rates of other regions. Detailed information on the teachers involved in the New School Model across self-governing cities is presented in the graph below:

Figure 4. Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Teachers participating in NSM by Cities



The status of teachers involved in the program reveals that the vast majority are senior teachers, followed by a notable portion of leading teachers. Approximately 5% of the participants are teachers without status, while the representation of other categories, such as candidate teachers, , mentors, and practitioners (currently there is no status of practitioner in Schema), is minimal. A detailed breakdown of the status of participating teachers is presented in the graph below.

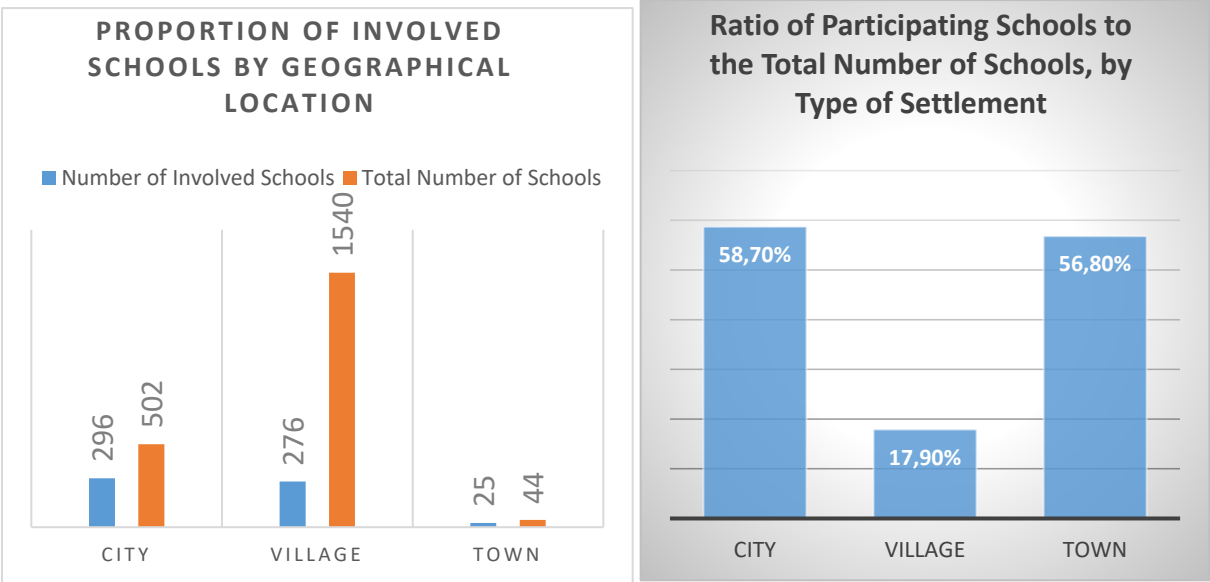
Figure 5. The Distribution of Teachers involved in NSM by Status



As previously mentioned, the participation rate of teachers from self-governing cities, particularly those from the capital, is significantly high. In light of this, it is worthwhile to examine the distribution of schools and teachers involved in the reform program based on the type of settlement (city, village,

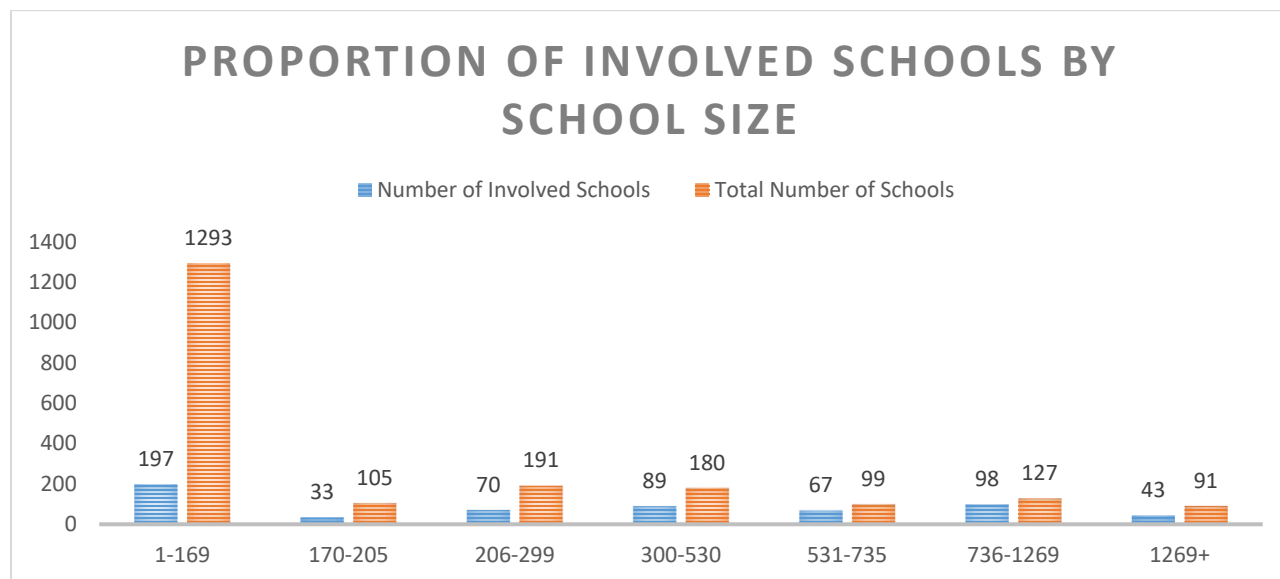
township). Among 550 urban schools, 296 are participating in the program. Similarly, 25 out of 44 schools in townships are involved, whereas only 276 out of 1,502 rural schools are part of the program—representing just 18% of rural schools. Despite the fact that rural schools outnumber urban schools by threefold, their inclusion in the reform is substantially lower (detailed graphs are provided below). This discrepancy highlights a clear pattern: the reform disproportionately benefits urban schools, which already enjoy greater access to resources and higher academic performance, while rural schools—where educational challenges are more pronounced and student achievement is generally lower—are less engaged in the reform efforts.

Figure 6-7. Proportion of Involved Schools by Geographical Location



In addition to the urban-rural divide, school size is also a critical factor when considering both school management and education policy. School size influences many aspects of education, including funding, management efficiency, access to resources, and academic outcomes. Schools in rural areas, which are often smaller and underserved, face challenges in all these areas. When evaluating the inclusion of schools in the reform based on size, a concerning pattern emerges that may exacerbate existing inequalities and further marginalize schools that are already disadvantaged.

Figure 8. Proportion of Involved Schools by School Size



The language of instruction is another parameter that is an important aspect of education policy, management, funding, as well as academic acceptance and success. Currently, 582 schools are included in the program, along with 15 schools that have bilingual sectors. Among these, 581 are Georgian-speaking schools, while only one is a Russian-speaking school, along with a small number of sectors. Additionally, it should be noted that a bilingual education program is implemented separately for non-Georgian-speaking schools at the preschool and primary education levels. It is likely that this program is where the reform of schools is taking place. However, these two programs have completely different goals. Notably, three of the four tasks developed by the New School Model are not implemented in non-Georgian schools. In terms of developing the school curriculum and introducing constructivist principles, only a small number of schools and teachers are involved in the new curriculum. Consequently, non-Georgian language schools, which total 207, are completely overlooked within the framework of the New School Model.

Another interesting detail regarding the introduction of the New School Model relates to the involvement of private schools. Due to authorization requirements, private schools that do not implement international programs must provide education in accordance with the national curriculum. Although legislation mandates that access to quality education be guaranteed for all students, no activities have been aimed at introducing the New School Model to private schools and the teachers working there, even on commercial terms. Nevertheless, there is significant interest among private schools to engage in these processes, as well as a willingness to meet various conditions in exchange for their involvement.

Reform planners, teachers, and parents have questioned the policy of including schools in the New School Model. As one of the research participants involved in the reform process notes, the decision to include schools in the new model was primarily based on their infrastructural readiness. The aim was to ensure that reform schools were structurally sound for external validation, a decision often explained by political expediency. One study participant explained: "When decisions are made, more or less in this mode, the political component is included... I will tell you what the main motive was. The starting point at all stages and at all times was that if we say there is a school involved in the reform, all the ministers had this whim

to add reform schools gradually, focusing on infrastructure and external appearance. They wanted to avoid the narrative of a collapsed school being labeled as a reform school. Politicians were primarily concerned about not having this perception conveyed to anyone. It is absolutely true; that schools were selected based on their sound infrastructure system. If a researcher like you, or an external observer, had entered those schools, they would not have said, 'Wow, come on, put a roof over your head first and then do the reform.' Let's not forget that the first two stages, including 600 schools, were provided with equipment funded by the World Bank. But who needs this technology if there is no Internet in such a school? In other words, it could be said educationally that the conditions in those schools were better than in the first experimental schools. In a well-maintained school, the preparation could be at least as good, if not more interesting."

From the analysis of the available data, three significant trends emerge: (a) At the initial stage of the reform, there was broad financial and political support, which was evident in the infrastructural and technical assistance provided to the schools involved in the project; later, this support diminished. (b) Schools with appropriate infrastructure and readiness were included in the New School Model, often resulting from party PR rather than educational expediency. (c) The involvement of schools in the New School Model, depending on the support instruments, has placed the schools that need support the most—those in highland regions, schools with small enrollments, and ethnic minority schools—at a disadvantage. Within the framework of the program, schools that performed well in international evaluations, national assessments, certification exams, and research received support, thereby deepening the already significant gap between different types of schools as the model develops and the selection of schools progresses.

Chapter 4. Compatibility of the New School Model with Other Educational Reform Initiatives

The research emphasized the compatibility challenges of the New School Model project with ongoing educational reforms, as well as the administrative and institutional obstacles to its implementation. Participants identified key dilemmas in harmonizing the model with the teacher professional development and career growth scheme, licensing and approval of school textbooks reform, the selection process for school principals, school authorization processes, and unified national exams. Additionally, issues were raised regarding the administrative roles of various structural units within the Ministry of Education and Science, local Educational Resource Centers (ERC), and school principals in supporting the reform. Our analysis considers both the compatibility of these reforms and the engagement and cooperation in project implementation and administration, all of which significantly impact the success and sustainability of the New School Model.

Teacher professional development and career growth scheme

The research revealed that the New School Model conflicted conceptually, administratively, procedurally, and substantively with the existing teacher professional development and career growth scheme, making it challenging to implement the model's vision in terms of teacher support and development.

The findings revealed that two distinct models for teacher professional development were operating concurrently within the system. The first model emphasized teachers' adherence to formal activities outlined in a professional scheme, allowing them to accumulate credits that contributed to career progression and monetary benefits through allowances. In contrast, the second model focused on school-level professional development opportunities facilitated by coaches and support groups within the framework of the New School Model. This second approach aimed to enhance teaching practices and support the effective design and implementation of the school curriculum as defined by the new model. The coexistence of these two models created challenges for reform authors, coaches, trainers, schools, and teachers, ultimately undermining the effective implementation of the New School Model.

In the initial stages of the new model's rollout, limited efforts were made to integrate these two reforms. Only a small component of the New School Model participants could count their involvement as part of the professional development scheme (through external assessment), earning corresponding credit points; however, this practice was later discontinued. According to study participants, merging the two reforms was essential, with a single, unified approach and coordinated efforts being far more effective.

"Unfortunately, or perhaps inevitably, the New School Model and the existing scheme could not merge into one. For this to happen, the scheme would have needed to evolve into the New School Model, or vice versa. This challenge went beyond personal and institutional obstacles; there were also missteps that hindered the process. The approaches and foundational principles of each were fundamentally different. The New School Model was more of an initiative aimed at fostering understanding and 'breaking the ice,' so to speak, rather than imposing stress on teachers. It

created a space that allowed for gradual progress. Yet, without full alignment—whether transforming the New School Model into a scheme or integrating the scheme into the model—this synergy couldn't be achieved. If asked how the reform would ultimately succeed, I would have to question it repeatedly myself." (Interview with an expert)

Participants observed that the professional development and evaluation system of the New School Model emphasized needs, practice, and growth more effectively than the existing teachers' professional development scheme. However, they noted that it was more time-intensive and challenging to navigate compared to the established external observations and lesson assessments within the traditional scheme, which had already been tried, tested, and implemented in ways familiar and manageable for teachers.

"Participation in the New School Model has become integral to professional career advancement. ... It's challenging to plan lessons daily, especially with an 18-hour weekly workload. Teachers needed to plan every day, with three meetings each week dedicated to organizing the next day's lessons. A coach would be present at the school, observing lessons, providing feedback, and so forth (**Participants speaks about NSM /Author Note**) . Then, the following day's lessons would be planned, creating an ongoing cycle of preparation and reflection," the participant explained regarding the activities in the New School Model.

"Teachers completed not just a few but dozens of external observation lessons, dealing with constant stress. By contrast, the teachers' professional development scheme involved just one external observation. I can plan five lessons in a row without issue and meet any requirements, but this was unending, lasting the entire school year. Yet, those involved in the process—even the coaches—were fully engaged. I can't attest to the coaches' professionalism in every case, but their level of expertise was inspiring for our teachers. They didn't just issue directives; they were active participants, sharing knowledge and working with teachers to find solutions where difficulties arose. It was a truly collaborative, business-like process," a school director shared.

"In my view, the traditional model, which emphasizes lesson-based teaching, has its merits—its simplicity, accumulated knowledge, experience, and logical structure. There's a strong logic in its progression: introduction, delivery, closure, and reflection. This method allows for longer-term planning, providing a bird's-eye view of the entire learning process, rather than limiting planning to individual lessons," a coach reflected.

Despite the New School Model's more practical and professionally focused approach, the majority of teachers remained aligned with the traditional professional development scheme for two main reasons: (1) the approaches within the scheme were clearer, more accessible, and thoroughly tested, directly aligning with the Ministry's declared policies, and (2) the career advancement and financial incentive systems within the scheme were sharply defined and structured.

"In general, the scheme prevailed, in the sense that the teachers' mindset and attitudes toward the Ministry were shaped by it. They understood clearly what the scheme demanded—four conferences, nine portfolios for six credits. They might not agree, they might argue, but they complied. They'd say, 'I did it because I had to,' which felt more straightforward. In the New School Model, however, it was like preaching to the choir; they weren't sure what to aim for or how much effort to invest to meet expectations" (curriculum expert).

"Rather than calling it growth, let's call it acceptance. The structured lesson framework proposed in the scheme, with its three phases—introduction, transfer, and reinforcement—had become familiar to teachers over the years, embedded in their practice for better or worse. It's straightforward, and to many teachers, the newer, more flexible model—what some might even call postmodern or improvisational—felt foreign and difficult. They naturally leaned toward what was familiar: start with an introduction, clarify points, reinforce learning, and conclude the lesson" (coach, teacher).

"In the first year, when we began implementing the New School Model, teachers who cooperated and served as examples were exempted from external observations. That first year, the exemption motivated them to participate, but it was later removed for some reason. This exemption was highly desirable; nobody wanted the stress of external observation, and when it was no longer a factor, their motivation declined."

"If a teacher puts in extra effort, they expect some form of immediate acknowledgment or reward—'payment,' so to speak, even if symbolic. It's challenging for them to see the long-term benefits intended by the New School Model, while the immediate benefit of the external observation was tangible: someone was there to recognize and validate their work. They knew it would 'count,' and that was rewarding. Yes, the lessons became more engaging, and the students were happier, but teachers didn't always recognize this value immediately—or if they did, they often felt it went unappreciated" (school principal).

Research has shown that these two parallel processes have resulted in the emergence of two groups of teachers who differ markedly in their approaches and motivations. One group focuses on innovation, development, and changing practices to enhance student academic achievement. In contrast, the other group prioritizes meeting formal procedures for career advancement and extrinsic motivation, such as monetary benefits. It is noteworthy that, according to the observations of the research participants, the second group of teachers predominates within the system, which has also impacted the effective implementation of the New School Model. The experts, coaches, teachers, and parents involved in the research clearly emphasize this trend.

"The teacher is the main implementer, whether you like it or not. There are actually two types of teachers. One type is a "conservator," who has what they need from the school—such as a scheme and salaries that can be higher. While there is no standard level, a teacher can earn a higher salary than a policeman or fireman in the district, especially if they are a leader or mentor. If they hold the title of tutor, they contribute to this and do not expend much energy in the classroom, conserving themselves for other activities. The number of such teachers is not insignificant, and in such a situation, introducing a project that promotes alternative pedagogy can lead to resistance. Why do we want this? The backdrop is such that these teachers add their voices to the rhetoric, resulting in the emergence of demagogues who oppose these changes. In short, this is a natural process. I want to emphasize that what I am saying is not new to you, but this factor is also important. Alongside various other factors, transformational leaders are emerging in schools—individuals who see these new practices as opportunities for personal advancement and recognition. If that is the case, all factors are involved, including the director's need for self-approval and the desire to demonstrate superiority over other teachers".

"The small percentage of teachers who are constantly ready to embrace innovations would automatically seek out these changes. That's why the three days a week of training is debatable—how necessary were those three days? Perhaps it was a tiring process, and those three days became routine, causing some irritation among teachers. In summary, I believe these processes were designed for teachers who are actively seeking news and need support from others. This is why I think this process was teacher-focused."

It should be noted that in the study, a clear tendency among parents to separate these two types of teachers was observed. Additionally, age factors were also evident, as noted by the participants in the study.

„Fortunately, the younger generation of teachers easily understands all of this. In contrast, the older generation prefers to write down what they need to discuss on a piece of paper or draw it on the blackboard to explain material to students“ (Parents, Shida Kartli).

„They don't know where they are; they will answer you very briefly. Younger teachers are more certain about things, but older teachers spend most of their time either buying these materials or writing them themselves. This is a problem for me as a parent“ (Shida Kartli parents).

Moreover, with these two different approaches, teachers and schools felt that the New School Model was not part of the reform but rather a temporary and supplementary project. The coaches participating in the study discussed this issue:

"The teacher should see all of this as part of one system, and the school administration should understand it first. However, it probably happened that this was not possible because, in reality, the New School Model demanded different things from different sources. If there was alignment, the ministry could have been behind all this, but the teacher could not understand who and why was asking so much from one individual. There was a sentiment expressed that they were not alone in this situation. I remember the meetings where it was emphasized that others were also asking for things. I don't know, maybe this feeling was prevalent, and I am sure that many teachers shared it. A lot of people would be happy because, frankly, it felt like extra pressure" (Interview with the Coach).

It should be noted that, in addition to their incompatibility, these two existing systems caused teachers to feel overwhelmed and nihilistic towards both. Teachers faced excessive training demands and had less time to focus on the teaching process.

"When the trainings were held, there was significant protest from the teachers. They demanded not only that the trainings be reduced but also that there be more information provided to them. Additionally, the Ministry of Education held separate meetings, and often the teachers had to attend trainings at the same time. This created chaos, as they were unsure which training they were attending and what information they were supposed to absorb. As a result, there was widespread frustration; teachers didn't want to attend any more trainings and didn't want to hear anything further. This reaction is understandable; as a teacher myself, I also didn't enjoy attending five or six sessions in a single day" (focus group of teachers).

It should be noted that this entire process has fostered a negative attitude toward professional development programs among both teachers and school principals. There is a clear trend of skepticism and reluctance towards the centralized professional development programs (trainings) among teachers and principals alike.

"...which is quite understandable; I'm a teacher myself, and I wouldn't really enjoy it if I were invited to 5 or 6 trainings a day, right?" (focus group of teachers).

There is nothing beneficial about this new reform; on the contrary, they will plan a training for you, telling you that they will teach you to create conditionally complex tasks to deliver to children. You will attend the training, spend your valuable time, and gain nothing from it. They will plan a training for you on how to create and teach matrices, but this training offers no real value. This new reform has not brought me anything beyond what I already knew" (focus group of teachers).

"The trainings have become outdated; it's as if different people are telling you the same thing. You observe this and realize that it has altered the training process for me. If you find out, it's not news, and as a result, teachers no longer want to hear the same information or attend trainings. There is no new knowledge among those who conduct these trainings; their knowledge is also limited, and they are merely re-teaching the subject they have already learned" (interview of the school director).

Participants in the study noted that these two reforms differed not only in terms of procedures and systems of benefits and incentives but also in conceptual and substantive visions. Different approaches were adopted by teachers. The first focused on conducting standard lessons with appropriate phases and time distribution, while the second allowed for free space in thematic teaching regarding time and phase distribution during the lesson. The coaches and teachers participating in the research highlighted this contradiction, which posed challenges for them as both coaches and teachers:

"To give a very simple example, I mentioned the so-called observation of lessons, where the lesson is structured as a 45-minute whole that begins and ends. For instance, I sometimes advised teachers on how to conduct lessons. When an observation took place, one suggestion was not to waste time when the children were engaged in their work. If something is going well, you should continue instead of stopping to fit everything into the allotted time. I'm not saying this is inherently good or bad, but the scheme requires summarization, evaluation, and reflection to happen within 45 minutes. In this regard, the New School Model offers a completely free approach, which I appreciate. However, this doesn't mean that a lesson should not have an end, summary, or reflection. There should be some intermediate step; I should not be bound by the minute but rather focus on the process, albeit wisely. This was really counterintuitive, especially concerning the assessment component, as the scheme provided a different assessment approach based on the New School Model" (interview, coach).

"For example, since no one could determine what the lesson should be, because Tbilisi was still demanding the old plans within the framework of the scheme, such as a three-phase lesson and even the transition to matrix teaching, they completely removed it from external observations. During external observations, the lesson component was no longer assessed. When they noted in the scheme that the director, or the school, or the principal must attend the three mentors—at

least one mentor and two presenters—I'm very sorry, but I didn't understand what lesson I attended. Even I did not comprehend it; it is unclear to me what kind of lesson I should request. A three-phase lesson? If I ask for this matrix, it will be conducted however the teacher sees fit. If you tell me that I can't cover the third category of knowledge, the teacher will respond, 'Why do I have to cover it today? I can do it tomorrow or two days later; I haven't finished yet' (school director).

The monetary compatibility of this reform is also of interest to teachers, particularly regarding the connection between the New School Model and salary policy in general.

"These programs of the Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC) are not relevant, but I participated anyway; I even completed assignments to avoid a reduction in my salary. All my teachers and colleagues can attest to this. As for the New School Model, it was something entirely different. It practically invited us to collaborate, to create something together that we could adapt to the needs of the children and then implement in the classroom. However, no one acknowledged this effort" (Teacher Focus Group).

"Look at what was happening: the teachers weren't genuinely enthusiastic. For example, I found myself doing things that felt irrelevant just to earn credits needed to maintain my status. There was an obligation... we were merely collecting credits" (Teacher Focus Group).

"In most schools, teachers find themselves in a second job; it's as if I've seen a teacher rushing off to another school because they feel they have to. I also work in two schools, but I prefer to be in one school and spend as much time there as possible, as long as the salary corresponds. That's what all the teachers said. This situation probably stems from the demand on their time; the students are at home, working at another school, and they simply don't have that time. In my opinion, that's the real issue. I'm not sure that simply offering a higher salary will guarantee a quality lesson. You can never be sure of that, at least not definitively.

„If the monitoring and evaluation processes are left in the hands of teachers who are not properly supported, we may not achieve quality outcomes. Additionally, if competent directors do not take charge in the schools, prioritizing both teacher qualifications and student needs, then even if we pay teachers 5000 GEL, we will still struggle to ensure quality lessons" (School Director).

It's crucial to highlight that the participants in the study identified significant institutional resistance that impeded the reform's implementation:

"Yes, I believe that mutual cooperation is vital, especially at higher levels. I'm referring to the Teacher's House and the department responsible for this project" (School Principal).

"This situation also led to institutional conflict, which was palpable. It's natural that when one institution invests resources into implementing a project, while another institution demands something entirely different from teachers, it creates a significant disconnect. Imagine the complications when money is allocated for implementation, and resistance arises as a result" (Interview, Coach).

"The opposition between the New School Model and its coexistence in the same environment may have severely undermined the process. There were individuals among the coaches who were aligned with the old model, acting in a subversive manner. This led to a sense of nihilism, and frankly, if we analyze it systemically, it was detrimental to the process and continues to be" (Interview with an Expert).

School textbooks compatibility with conceptual and methodological vision of NSM

It's important to note that the implementation of the New School Model, the creation of third-generation school textbooks, and the grading process could not be executed simultaneously. By the time the new curriculum implementation project was introduced, school textbooks aligned with the National Curriculum for 2018-2024 had already been developed, leading to several challenges for schools and teachers, particularly in terms of adhering to the textbooks:

"The printed textbook... fulfilled the regulatory requirements, meaning that learning continued to be based on these texts. However, at certain stages, the absence of third-generation graded books significantly hindered the implementation of the New School Model project. On the other hand, for grades 8, 9, 10, and 11, it simplified many aspects. Some may not realize the extent of these issues, but they truly disrupted many processes. Nonetheless, the core issues were still presented in clusters, allowing for visibility of the learning units" (Interview with an Expert).

"What the ministry has done is to gradually introduce the textbooks to ensure they align closely with the new curriculum tasks. Authors were expected to integrate the project content within the books, completing the educational framework these texts provided. However, I analyze this and realize that the Georgian education system or economy could not facilitate an immediate overhaul, leading to a phased rollout, starting from the 7th or 8th grade. Ideally, it would have been much easier if teachers had received the books planned uniformly across all classes within the same timeframe. This would have greatly simplified the process. I reiterate, because these books were not properly organized, coaches were instructed to create matrices for each book. Fortunately, these coaches had the expertise to adapt and transform the requirements from the existing materials" (Interview with a Coach).

Beyond the primary level, teachers discussing textbooks based on principles of concept pedagogy highlight existing problems that hinder the realization of the New School Model and its proposed approaches. The replacement of current texts at the school level and within textbooks, particularly those with limited resources, has proven to be a challenging process.

"Even if changes have been made for the first and second grades, if we start from the primary level and move to the secondary level, there are still issues. While the authors attempted to align the materials with the core concepts, the texts often do not support this effort. Many texts included in the textbooks fail to engage students. We advise teachers not to rely solely on the textbooks, but when you have a large class and cannot introduce new texts, you inevitably find yourself dependent on the textbooks. All students have these manuals for free, so it becomes

challenging. Teachers must often sift through various subjects to select appropriate materials that fit within the context of the topics" (Focus Group of Teachers).

Due to the challenges presented by school textbooks, the authors of the reform in the New School Model instructed coaches to utilize the textbooks merely as texts. This meant that all pedagogical approaches and principles aligned with the New School Model were to be based on these texts. This directive did provide some autonomy to teachers; however, the detailed matrices outside the textbooks still remained a desirable resource for educators, who were generally reluctant to construct a curriculum solely based on the existing textbook content:

"The task was clear for us as coaches. We were required to create matrices—essentially curricula—based on these guidelines. We had to develop thematic matrices that included one or two texts. Our textbooks, particularly in Georgian, consisted of a text and some questions. If we treat the textbook as merely a text, it follows that I need the textbook solely for processing that text, as teachers are expected to develop entirely different content. In essence, they must become the authors of their own materials. This requires a specific competence, and I must emphasize that this was not achieved to the necessary extent by most of the textbook authors" (Interview with a Coach).

The teachers and experts involved in the research directly address the curriculum issues that impede the ability of textbook authors to adequately reflect the approaches of the New School Model. A significant concern is the inclusion of complex tasks in school textbooks, which are essential for the implementation of the new curriculum. The textbooks derived from this curriculum are problematic from the perspective of reform implementation. In discussing specific subjects, teachers highlighted challenges that stemmed from decisions made for political expediency, such as teaching the history of Georgia as a separate subject:

"I believe the secondary level is the busiest. In the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, history is divided into two parts, creating an overwhelming amount of material. We protested that it is impossible to cover the history of Georgia from the 10th grade within one year, including the nineteenth century and even the twentieth century. Covering such a large chronological span in a single year is simply unfeasible. The textbook turned out to be extensive, with three parts dedicated to the history of Georgia, and the topics are fascinating, so you want to touch on everything. This leads to an overload of tasks for students, forcing me, as a teacher, to change my methods" (Focus Group of Teachers).

Beyond the immediate challenges of aligning school textbooks with the New School Model as a tool for implementing the national curriculum, the study identified general issues with school textbooks that indirectly affect the effectiveness of the new model. Key problems included textbook overcrowding, an emphasis on rote memorization, inconsistency with children's developmental stages, the use of complex scientific language unsuitable for young learners, failure to consider contextual relevance when selecting texts, and an overload of uninteresting topics that diminish student engagement and motivation.

Additionally, during the textbook development process, many texts that had undergone minimal revisions due to various challenges could not adequately support the teaching approaches required by the New School Model. This highlights the need for significant attention to be paid to resource development within the reform, including thorough pre-planning well before the program's implementation. However, this

was unfeasible due to the impulsive nature of the reform and the simultaneous, parallel processes of planning, implementation, and piloting the New School Model:

"If a textbook was written 50 years ago and the content remains unchanged, how can it be considered a reform textbook? In mathematics, if the only change made is swapping numbers in the examples, is that truly a reform? The reality is that new books are not being written."

"What has been written is very limited. The old textbooks were slightly revised, but they are no longer relevant. For example, if a beloved author passed away a decade ago, how can their work align with the new model?" (Interview with a School Director).

School Leadership/ The Role of School Principals in the Implementation of NSM reform. The Existing Problems and Challenges

The role of school leaders in the implementation of reforms is one of the most important aspects. The principal of the school plays a crucial role in the implementation of any reform, especially educational reform, which involves the preparation and implementation of the school curriculum based on constructivist approaches. Accordingly, the compatibility of the New School Model's activities and the competencies of school leaders—such as evaluation-selection, continuous professional development, autonomy, responsibility, and support systems—is of great importance.

Although the alignment of these two areas and their implementation in the context of the reform were crucial, one of the problematic areas of the New School Model is related to school leaders, who often could not ensure the reform's implementation on the ground. In many cases, this failure was due to their readiness, motivation, qualifications, and lack of competence.

In terms of the challenges of implementing the New School Model, reform planners, coaches, experts, teachers, and parents point to the weakness of school leaders as one of the weak links. One of the weak areas of the New School Model is the insufficient engagement with school leaders, without which it was impossible to achieve success in developing constructivist approaches to the new school curriculum.

As one of the experts involved in the planning and implementation of the reform stated, "The project for teachers performed better overall, and I would shift the center of gravity much more towards the principals. How did the school leader lead this process of transformations? It seems secondary."

This reform format was motivated by the idea of "top-down" decision-making efficiency and the desire to give teachers the opportunity for the first time in the existence of the Georgian education system to plan and implement teaching independently based on their own visions, competencies, and motivations for professional realization.

Ignoring the role of the school principal has also been discussed by the teachers involved in the implementation process. They believe that not delineating the role of the school principal, delegating fewer responsibilities to them, and bypassing them to leave it to the teachers was wrong, which caused the program not to be successful or sustainable. After the departure of the coaches and support groups, a large part of the schools stopped working in this sense.

"This New School Model operated under the approach that we work with elementary teachers and have nothing to do with the principal. The directorate was not involved in this process. I still believe, as I did then, that while it was good for teachers to be more independent, it was ultimately a mistake because the school is managed by the principal. In short, the principal is responsible for the educational process. If the principal had been involved, where they were interested in bringing innovations to the school and introducing something new, the process went well. However, where the principals were completely excluded, the Ministry eventually realized this and began to work comprehensively, not only with teachers but also with principals" (Teachers' focus group).

"At the first stage, when I attended one of the meetings, our teachers discussed issues that made me want to take classes to acquire that competence. If I had not taken those classes, my competence would not have increased. I was an external observer; I attended classes and tried to provide competent feedback. However, when I became a direct participant in the process, I found that my feedback became much more targeted. Judging by the emotions and feedback of the teachers, my feedback was more focused after I acquired these skills and this competence, but this was driven by my determination and desire" (School principal).

School principals openly acknowledge that their non-involvement or late involvement was detrimental to the process. In many cases, the learning process related to implementing a new school curriculum within the framework of the New School Model occurred without them being informed about what was happening in their schools:

"The principals were not involved in this process from the beginning. There was no communication indicating that the new generation curriculum was starting or that the New School Model meant the introduction of this. There was no informational meeting or any training. Involvement only occurred through meetings with the school and teachers directly, excluding the principals. When the need for the principal as an educational leader arose, we did not address it. At some stage, a meeting with the principals took place, informing them about the process that had already started, and it was then that we began to understand what it entailed. I am referring to the period when it began; informing the principals and involving them in this process was delayed, which impacted the process to a certain extent because the teachers met with the coaches independently of us, and we were unaware of what was happening there, nor was there any formal communication" (Interview, school director).

"There was no separate New School Model developed for the principal, although there was a direction related to leadership. We were also coached in the direction of leadership, which mainly focused on the school project. We conducted school projects and had certain priority directions. We would choose one or two of these directions per semester and lead the implementation of a common school project in that area. We supervised it. It was directly related to our professional development; it was not explicitly declared that way, but it was something that the principals developed in relation to the teachers" (Interview, school director).

Policy planners did not consider the hierarchical governance structure in Georgia's general education institutions, where school principals hold substantial authority and influence. Given this context, the limited involvement of resource center heads and directors proved critical and failed to foster significant teacher engagement or commitment to the project. Consequently, with existing horizontal management

in place, approaches that relied solely on vertical structures and did not align with the hierarchical model negatively impacted the engagement needed to implement the New School Model.

“I am following the hierarchy here as well. We had conferences, for example, where schools involved through resource center requests were actively engaged. This is a highly connected system. It was precisely a chain reaction; if the resource center management supported this project, it influenced the directorate, and the directorates, in turn, heeded the resource center’s input. As a result, the directorate stepped out of its comfort zone for its team. Where neither the resource centers nor the directorates were committed, the teacher – unless exceptionally motivated – was often the only one taking action” (interview with the coach).

“In most schools, what the principal says is the rule, but I am my own leader. I can have my opinion and stand my ground. Still, I would ask teachers about their recent professional development efforts, and often I’d hear, ‘Whatever the director told me to do, that’s what I did.’ They would say, ‘My director knows best and will guide me.’ Imagine the level of dependency on the director” (interview with coach).

A significant number of respondents – experts, coaches, teachers, and parents – remarked on the principal's low competency levels, noting that many were unable to lead their schools effectively or implement educational reform:

“Of course, we have to acknowledge the competence problem among principals. In schools without this issue, the process went as expected, and directors took charge confidently. But some schools still exist where principals essentially said, ‘It will go as you say,’ and this was disappointing because it should not be that way” (interview with an expert).

“I’ll tell you how I dealt with principals, and you can judge for yourself whether there was room for autonomy in the school as a whole. I would visit a school and suggest going over the school plan together before the term began. The principal would say, ‘I don’t even know where the school plan is; I’ll just use another school’s curriculum – it’s all the same.’ These weren’t isolated incidents; many principals were like this, and meaningful discussion was almost impossible” (interview, coach).

“Human resources here might consist of 3-4 dedicated individuals, a few professionals who could shed some light in one school, but the principal – if they don’t even know how to read the matrix – poses a challenge. I’m not referring to them personally, but when you don’t know how to read the matrix or construct a school curriculum, it’s concerning. The primary school document and the matrix shouldn’t be copy-pasted; it must be adapted and based on prior knowledge, tailored to an autonomous management style. Yet, we encounter copy-pasting. A principal who cannot prioritize, who cannot identify which of the ten or fifteen issues to address, lacks basic research planning skills. We all recognize the challenges of project and research planning, but principals should be capable of understanding these foundational aspects” (focus group of teachers).

The research clearly highlighted not only the issue of low qualifications among school principals but also the lack of a permanent professional development system tailored to their daily responsibilities, which could enhance school operations and teaching practices. Directors, experts, coaches, and teachers all noted the absence of a continuous professional development system for principals.

Study participants spoke actively about principals' lack of interest in implementing the New School Model, along with a generally weak perception of its importance. The principals' lack of engagement and motivation was also noted in a monitoring report from the department responsible for implementing the new model: "Some school principals do not take proper responsibility for projects aimed at school community development." This report includes perspectives from experts, coordinators, and teachers regarding the role of school principals, their inertia, and limited involvement. Our study participants emphasized these concerns even more strongly.

Some respondents identified as a challenge the excessive demands made by certain highly ambitious principals who sought to position themselves as active reformers. This often led to unrealistic expectations for teachers, creating an overload characterized by complex, frequent, and visual demands that provoked strong negative reactions among both parents and teachers:

"The issue isn't a bad principal but rather a 'good' principal who, despite good intentions, sometimes pushed things too hard. There were principals in those 600 schools who were eager to make a positive impact. They genuinely believed in the value of the reform but ended up pushing too much, too quickly. When we compare the New School Model to the gradual melting of ice, the point is to let it transition naturally rather than try to forcefully reshape it. Some principals pushed requirements too aggressively, leading to resistance. I'm not entirely sure, but my feeling is that this isn't coming from schools with disengaged principals; it's more from schools where principals were trying too hard. In management today, if team members don't buy into what they're creating, the effort won't succeed. The Ministry never asked for curricula packed with complex tasks; some individuals just tried to stand out" (interview with an expert).

"Look what happened—at some point, we were provided with information, but then schools had autonomy to lead these processes independently. There seemed to be minimal intervention, with the expectation that each school would manage on its own. From what I've observed, some schools succeeded where principals were involved, had good leadership, and aspired to make their school a model. But in other schools, it's a different story. Not everyone could meet these expectations" (school principal).

School principals themselves acknowledged their limited involvement in developing or implementing the school curriculum, citing their multifaceted workloads. They noted that effectively leading the educational process was almost impossible given their wide-ranging responsibilities. The current scope of their duties prevents them from fully engaging in educational leadership, especially when balancing formal and informal demands:

"The role of a school principal—the leadership of the educational process—requires an entirely different workload. If I were to attend to each teacher, I'd need to prepare, hold preliminary meetings, provide feedback, and then evaluate changes based on our interactions. I can't do this with all teachers; if that were my only responsibility, it might be possible. But I also have other tasks—communication, relationships, and management—that make it impossible to focus solely on the educational process" (school principal interview).

The Higher Education Admission System and New School Model

The research identified issues that, while not directly related to the New School Model reform, still impacted its implementation and raised questions about compatibility between education policy and the New School Model. One critical aspect is the compatibility, or lack thereof, between the New School Model and the existing higher education admissions system, particularly the degree to which the admissions system supports or hinders the New School Model.

The admissions system prioritizes certain subjects, which drives secondary students to focus on these subjects alone. Students view school as a means to prepare for higher education, focusing only on subjects included in admissions exams and neglecting general education, skills, and competencies. Entrance exams are a stronger motivator than general knowledge. As one teacher noted:

"We know what students need to pass entrance exams, so they don't bother with biology or other subjects they don't need. They focus on the main subjects for the exams, ignoring general skills from other subjects like biology, physics, or art. History, Georgian, mathematics, and foreign language are the only subjects they concentrate on. As teachers, we lose motivation when we teach but see no interest or engagement" (teacher focus group).

Complex tasks, a component of the student-centered school curriculum with a constructivist approach, aim to develop skills linked to higher education standards, yet without this connection, similar educational practices in schools are challenging. Students, parents, and teachers see little relevance between school education, school reform, and university admission:

"Complex tasks are the result of integrated education, with skills to help students enter higher education without tutors. But the connection isn't strong enough, regardless of task complexity. From what I understand, other parents are still spending significant amounts on tutors to help their children get into university" (teacher focus group).

Teachers view linking school subjects, evaluations, and student experiences with the admissions system as critical for reform effectiveness. Most teachers consider this connection essential:

"Students find lessons interesting, but don't engage at home. The admissions exams emphasize Georgian, mathematics, and foreign languages, with no attention to science subjects or broader learning. The high school diploma shouldn't just be based on exams from the 12th grade but reflect a student's overall learning" (teacher focus group).

Parents also see school as primarily preparing students for entrance exams rather than providing broader education, limiting their support for comprehensive education. One parent expressed that preparing for exams with tutors is often prioritized over school curriculum:

"We're trying to motivate students, especially in higher grades, to take school seriously. But when we ask for parental support, they often respond, 'We're preparing them with tutors for the admission exams,' showing that school education is separate from exam preparation and this attitude is coded in student. The preparation with tutor is more important and you know, the minimal threshold at admission exam is very low and one can pass it if comprehends the text and has writing skills."

School Authorization Process and New School Model

The public school authorization process was a long-planned reform, with practical implementation beginning in selected schools during the fourth year of the New School Model. Analysis of research data confirms that the effective implementation of the New School Model prepared many schools for authorization, not only by addressing individual issues but also by defining visions and development directions. The principles of the New School Model align well with authorization requirements, including a curriculum tailored to specific school needs, diagnosing needs through collaboration, instructional interventions based on identified needs, and adequate learning resources and technology, all of which are necessary for meeting authorization standards. However, the preparation for authorization has caused a shift in focus within school communities, reducing attention to the New School Model's broader impacts and benefits. Schools that have completed or are preparing for authorization often view the New School Model as primarily a stepping stone toward meeting authorization conditions:

"So autonomy, the earlier process, the New School Model, as we call it, was very beneficial for us. Our teachers engaged with decision-makers assertively, defending our practices. They demonstrated that we were on the right path, showing long-term plans and intermediate goals. This increased our autonomy" (school principal).

In this context, the school community often associates the progress achieved through the New School Model with steps taken to meet authorization standards, resulting in less focus on the model's direct benefits. The improvements brought by the New School Model have, in fact, become essential foundations for authorization readiness.

"We passed authorization without additional monitoring, even in the second standard concerning the school curriculum, though it's not perfect. It was initial authorization, giving the school a chance to establish its value. Though our time to plan next year's curriculum was limited, the board acknowledged that we didn't need external support for this and could develop the curriculum independently. Full compliance was achieved in the second standard, and we incorporated minimal advice received in August into the curriculum for September" (school principal).

"We had choices for topics as a result of the New School Model. When we were preparing curricula for authorization, we incorporated complex tasks based on our chosen topics" (teacher focus group).

"The authorization process went smoothly, especially with the second standard, which was very effective. Those involved from various departments handled it well, receiving minimal feedback from board members. This was a positive indicator, as teachers demonstrated high competence and an understanding of the new model's impact and scope" (school principal).

Interviews and focus groups conducted with the school community during the research highlighted this trend. Respondents often shifted to discussing issues from the authorization perspective when discussing the reform and the New School Model.

"Regarding the relevance of the reform's goals and tasks, the preparation for the accreditation process, and the connection between these two, the second standard is entirely based on the curriculum—how well it's developed, how individualized it is, and how changes are integrated. If

the school addresses these points correctly, it effectively meets the second standard" (school director interview).

"I believe the fourth standard focuses on the environment, specifically the digitization of the school, and how well human resources are allocated and selected. These factors are interconnected" (school director interview).

The focus on school accreditation partly stemmed from the central role of principals in the accreditation preparation process. Unlike the initial implementation of the New School Model, where the principal's role as a leader was not fully recognized, the authorization process highlighted the principal's role in effective school management and instructional leadership, as well as in delegating responsibilities essential for successful authorization.

"If the school leader and the community implement real regulations tailored to their school, achieving quality in education becomes easier. If it devolves into mere paperwork, however, it risks losing effectiveness. Authorization organizes these issues, ensuring both the presentation of achievements and the mobilization of problems, which is crucial, as over time, everyone—including schools and state institutions—will be expected to address emerging issues more effectively" (expert interview).

"As a leadership expert, I worked with two schools—one rural and one urban—to introduce leadership innovations aligned with the national curriculum, focusing on analysis, evaluation, and monitoring of summative assessments. We aimed to apply a quality cycle approach, but the authorization process expedited this without allowing for in-depth application, as our work in this area was cut short. For some reason, principals didn't prioritize collegial cooperation in this direction" (school principal interview).

"I was heavily involved in the process. When an expert team visited as part of the authorization, they asked for specific documents. I had already prepared a register with numbered pages because of the volume of documents. When asked if I was in school 24 hours a day, I answered yes" (school director interview).

The research findings confirm that the authorization process required extensive involvement from the entire school community. School leaders who successfully completed the authorization process emphasized the complexity of preparations and the critical role of readiness among administrators and teachers. The director's role emerged as central—a "locomotive" driving the process:

"As the head and part of the school's management, it was really challenging for everyone, but the director's competence is key. It's essential to create a safe environment for teachers and students because these documents are needed, and we went through all of them. All teachers were directly involved, and we worked together, but ultimately, the main responsibility was mine. I didn't approve any school management document without teacher involvement, which helped build a sense of readiness among them. I think we're moving toward a place where teachers need even more competence. I imagine that even if I weren't here, any teacher would know how to manage because they understand the internal regulations, evaluation system, school curriculum, and action plan. It's crucial that every teacher is truly prepared" (school principal).

The authorization process differed from the introduction of the New School Model in its use of a structured system of external evaluation. This served as a crucial tool for aligning schools with established standards, setting and achieving goals, and assessing school performance objectively. Unlike the New School Model, the authorization process determined the official status of the schools:

"The principal doesn't have executive authority, and teachers receive training centrally as part of the New School Model. Authorization served as the only external mechanism of accountability, which had been lacking for years. Schools now have well-organized accounting systems due to consistent audits, but before authorization, there was no such external oversight for educational standards. Under the new model, however, schools received support in developing projects and implementing change, even though the system lacked this accountability structure" (school director).

While the New School Model aimed at transforming schools as autonomous institutions with unique developmental trajectories, the authorization process introduced an external accountability system. This approach made schools reconsider their capacities and readiness for autonomy—a key difference that authorization did not allow, as schools were required to mobilize resources and meet the set requirements:

"Autonomy was indeed encouraged, but there was so much focus on the evaluation system that I'm sure many schools will revert to old practices. For example, teachers often spoke about the desire for freedom, but when faced with it, no one could suggest changes to the evaluation system or scheduling grid. There's discomfort; everyone wants freedom but isn't fully prepared. I sometimes used this moment as a defense, saying, 'Yes, I'll report, but I'm just following instructions from above.' It became a sort of defense mechanism" (school principal).

Schools that joined the New School Model in its later stages and did not receive the planned technological and infrastructural support found themselves in a particularly difficult position when entering the authorization process, as they felt unprepared to start the process.

"Now they are putting us in the authorization process, but we are not prepared. They don't ask us for support, and if a person is ready to receive help, then support should be offered. For example, when my printer broke down, I had to go to Kutaisi to get it fixed. It hasn't been returned for 4-5 days, and now I'm without it. Imagine what it is like to run school activities without the necessary technology. The use of technology in the educational process is one of the leading directions; in this case, these are actually empty words because we were not provided with resources. Something was introduced in two schools, but we do not have enough computers. I believe that every classroom should have a computer, a printer, and a projector because teachers need these resources" (school director).

In addition to the direct responsibility that the principals had to play a leadership role in the authorization process, it was also important for them to believe that they were prepared and competent to manage the process.

"Now, those of us who were involved here went through the Leadership Academy. I want to say that the authorization process prepared us for this" (school principal).

As we have already mentioned, the authorization process demonstrated the necessity of mobilizing the entire school community and sharing a common vision, which was not a necessary condition for achieving the goal within the framework of the New School Model. In the process of achieving this unity, the feeling of belonging to the school increased among the members of the school community:

"I think that this is a shared responsibility and that it is necessary for it to be so. For example, before this process, all we had were documents, but in many cases, those documents were just for show. We would discuss them at meetings, accept them, decide unanimously, approve them, and it would end there. Now the authorization process has shown us that it's not enough; it's not a shared responsibility. In light of these innovations, the approval of so many provisions has led to the delegation of responsibility. We've shifted 80% of the responsibility to the teachers who handle specific issues such as the evaluation system and the creation of a safe environment. This should be known, understood, and therefore it has led to more involvement in many ways. The school is not just the principal's; the school belongs to everyone. The principal is distinguished by having more responsibility, authority, and accountability, but the school is for everyone: students, teachers, and parents, and their roles are significant. I think these innovations make the school an open society" (focus group of teachers).

On the other hand, the complexity of the authorization process is discussed not only by the community of schools that, for various reasons, do not feel prepared for this process, but also by those involved in the reform processes, both institutionally and individually, as experts and coaches who have a good understanding of the objectives, results, and possible challenges.

"During the authorization process, for the first time, the school united toward a common goal. Everyone in the entire school community gathered together and focused. However, we honestly do not know the authorization standards; it is very difficult. I don't think there is anything like this in any country. It is almost impossible to meet the standards... There are so many components involved; I will tell you honestly, the authorization requirements are much more extensive than in other countries" (school director).

Based on the clearly expressed requirements in the authorization process and the need to meet these requirements, the school principals became proactive in solving the necessary issues and addressing challenges in accordance with the authorization requirements:

"During the authorization process, I partially saw what it entailed. For example, it turned out that some schools did not have a laboratory, and the school had to write a letter to request one. In that case, the school would eventually have a laboratory" (school director).

Similar to the New School Model, the authorization reform places a strong emphasis on the process. Specifically, schools have the opportunity to improve their results in targeted areas, and even if they meet the accreditation criteria, they can develop plans that demonstrate their commitment to continuous progress

"We passed the authorization without monitoring, including the second standard, which refers to the school curriculum. In August, we received minimal advice, which we incorporated when updating the school curricula for September. Now, we need to confirm and test some of our planned changes, as we did not have this planning process in previous years. We reviewed the

authorization standard to identify the evidence needed to ensure that the school curriculum is as focused as possible on the needs of students.

Meeting with parents, sharing this document, and listening to their feedback were essential steps in our process. I'm not even referring to the teachers, who were participants in these discussions themselves. We engaged meaningfully with the community, which proved to be both interesting and challenging. Not a single email I shared with the parents went unanswered. I also organized a face-to-face meeting and have compiled a group of parents' email addresses for future communication. I highlight this experience because, without the insights we gained in the previous period, we would have struggled significantly in developing the school curriculum." (school principal)

"However, for the first time, the system demonstrates an expectation that schools must meet at least the minimum requirements. This includes having the necessary mechanisms in place, a solid documentary foundation, a positive atmosphere, and established groups—do you understand? In other words, I believe that the authorization process represents a positive approach toward schools, reflecting a supportive stance by allowing them to consider important issues." (interview with an expert).

In addition to positive examples of successful authorization to meet standards, ineffective examples were also identified, completely dependent on the readiness and mobilization of school principals as institutional leaders.

"I am, so to speak, an authorization expert, and now I am participating in this process as well. Prior to this, I took part in primary training, and there were different schools. I saw schools that were ready for something, and for them, it wasn't a difficult step. Some schools understood this reform more or less, developed, changed their vision, and saw the importance of teaching from a different perspective. But there are schools for which it is too big a step to allow, and therefore, in many cases, they resort to copying. Here are the socially desirable answers. It is very common among us that everyone knows how to answer, for example, how the school should fly the flag" (interview with an expert).

In such cases, attention was paid not to the readiness of the school but to the compliance of the requested documentation with the principles of authorization. During the research, examples were identified where the dedication of principals, mutual relations, the establishment of personal and professional networks, the approaches of principals' associations, and the joint work on the documentation required for authorization allowed several schools to present template forms of the required documentation and successfully navigate the authorization process due to institutional readiness and school community engagement, without a central focus on visions and unity as key issues.

"I searched for a school on my own, one that had switched to the new assessment model, and I found xx school. I contacted that director through my personal connections, sent him the materials, and spoke to the teaching staff of that school. That is, I, with my contacts and my own efforts, searched for this information and greenlit it. I weighed it and decided to take the school to this new assessment" (school principal).

"The quality management team introduced the authorization and issued an order in April. By April, we already knew they would ask us for something; a guide was issued, which stated how many documents the school should have. It is good to have them. What happened then? I noted down what documents we needed, and there were also studies. We wrote, 'That's it; what should we do now?' [Names of two colleague directors] were involved. We asked, 'What should we do?' and we realized we needed to create forty documents that didn't even physically exist. If we were to share it like this, who has the first authorization? [Amisia, name of the school director], what should we do? 'Arika, hurry up and do this; I will do that. Let's write it and get started...' (school director).

Chapter 5. Developing and Implementing a Constructivist-Based School Curriculum

To establish a student-centered learning environment grounded in constructivist principles, the New School Model identified three key areas of focus: (1) developing a school curriculum; (2) integrating complex tasks into the learning process; and (3) actively applying formative assessment within the educational framework. This chapter will examine the qualitative research findings related to each of these areas.

(1) Development of School Curriculum

Issues related to the development of school curricula (analysis of interviews and focus group discussions)

The development of the school curriculum, identified as one of the key tasks within the reform framework and aimed at creating a curriculum tailored to each school's autonomy, context, and needs, proved to be the most problematic component for schools. This challenge was acknowledged by reform planners, coaches, principals, and teachers alike. As one curriculum development expert notes:

"There were three main directions—formative assessment, complex tasks, and the school curriculum. Yes, that observation is accurate; complex tasks haven't been fully implemented but at least were implemented and were the most successful in these three directions, but school curriculum development, if not an outright failure, turned out to be the most flawed. Our school and teachers managed, to some extent, to handle complex tasks... they engaged in discourse to some degree. In the discourse surrounding complex tasks, whether well or poorly, they still participated—that is, they began to discuss alternative teaching and pedagogical styles. However, orienting formative assessments towards long-term goals and developing the student and school curriculum posed a very difficult challenge. At the next level, by 'curriculum,' I don't mean just one subject but the entire scope. Planning for each subject and organizing the whole school curriculum accordingly proved to be an exceptionally difficult task" (Interview, curriculum expert).

Implementing this component was not only challenging; some study participants even regarded this direction as utopian. They argued that, with the current format, requirements, and workload, implementing it in Georgia's educational reality—especially considering the human resources available in public schools—is difficult to envision. Furthermore, some participants believe that curriculum development is not, in general, the responsibility of teachers, as teachers are primarily educators, not curriculum experts. Requiring all teachers to become specialists in curriculum development, they suggest, is a misguided expectation in itself:

"The notion that teachers should develop the curriculum themselves seems to persist, and some still believe in it. However, it became evident—though this was entirely expected for me—that it did not work out. Teachers cannot devote the immense time and energy required for curriculum development, as it demands a level of expertise beyond what can reasonably be expected of an ordinary teacher, or even of textbook authors. Considering the guidelines set by the New School

Model, even textbook authors struggle to fully meet the ideas proposed. Expecting a narrow group with ambitions to write a curriculum or create a manual to implement it thoroughly and thoughtfully, in a way that is both adequate and useful for teachers, is unrealistic. And demanding this from all teachers is simply unfeasible" (Teacher focus group).

It should be noted that study participants directly cited the failure of the theoretical foundations underpinning school curriculum development, highlighting inconsistencies and a lack of maturity on the part of the reform's authors. This led to skepticism among teachers and schools regarding the curriculum development process, reflected in their attitudes and the formal approach to school curriculum development:

"Whether we refer to it as 'the theory of Georgian concepts' or 'theory of curricula,' it raised questions at both the theoretical and conceptual levels. For instance, I'll share a few points, and you may or may not agree with me. My initial reaction was to doubt the soundness of these ideas. In the Georgian subject, when we first reviewed this framework, eight concepts were proposed for elementary level Georgian, which were then revised and eventually reduced to three or four. This evolution signals some instability. For instance, when such radical key concepts are introduced—such as discovery or communication—but the scope of these concepts isn't clearly defined from the outset, it raises concerns. I'm citing this example specifically for one subject, but similar issues arose in other subjects too. For instance, certain concepts were found to be missing, replaced, etc., in social sciences. From the beginning, there was some unsound theoretical content evident" (Interview, school principal).

Some coaches, principals, and teachers involved in the study felt that school curriculum development was overly demanding. Considering the schools' readiness and teachers' or school leaders' competencies, they viewed it as a formalistic bureaucratic process from the outset. In their opinion, reform planners did not fully understand this reality, and their idealistic vision was neither realistic nor necessary:

"Is curriculum creation a competency? And is it feasible as a mass competency, expecting everyone to create one? I don't mean to belittle anyone, but even within the authorization framework, expecting every school to develop its own curriculum seems absurd from the start. If I'm a teacher, why can't I work with an established curriculum? Suppose someone created a curriculum, that is, let's say, 15 experts devised one. The role of a teacher is not to develop the curriculum. This misunderstanding complicates things. What is being asked is beyond the scope of a regular teacher. Even if a small group of highly competent individuals developed a curriculum covering all subjects, why am I burdened with creating something I'm not equipped to do? In ten years, it may be reported that 2,000 schools have created curricula, which, in reality, will amount to minor adjustments such as changing the student count from 20 to 15. I'm uncertain why such demands are imposed" (Interview, school director).

Not all teachers perceived the process of school curriculum development as a creative one, led by highly competent individuals. Some teachers believed the school curriculum was simply a modified version of the national curriculum, including textbooks and frameworks provided by the Ministry, and didn't require extensive effort or creativity. Elevating it as part of the reform and making it a critical component of the authorization process, they felt, was formal and bureaucratic. The expectation for schools to develop unique school curricula was more performative than practical. This perspective is reflected in the words of one teacher participating in the focus group:

"The concept of a school curriculum itself is excellent. When a teacher can develop a unique curriculum based on the needs of their school, students, and abilities, that's ideal. I recall when the subject expert instructed me to create a new curriculum for authorization within three days. My reaction was disbelief—how could I produce a new curriculum in three days? This should be a serious creative process, yet it turned out to be a matter of organizing concepts and complex task ideas logically, something I managed in 20 minutes because I was familiar with the standards and the textbook I was using. Isn't that essentially the school curriculum? This aligns with what the Ministry proposed and what we use. Why is this additional requirement necessary? Why should I go through the school authorization process and put effort into it if there isn't a new curriculum? I think that if a school has its own curriculum, then it makes sense to go through this process and put in the effort. But if the school is simply following the same standard curriculum, I don't understand why we would call it a unique school curriculum. It seems like we're just renaming the organization we already have in the handbook and standard. Is that really a unique school curriculum?" (focus group of teachers).

It is important to note that while the development of the school curriculum was both a major focus and one of the most challenging components of the reform, it still had a positive impact on teachers. All participants in the study agreed that teachers began actively engaging with and understanding the national curriculum. Previously, many teachers relied solely on textbooks without being familiar with their subject's curriculum; the New School Model changed this by positioning the national curriculum as the primary resource for teachers.

"This system encouraged teachers to read and understand the standards. Previously, many teachers did not even know the introductory part of the national curriculum, let alone the standard for their subject. They simply followed the textbooks. With the New School Model, coaches guided teachers to realize that the standard, not the textbook, is the foundation of their teaching. This shift was crucial because it prompted many teachers to re-engage with the curriculum document, realizing its importance in the teaching process. This focus, in my opinion, is a positive aspect of the reforms" (focus group of teachers).

School principals especially praised the New School Model and curriculum development for its alignment with the school authorization process. They acknowledged that the development of a new curriculum, along with the support provided for teacher professional development, prepared their schools for the authorization process:

"In the end, I was genuinely grateful. These new approaches and concepts, which demand work with complex standards, couldn't have been achieved by my teachers without their involvement in the New School Model" (Interview, school director).

„My deputy, department heads, and I reviewed these issues to ensure we understood them well enough to guide teachers. I even attended training sessions to clarify questions. Some schools and leaders are not as engaged in professional development. Without this project, I might have struggled with the curriculum portion of the authorization process. Schools needed to understand this new system and propose plans accordingly“ (Interview, school director).

Another key aspect of the curriculum development process highlighted by participants was the collaboration between parents, teachers, and school management. This teamwork allowed for feedback,

discussion, and practical adjustments to meet the school's needs, fostering a positive school culture. By actively developing the school curriculum, schools began to shift their dynamics, promoting a collaborative culture focused on the learning process:

"The school curriculum should be as student-centered as possible. We met with parents, shared the document, and listened to their feedback. Teachers, of course, were part of this process as well. It was both interesting and challenging. After receiving little response from emails, I began meeting with parents in person. Without the experience from the previous period, we would have struggled to create a meaningful school curriculum" (Interview, school director).

Some participants in the research view the New School Model as a valuable tool for the professional development of their school, teachers, and in developing school curricula. Previously, the curricula across schools were largely uniform due to limited competency and experience. However, the New School Model helped make curriculum development more practical and highlighted the school director's role in this process. One director commented:

"We had never created a school curriculum before, likely because we lacked the necessary competence. Now, our curriculum truly reflects our school's identity, shaped over time and aided by support that later emerged, showing us what could be changed. For example, since 2019, we have had subject matrices, but in 2020, they became a resource to develop during the study period" (Interview, school director).

In summary:

Weakest Component: Curriculum development was seen as the most challenging area of the reform.

Unrealistic Expectation: The task of curriculum development is deemed unrealistic, as teachers are not specialized in creating curricula and textbooks, making this demand impractical.

Adaptation, Not Innovation: Curriculum creation was more about adapting existing resources provided by the Ministry than creating original, unique curricula.

Positive Impact on Authorization: Despite challenges, curriculum development helped schools in the authorization process.

Cultural Shift in Schools: Working on the curriculum fostered a collaborative culture among school leadership, teachers, and parents, especially in schools actively engaged in this process.

Professional Growth: The curriculum development support was crucial for the professional growth of both schools and teachers.

Chapter 6: Analysis of School Curricula

Within the framework of the New School Model, the state planned to improve the capacity of schools in the area of curriculum planning. In developing these school or subject curricula, the state's theory of change was based on the assumption that the planning of the learning process, and consequently the outcomes, would improve if schools:

- a) Used constructivist approaches in planning the educational process;
- b) Shifted from developing separate lesson plans to creating medium- and long-term plans;
- c) Began developing concept-based curricula;
- d) Considered the possibilities of integrating digital technologies into the educational process.

To compare the situation after the introduction of the New School Model with the situation before its introduction, we also requested that schools provide their curricula from the period of the second-generation curriculum. Schools mainly presented their curricula from the 2015-2016 and 2022-2023 school years.

The data obtained from the schools varied in both volume and content. Some schools submitted only their school curricula, while others included subject curricula (as they refer to them). The subject curricula were also presented in varying volumes by different schools. At the time of submission, some schools had only developed curricula for certain subjects. Additionally, some schools submitted other documents related to the school curriculum, such as descriptions of school projects, club statutes, and more.

Originality and Authenticity of School Curricula

The analysis of the materials provided reveals that a large portion of the school curricula repeats provisions found in the national curriculum. In many cases, the school curriculum text is copied verbatim from the national curriculum. In some instances, the content of the national curriculum is reproduced in such a way that even the page numbering is preserved. Not only are sections relevant to the principles of teaching and learning within the school copied, but also those norms that do not serve any functional purpose in conveying the curriculum. For instance, some school curricula include regulations on how schools should determine the maximum number of students in a class and how this number should be adjusted in agreement with the state. However, certain aspects of the school curricula reveal the uniqueness of individual schools in the following areas:

- **Introduction of Additional Subjects or Informal Education (Clubs):** In these cases, schools seem to be guided by their own needs, interests, and abilities.
- **School Missions:** Parts of a school's mission may be copied from the law on general education and the national goals of general education. While references to the law and national goals may lend legitimacy to the school mission, many schools also define their own goals and aspirations.

- **Rehabilitation of Schools:** Schools undergoing rehabilitation with special admissions often include changes to the typical hourly distribution, which sometimes results in reduced lesson times.
- **Foreign Language Teaching:** Schools are required to teach English as the first foreign language, while the second foreign language is chosen by the schools themselves. Consequently, there is variability between schools regarding which second foreign languages are offered, particularly in urban areas.
- **Textbook Lists:** Schools have the right to select textbooks from a list of graded options. Since most subjects and grades offer multiple textbooks, school curricula vary in terms of which textbooks are chosen.
- **School Projects:** Especially after the introduction of the New School Model, schools describe projects to be implemented at the school level. These projects usually take into account the local community and geographical context. As this varies across schools, it demonstrates how curricula adapt to local needs and opportunities. It is also noteworthy that these school projects often attempt to align with the national goals of general education or the provisions of the law on general education.
- **Partnerships with Local Organizations:** Schools that establish business partnerships with local organizations demonstrate an awareness of resources available outside the school. This approach provides more opportunities for schools to tailor their curricula to the needs of the school community.
- **School Schedule Organization:** In rare cases, the school curriculum outlines the school's operational schedule. Also, occasionally, we find curricula that describe the roles and responsibilities of school personnel.
- **Distance Learning:** In school curricula developed after the pandemic, certain provisions on distance learning forms and lesson durations are included.
- **School Evaluations:** Some schools, as part of the school curriculum, define the forms of diagnostic and summative evaluations and the organization of exams. Interestingly, some diagnostic exams are conducted at the end of the academic year.

In practice, the school curriculum lacks essential elements that contribute to the formation of school culture. For example, very few curricula describe school holidays, gatherings, or sports competitions. It is unclear when or how school excursions are organized.

Changes in School Curricula According to the Second and Third Generations of the National Curriculum¹

There are no significant methodological differences between schools' approaches to developing school curricula after the introduction of the second and third generation national curricula. In both generations, school curricula replicate the provisions of the national curriculum. In both cases, the subject curricula, if present, generally follow the content and sequence of thematic units as outlined in the textbooks.

¹ [Authors] The National Curriculum is revised every six years. Each cycle is officially referred to as a 'generation.' (<https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=12552&lang=geo>) The current National Curriculum is the third in sequence and is therefore referred to as the third-generation National Curriculum.

Schools have been involved in the implementation of the Third Generation National Curriculum in varying ways and at different times. This difference seems to have affected the interest and ability of schools to implement the changes initiated by the New School Model.

In the documents submitted by the schools involved in the piloting phase, we often find subject curricula written in a new format, including the so-called complex tasks. Schools participating in the piloting phase have more frequently implemented school projects, the goals and implementation methods of which align more closely with the teaching and learning formats envisioned by the New School Model.

Although the study was not aimed at quantitative analysis and adopts a qualitative approach, it is worth noting that urban schools not involved in the National Curriculum pilot were more likely to have introduced subject curricula compared to rural or township schools that were not part of the pilot.

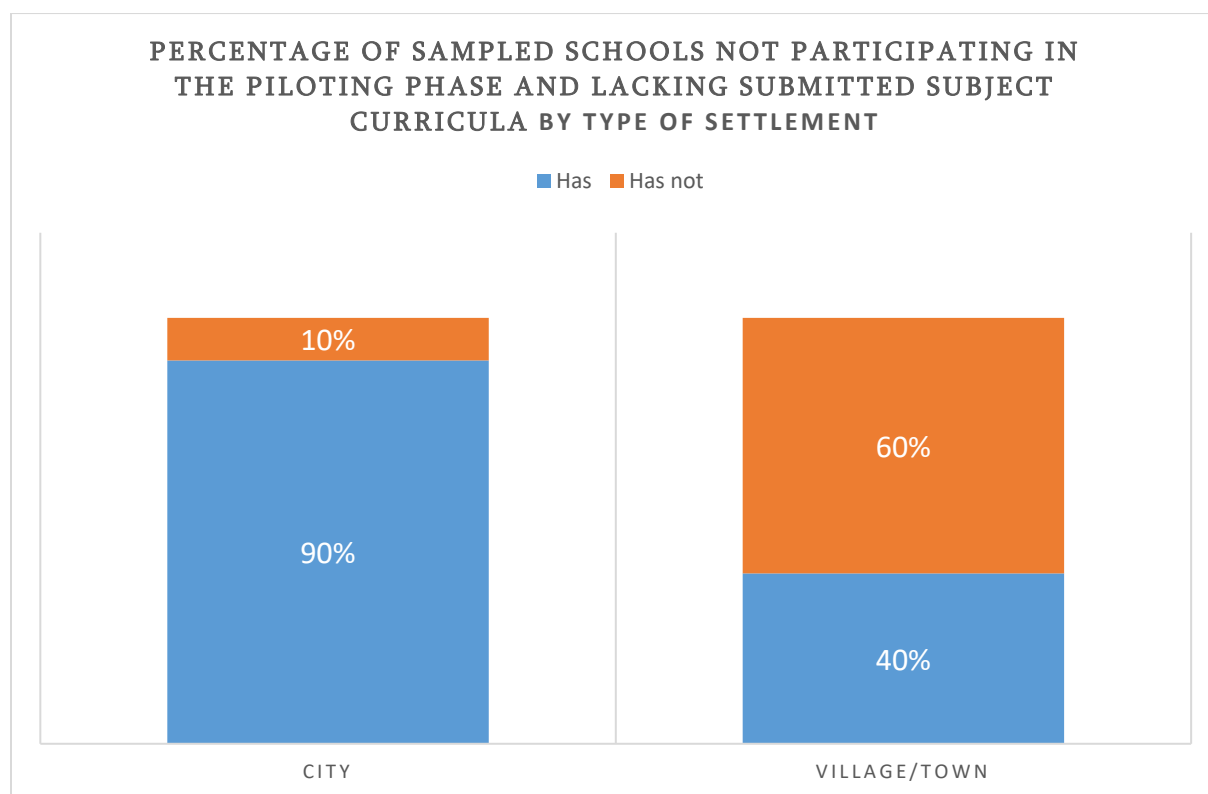


Figure 12. Percentage of sampled schools not participating in the piloting phase and lacking submitted subject curricula

It is clear that sampling within the framework of qualitative research does not allow for statistical generalizations about the entire school system. However, this data may be of interest for future research, as the differences in our sample may indicate unequal access to information or methodology between schools, depending on their settlement type. Of course, it may also be valuable to investigate alternative causes, which are generally related to the schools' ability to develop the school curriculum, as well as the competence or motivation of school staff.

The realization of Principles of Constructivism

In the school curricula developed within the framework of the New School Model, there is an attempt to base the educational process primarily on constructivist principles. This effort is most noticeable in the subject curricula, though it is less evident in other elements of the school curriculum (such as in the mission statement or when defining the principles of teaching and learning, etc.).

On one hand, in the subject curricula, we observe that the descriptions of the learning process include elements characteristic of constructivist approaches. Specifically, it is planned that students will develop responses to thinking questions, engage in subject-related projects, and acquire diverse educational experiences. Assignments include making presentations, creating hypothetical traveler diaries, brochures, posters, CVs, and more. On the other hand, there is a concern that the implementation of these subject curricula is somewhat formalized, rather than being fully adapted to the students' learning process. This can be observed in several important details, such as the monotony of subject curricula and content errors.

In the subject curricula of the schools, tasks and even the descriptions of these tasks are often repeated. For example, out of 30 selected schools involved in piloting the Third Generation National Curriculum, eight repeated the same tasks in the history curricula. Students in different schools were asked to conduct imaginary interviews with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, develop Giorgi Brtskinvali's CV, and more. The identity or apparent similarity of these tasks is likely due to the content of the teaching materials (teacher's books) or the sets of complex tasks developed by the state and shared with teachers during training sessions. Complex tasks with identical texts are also searchable on the internet, providing teachers with the opportunity to incorporate practices from other schools into their subject curricula.

The content of these complex tasks may sometimes indirectly address the requirements set out for this type of task in the national curriculum. A complex task, according to the National Curriculum, is defined by topics and is a meaningful task related to life situations, the performance of which requires the integrated use of different knowledge in functional contexts². It is clear that compiling Giorgi Brtskinvali's biography can be somewhat related to real-life requirements, such as knowing how to compile a CV. However, the extent to which another person's CV relates to a real-life situation can be debated.

Some of the complex tasks lack depth, suggesting that their creators may not fully grasp the essence of constructivist teaching. For instance, an assignment might ask students to make a presentation and then explain how they made it, but without detailing the steps necessary for students to learn and successfully create the presentation (e.g., idea generation, research, material development, design, etc.).

In the example of the complex assignment above, it is unclear how students are expected to perform the analysis, what methods they should use, or which sources they should rely on. This task also does not appear to require any preparatory steps in which students would gather examples of restored monuments or develop criteria for making comparisons.

Additionally, the samples of subject curricula provided are often flawed, incomplete, and difficult to interpret.

² National Curriculum, Chapter I – Administrative and Conceptual Issues of Organizing the Teaching-Learning Process. 2018.

Grade 6. Arts

Task Description: Describe and analyze a restored monument of medieval Georgian architecture, focusing on its condition before and after restoration

| Topic | Target concept/s ub-concepts | Issue | Text/texts (context examples) | The idea of a complex assignment | Learning resources for working on a complex assignment |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| VI. Remembering a parent | | 1. | Main resource: Revaz Inanishvili - "What should I say about my mother" p. 112 Additional resources: Besik Kharanauli "My mother" p. 114 Tariel Kharkhelauri "My father" p. 115 | | Exhibition - portraits of the mother. |
| | | 2. | Main resource: Revaz Inanishvili - "What should I say about my mother" p. 112 Additional resources: | | |
| Topic | Target concept/s ub-concepts | Issue | Text/texts (context examples) | The idea of a complex assignment | Learning resources for working on a complex assignment |
| VII. Self-establishment | | 1. | Main resource: N. Dumbadze "HELADOS" p. 120 Additional resources: | | Fiction film "Helados" Greeks in Georgia p. 133 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| | | | Fiction film "Helados" p. 135 | | For a biographical sketch, p.134 |
| | | | The TV program "Our yard" p. 135 | | |

Grade IX- Subject: History

Illustration 1: The example of subject curriculum (authentic material)

As shown in the illustration, the list of target concepts appears both in the description of complex tasks and in the topic column. This approach again follows the older, thematic, content-based teaching model rather than a concept-based one. In this particular complex assignment, there are no visible elements of a constructivist approach. The student is assigned to write a report on the topic they have learned, but the cognitive process involved remains unclear.

| Month | Topic | Issue/issues Sub-concept/sub-concepts | Complex Assignment |
|-----------|--|--|---|
| September | New times (Georgia and the world in the XVII-XIX centuries) | Issue: English revolutions in the 17th century - a new form of political government in England | Target concept: power Grade: IX |
| | | Topic: The 'Agrarian' and 'Industrial' Revolutions in Britain Sub concepts: Society - gentry, bourgeoisie Historical event / process - enclosure process, pauperization, agrarian revolution, industrialization. | 1. Write a report on the consequences of the Agrarian and Industrial Revolution. Target concepts: society, historical event/process Grade: IX |
| October | | Target concepts: Source, space, society, time, power, historical event. | Issue: In search of reliable foreign allies of Vakhtang VI-era Kartli Target concept: power - absolutism, Feudal monarchy, Catholicism. Grade: IX |
| November | | Issue: Erekle II as a statesman and military commander | |

Illustration 2. Subject Curriculum in Georgian as a Native Language (Authentic Materials)

In the third illustration, it is evident that complex assignments are entirely absent in the curriculum section. While it may not be necessary to include such assignments in every subject, this sample subject curriculum still leaves an incomplete impression as the target concepts are also missing. Here, once again, the thematic, content-based teaching approach seems to be the guiding principle. The curriculum attempts to formalize teaching according to this principle through the tools (matrices) introduced within the New School Model framework.

Using these matrices may not be technically straightforward for teachers. The documents indicate that formatting issues with text and assignments pose challenges. Due to the table's layout, teachers must input lengthy texts into narrow columns, which stretches the curriculum over several pages and makes it difficult to read (see Illustration 3).

As illustrated above, the organization of the learning unit description requires frequent back-and-forth reading between different pages to access individual elements. For example, to understand the intended outcomes or the terms and steps of a complex task, one must navigate between two separate pages. This format makes the document usable only in electronic form, as it includes links to external resources—many of which are inactive.

Integrating Technology into Subject Curricula

In the school curricula developed according to the third generation national standards, especially within subject-specific curricula, technology usage has become more prominent. Descriptions of subject curricula and complex tasks indicate that students are expected to utilize the Internet for class projects, including information searches and research using online materials. Some curricula also include multimedia resources from the Internet as supplementary aids for subject knowledge acquisition. The third generation curricula reflect a growing emphasis on digital technology use, encouraging students to incorporate digital tools in constructing and presenting their work.

Illustration 3. Subject Curriculum Formatting Example (Authentic Material)

The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions in Britain

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <div>long term goal</div> <div>The target concept and related indigenous concepts</div> | <div>Issue:</div> <div>"Agrarian" and "Industrial" Revolutions in Britain</div> <div>Subtopics:</div> <div>Sub concepts:</div> <div>Society - gentry, bourgeoisie</div> <div>Historical event / process - enclosure process, pauperization, agrarian revolution, industrialization</div> | <div>Key question / questions</div> <div>How can I present the social and economic changes in British society as a result of the 'Agrarian' and 'Industrial' revolutions through the report?</div> |
| <div>society</div> <div>Results: Base Level: 3, 7, 8</div> <div>1) Historically, there have been many societies, but each of them had common features. Their members had a common identity, interest, concerns, and agreed upon rules of conduct and values.</div> <div>Society is divided into smaller social groups:</div> <div>2) Small communities were mostly part of a larger community.</div> <div>3) Society members have a mixed attitude towards diversity.</div> <div>A historical event/process</div> <div>Results: Basic level: 3, 7, 8</div> | <div>Stages of complex processing (resources, Stage I: complex form</div> <div>Step 1: How do I my knowledge by engaging with the topic being studied?</div> <div>Resource/Activity:</div> <div><div>• Mini-lecture regarding the report</div><div>• Report sample</div></div> <div><div>Questions focused on constructing target knowledge</div><div><div>Questions focused on constructing target knowledge</div><div><div>• Who was the main manufacturing class in late 16th century England? Under what conditions did they cultivate the land?</div><div>• What factor changed the traditional life of the English peasantry?</div><div>• Why did the peasantry have to leave the land and seek refuge in the cities?</div><div>• Why large landowners were interested in freeing the land from peasantry</div><div>• How do the resources used make us think about the relationship between economic changes and the way of life of society?</div></div></div></div> <div>Resource/Activity:</div> <div><div>• Sources about fencing. Work on historical sources, analysis of the fencing process and its results.</div><div>• Narrative material: working on narrative, historical material, prerequisites of the industrial revolution.</div></div> | <div>assignment activities):</div> <div>assignment</div> <div>demonstrate</div> <div>Step 2: What was the role and place of the peasantry in New Age English society? How were they transformed into industrial labor?</div> |

1) every historical event has its cause/causes and result/results;

2) Historians often argue about the causes and consequences of historical events;

3) some historical events have local and some global significance;

4) Historical facts and events can be typologically grouped by political, social, economic, cultural criteria.

Chapter 7: Integration of Complex Assignments in Teaching and Learning Process

This content has been organized under various headings, each addressing essential issues and concepts related to Complex Assignments. This structure allows for a detailed and focused analysis. The analysis integrates both the challenges and issues identified by schools and the wider community, as well as the strengths and positive aspects highlighted by community representatives in public discussions. More specifically, examining these issues has enabled us to delineate the following areas of focus:

Table 8: The problems and challenges as well as positive aspect related to integration of Complex Assignments in teaching and learning process.

| <i>Problems/Obstacles/Challenges</i> | <i>Positive and Strong Points</i> |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The duration required to complete the task, alongside time management challenges; 2. Complex Assignments and additional costs for teachers and students' families; 3. The multiplicity of Complex Assignments leading to reduced coordination within the school; 4. Students' apprehension regarding Complex Assignments; 5. Issues related to collaboration among teachers from different departments in schools; 6. Challenges related to technology, internet access, and resources; 7. Issues concerning teachers' competence; 8. Problems associated with the professional development of teachers; 9. Misunderstanding of Complex Assignments, alongside inadequate expectations for the age and standards of teachers; 10. Difficulties in the evaluation of students by teachers in the context of Complex Assignments performance; 11. Inappropriate use of Complex Assignments by teachers, fostering an environment that encourages tutoring; 12. An emphasis on visual effects rather than the cultivation of in-depth knowledge; 13. Delegation of learning responsibilities to home environments instead of facilitating them at school; 14. Concerns regarding parental involvement; 15. The predominant role of parents, resulting in insufficient space for student initiatives; | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on the development of knowledge and skills; 2. Integration of life experiences and practical applications; 3. Enhancement of communication and audience management skills; 4. An engaging process that fosters student motivation; 5. Cultivation of a cooperative culture; 6. Access to methodological and educational resources for teachers; 7. Increased freedom for students to express their opinions; 8. Ability to respond effectively to students' needs; 9. Promotion of student cooperation and peer education; 10. Greater utilization of technology in both classroom and home environments; 11. Flexibility and the provision of unlimited time for task completion. |

| | |
|--|--|
| 16. The direct replication of foreign educational models without consideration of the local context; 17. Inequities arising from varying levels of parental involvement; 18. Challenges related to the qualifications of coaches; 19. Issues with individual contributions by students during group work on Complex Assignments, impacting their actual development of knowledge and competencies; 20. Incompatibility between the school budget and reform initiatives, along with a lack of appropriate funding for Complex Assignments; 21. Inadequate instruction from teachers during the preparation process for students completing Complex Assignments; 22. A lack of connection between extracurricular activities and the teaching and learning processes; 23. A format that is technically and content-wise complicated. | |
|--|--|

To support the analysis, direct quotations from study participants are frequently incorporated, offering not only the content itself but also insights into participants' emotional attitudes for a deeper understanding of the issues. In the final stage of the research, and in accordance with research ethics principles, citations and references will be formatted to prevent the identification of opinion authors or the association of specific views with identifiable individuals.

Problems/Obstacles/Challenges

1. The duration required to complete the task, alongside time management challenges

The challenges associated with complex tasks primarily relate to the significant time teachers must devote to classroom activities and preparation outside of class. This time demand increases the likelihood of both emotional and physical burnout, as well as professional frustration. The issue is especially acute in large classes with many students, where time constraints also raise concerns about the feasibility of addressing diverse contextual needs. Parents, in particular, express doubts about the effectiveness of complex tasks due to these time demands; the challenges are compounded for parents with multiple school-aged children who all require homework assistance.

"Well, it's a significant challenge... it requires a lot of time in practice. For example, with younger students in grades 4 through 6, they're not yet able to complete the essay tasks independently online. Teachers assign these complex tasks requiring internet access, but students tend to work on them collectively, often going to the home of a family friend nearby. This happened with my child—two or three times they went over to complete the task together, but it takes a long time,

and they still struggle to coordinate when they'll meet," explained one parent during a focus group discussion.

Another parent recounted, "Last year, my child was in 5th grade, and during one of their group sessions, they spent 5-6 hours and still couldn't finish. They seemed to enjoy spending time together but didn't get the task done. I later asked the teacher if the children could do the work individually, but nothing changed. They went from one home to another without completing it."

The time factor is also seen as problematic for the presentation of complex tasks. Across all study groups, participants noted the time-intensive nature of this process.

"I enjoy complex tasks and complete them, but the presentation takes me a long time. My issue is that every student wants to present their work, and in a class of 25, it's difficult. I can only have three students present, which takes a lot of time," shared one teacher in a focus group.

"Should complex tasks be presented at all? Where, and who will sit through so many presentations on the same topic? With 30 students in a class, how long will it take?" (excerpt from a teacher discussion group on Facebook).

Another teacher commented, "We spoke to fellow teachers, who voiced concerns over the time commitment. Imagine assigning complex tasks to classes with 32-34 or more students—presenting and individually assessing each project would take days. And that's with a teacher potentially responsible for 200 to 350 students across two schools. It feels overly formalized."

The introduction of foreign models was also questioned, with one teacher focus group discussions. As one of the teachers remarked, "Isn't it essential to evaluate a model's relevance to the local context first? Implementing a foreign model without considering the situation here seems to disregard teachers' perspectives, almost as if implying, 'I know better, so follow my instructions.' It's worth considering if this approach is truly effective."

2. Complex Assignments and additional costs for teachers and students' families;

Some research participants note that the introduction of Complex Assignments has placed an additional burden on teachers, who often cover personal expenses to implement these tasks in the educational process. Teachers' personal spending is frequently due to inadequate material and technical resources at public schools, which are necessary to support teaching and learning based on the methodological and conceptual principles of the New School Model. Study participants repeatedly mention the personal expenses incurred by teachers in this regard:

"Our English teacher used their personal finances to buy materials I needed to complete an assignment. I felt a bit uncomfortable because the teacher was personally funding classroom supplies. Each lesson requires twenty-eight to twenty-nine items, and seeing their work posted on Facebook, I understand how much money they spend. Each complex task costs at least ten to fifteen GEL, including printing photos and other materials" (parent).

"In our school, there's always a rush for the projector; you have to wait in line to use it. I ended up buying a photocopier, which I keep at home, and sometimes I print materials myself. However, I can't do this systematically because it's challenging to prepare everything alone. Visuals get a lot

of attention, so we try to make everything colorful and eye-catching, but it's costly" (teacher focus group);

"The budget for stationery is too small to meet all the needs, so teachers sometimes have to pay out-of-pocket, or students and their parents buy additional materials for the class, like A4 sheets or colored paper" (parent);

"Teachers need significant resources. Although we don't lack basic stationery, when demands exceed school resources, it's tough. The Ministry should support teachers, both professionally and materially" (school principal);

"Using digital resources has been challenging. Years ago, I carried a 5-kilogram laptop to class, later buying a lighter one for convenience. Two colleagues even bought their own projectors, which cost half a month's salary. I can borrow them now because I have their locker key, but it's not the teacher's responsibility to buy these resources. Schools need to provide them. Teachers spend to offer quality education, but what they really need is consistent access to essential materials and quality resources" (teacher focus group).

Besides teachers, parents also incur significant expenses to support complex tasks, either by pooling funds beforehand or paying as tasks are completed at home.

"Our parents pooled money for materials. Some teachers can source supplies from the school, meaning less cost for parents overall, but others rely on parents to cover everything" (parent focus group);

"Sometimes parents provide a supply package for the class, but this isn't always possible. Many families struggle financially, and it's hard to ask them to buy materials. I work in a community with significant need, and I can't obligate parents to contribute. I fully understand the challenges teachers face, and whenever I speak to the Ministry, I emphasize that if teachers lack school support—even for basic supplies like paper, markers, or a printer—it becomes very difficult to produce effective results" (teacher focus group).

3. The multiplicity of Complex Assignments leading to reduced coordination within the school;

The issue of excessive Complex Assignments was a recurring theme in all interviews and focus groups. Although schools and teachers had the autonomy to decide the number of Complex Assignments and could integrate subjects to produce a unified Complex Assignment, this approach was ultimately unsuccessful. Consequently, schools, students, teachers, and parents report being overwhelmed by the volume of these assignments. This problem is attributed to factors such as over-zealousness by some principals and teachers, a lack of collaboration culture in certain schools, limited competence among some teachers, and misunderstandings about the purpose of Complex Assignments.

The Department of General and Preschool Education's monitoring report also highlights that, initially, two complex tasks per semester were mandatory. However, in response to the identified challenges, this requirement was gradually relaxed. Despite allowing schools and teachers more flexibility in the number

of Complex Assignments, the overall trend remained largely unchanged, and the volume and intensity of assignments continue to be a significant concern among study participants:

"The girls mentioned that in past years we had a lot of complex assignments, but this year we didn't have any... I think we complained so much that they finally understood," remarked a parent in a focus group.

"Last year, we had a lot, requiring significant parental assistance due to the difficulty of the tasks, but this year it's much less," added another parent in a focus group.

A teacher focus group also commented on the lack of cooperation: "When there are no shared resources in the school, it becomes a major problem. For example, my department decided to do two or three complex assignments per semester, but there must be coordination with other departments. Otherwise, a student might end up with complex assignments in mathematics, science, history, and citizenship all at once. To ease the burden on students, these assignments should be spread out through mutual agreement."

4. *Students' apprehension regarding Complex Assignments*

The overloading of students with Complex Assignments, along with the attitudes displayed by teachers in assigning and managing these tasks, has led to an increase in fear and anxiety among students, which is widely regarded as counterproductive, undermining the overall learning process.

"Currently, a clear issue arises when children are exposed to complex tasks across all subjects simultaneously. For instance, students studying ten subjects may be required to complete intricate tasks in nearly all of them. This situation generates anxiety, as students wonder, 'Can we manage this workload across all subjects?' They develop a 'fear syndrome' related to these complex tasks. From my own experience, I conducted an integrated complex task in civics and geography last year, and the students responded with great enthusiasm. They expressed that if they could tackle just one integrated task spanning geography and civics, they wouldn't face the strain of complex tasks in each subject separately. I believe it would be beneficial if we organized subject workloads more systematically. For instance, enrolling seventh graders in geography during the first semester and offering a single complex task per year in that subject, followed by a related subject like history in the second semester, could be advantageous. However, in discussions with trainers, they suggested that each subject should ideally incorporate at least two complex exercises. This is simply my perspective" (school principal).

"Approximately two years ago, my son was assigned to a group project, where the teacher formed the group in such a way that included disengaged students who did not contribute. My son ended up preparing prompts for each member and recording a video with them. Ultimately, these students failed to participate as expected, and since my son bore the responsibility, I discussed the matter with the teacher. Following this, group assignments were eliminated in that subject. I recognize the value of group work and the importance of students collaborating; however, the group distribution was poorly managed. My son, being more responsible, was placed with students who lacked interest and didn't support him, creating

additional stress. As a parent, I don't believe my child should face unnecessary stress from poorly coordinated group activities" (parent).

5. *Issues related to collaboration among teachers from different departments in schools*

The low culture of cooperation within schools, the role and function of departmental chairs in planning and implementing complex tasks, and the limited utilization of thematic integration across subjects in thematic planning were identified as significant challenges in the execution of complex tasks. These issues also relate to the broader challenges of leading the learning process at the school level, where effective implementation of complex tasks and achieving meaningful outcomes are essential. The lack of teacher collaboration and the inefficiency of departmental activities emerged as prominent issues across all participant groups in the study:

"When schools lack well-functioning department chairs, there is no cooperation among teachers, which is a significant issue. There should be a structure that fosters collaboration within the school community, right? For example, in mathematics, our department has planned for two or three complex tasks each semester, which I am expected to carry out. The student should encounter complex tasks across various subjects—mathematics, science, history, civics, and others. This workload should be managed and distributed through mutual agreement to alleviate the pressure on students and create a more balanced environment overall" (focus group of teachers).

"I'll provide a specific example—I planned the last complex task in collaboration with the science department. This approach resulted in a more active, enjoyable, and creative process, and the final outcome of the task was more engaging than any individually completed complex task. The students' final product reflected this enhanced collaboration" (focus group of teachers).

"In my view, teachers' professional development is hindered by their reluctance to collaborate. Teachers tend to be guarded with one another, fearing that revealing a struggle or seeking advice might lead to judgment from colleagues. As a result, they often prefer to seek answers within a professional group or turn to theoretical resources and then attempt to apply these in the educational process independently" (school principal).

6. *Challenges related to technology, internet access, and resources*

Although one of the objectives of the "New School Model" is the integration of technology into education—supported by a dedicated fund—many challenges persist related to access to resources and the autonomy to use them. These issues suggest that the announced goals and the implementation plan for the New School Model require reassessment.

This challenge was anticipated within the New School Model, leading to the initial provision of equipment to schools participating in the project as a motivation for joining. Funding for equipment was allocated through the World Bank project budget or directly by the Ministry of Education and Science. However, individual teachers, students, and parents continued to face difficulties in accessing necessary equipment, both at school and at home, to complete complex tasks.

"A complex task involves steps that must be carried out at school, but it also includes activities that students must complete at home, often involving research or experimentation to develop a final product. What technical resources do schools provide for this? – None. This is why part of the assignment must be completed in written form at home" (Teacher.)

"Technological advancements and the shift to digital systems have set high expectations for schools, yet many challenges remain. It's difficult for schools to meet the demand for digital education when some students lack internet access, cannot afford internet packages, or do not have suitable devices. Additionally, many schools are not technically equipped to support teachers in delivering these 'never-seen-before' digital lessons. The inadequacy of textbooks only compounds these issues, leaving us with numerous challenges" (School principal).

"The introduction of technology is a distant reality for many schools. For instance, our school participates in the New National Curriculum, and we strive to follow each step, but we lack essential technical resources. Even when working on complex tasks and utilizing e-learning resources, we often encounter barriers that prevent us from implementing what is embedded in the curriculum" (Teacher).

"We recognize the importance of digital technologies and use them effectively in our school; however, we only have access to one equipped classroom, which limits our ability to fully integrate these tools" (Focus group of teachers).

It's not only technology access that is a challenge; a significant issue lies in the lack of reliable internet within and outside of schools. Although some schools received equipment, weak or nonexistent internet access continued to hinder the learning process. Likewise, families often face difficulties affording internet access, which creates further obstacles for students in completing complex assignments at home:

"Children lack internet access and computers, so how can they be expected to complete complex tasks?" (School principal).

"Many students and teachers face serious challenges. Completing these assignments requires internet access, a computer, or at least a reliable phone—resources that are not available to everyone" (Teacher).

"When complex tasks require extensive resources, we are encouraged to use various tools to boost students' motivation, yet we often struggle to implement these effectively. For instance, I often use my own funds to pay for internet on my mobile device when needed, but it's not feasible to do this for every class and every lesson. In cases where students lack access to the necessary devices, the families are simply unable to provide them, creating a significant barrier, even within the school itself. Ideally, each classroom should have adequate internet access so that both teachers and students can use these resources to enhance their learning. This infrastructure is critical for achieving quality education" (Focus group of teachers).

"We would like to use digital resources, but the school claims it lacks the means to provide them, which has become a justification for their absence" (School principal).

"It's frustrating. Our school doesn't have an internet network—only the laboratory is connected, and even then, the space is so crowded that accessing it is challenging" (Teacher).

"Resources have been allocated multiple times, which is commendable, yet small, resource-limited schools are often overlooked. This is the 21st century; lacking internet access in a school is simply untenable" (Focus group of teachers).

"There's no alternative resource, no library nearby to access additional materials. Even if a student wanted to, it's nearly impossible for them to find resources independently. Accessing online materials is often restricted to phones, which is neither practical nor efficient for serious study. Many students are socially vulnerable, and living in remote, mountainous areas compounds these difficulties. The lack of reliable internet access or adequate devices makes it almost impossible for these students to succeed" (School director).

7. Issues concerning teachers' competence

Teacher readiness and competence are frequently cited as significant challenges in implementing the New School Model, particularly concerning complex assignments. It should be noted that the Ministry of Education and Science reform authors and implementers have a different perspective on teachers' readiness and the existing problems from this standpoint. They do not believe that schools' and teachers' readiness needs to be increased to implement the new model; instead, they see the New School Model as a process to train teachers, increase schools' readiness, and introduce student-centered teaching based on constructivist principles.

"As for readiness, the New School Model was intended to reduce the focus on teachers' readiness (for student-centered teaching) and serve this purpose. If something couldn't be done, perhaps it could have been done better, but this reform was a process of learning and building readiness" (curriculum expert).

Based on the above, the reform group expected challenges related to teacher competence. The New School Model was meant to create teacher readiness based on these challenges, which would, in turn, change classroom practices and support higher academic achievements. However, according to the participants' observations in the study, teachers' low competence has created specific issues for carrying out tasks effectively. The practices and understanding of the reform among teachers do not suggest optimism about their increased willingness to apply constructivist, student-centered teaching.

"If possible, do you know what's sad for me? The teachers, especially the so-called old teachers, didn't understand that my children should not just be given caught fish—they should be taught how to catch fish, to put it bluntly. They themselves couldn't understand where they are. I understand it's difficult, even writing curricula" (focus group of parents).

"There are... many teachers. Previous parents also mentioned that even with complex tasks, it was very difficult for both teachers and students. Especially since the students couldn't understand, I realized that the teachers didn't explain well what a complex task was. That's why it was on the shoulders of the parents to complete complex tasks" (focus group of parents).

"First, the teachers themselves don't understand the meaning of these complex tasks. Second, they cannot explain to students what to do and how. Third, why should a parent step in if there's nothing more to be done when the parents are studying? Teachers who also have no idea what

and how to teach. They themselves look at these changes like children. In short, there is a lot of trouble in education" (focus group of parents).

"Unrealistic demands and unrealistic expectations, as if they are not in Georgia and as if they don't know what skills the school, the state, or the teacher has. The demand is disconnected from reality" (focus group of teachers).

8. The problems related to teachers' professional development

One aspect of the criticism relates to the readiness of teachers, while another concerns the New School Model itself as a process focused on building teacher readiness by developing suitable approaches. In other words, the reform aimed to provide training for teachers, enabling them to cultivate their own competencies in line with the reforms and effectively incorporate complex tasks into the learning process. However, principals, parents, and teachers themselves have expressed criticisms of this approach:

"There is nothing motivational for teachers in this new reform. On the contrary, they schedule a training, telling you that they will teach you, for example, how to create complex tasks and present them to students. You attend the training, invest your time, yet gain nothing from it. They create matrices, plan and conduct a training, you attend, and still, this training offers you no tangible benefit. This new reform has not contributed anything beyond what I already knew" (focus group of teachers).

The critiques extend beyond the substance of the trainings, which were intended to strengthen schools and teachers, to the practical application of the knowledge gained, which was minimally supported by monitoring and reinforcement tools within the New School Model. Challenges related to principal involvement have already been discussed:

"Where are we now in these schools? One benefit of this project was that, while negativity is often emphasized, it undeniably came with positive aspects, such as the provision of computer equipment and related training. Our teachers received training; however, this term, 'training,' seems to contain some unknown secret. Who is using this training, and how? Yes, they completed training, but whether this training translates into knowledge and skill is another matter" (school principal).

"This type of webinars and centralized interactions – the so-called joint conversations with all teachers – seemed to bypass the essential intermediary link, the school itself. Even if the teacher understands what to do, if the school culture does not integrate these practices and ensure quality at the school level, the implementation remains incomplete. Suppose every teacher understood what the principles mean and how to teach them" (school principal).

Criticisms also concern the form, format, and intensity of the training that teachers receive for teaching complex tasks. Discussions reveal concerns about the logic and relevance of these systemic changes, particularly regarding the orientation of teachers' professional development. Questions around the quality of professional training and recognition of teachers' expertise have emerged following the training sessions:

"Learning new concepts... attending afternoon training sessions was tiring and often monotonous. Many issues were unclear, as teachers did not fully understand what was being asked of them. Complex tasks, unfortunately, often shifted the burden onto teachers and parents rather than

delivering a beneficial product to students. The essence of complex tasks—studying issues deeply, analyzing, reasoning, and evaluating—is valuable in itself. However, the teacher must first understand and internalize these concepts to convey them effectively to students. When the requirements are unclear, this ambiguity hampers clarity in teaching and reduces positive outcomes" (focus group of teachers).

"When communicating with teachers, it's essential to engage with them as equals, not from a higher pedestal, because this attitude creates distance. They perceive it as if we are presenting them with something unfamiliar, something extraordinary, yet we are not" (Interview with the school principal).

9. Misunderstanding of Complex Assignments, alongside inadequate expectations for the age and standards of teachers

The process of reviewing complex assignments is also a focal point for critical feedback. When the completion of a complex task by a student becomes a purely formal process, disregarding age-appropriate abilities, skills, and quality standards expected by teachers, it often fails to meet the grade-specific benchmarks. Two primary types of issues arise in this context: (1) the alignment between student age and standard requirements is insufficient to produce an expected final product in complex tasks; and (2) the step-by-step process guiding students to the final product is inadequate, with expectations that students should master essential skills—such as identifying relevant sources, verifying information, classifying data, analyzing, and synthesizing—without foundational support. Rather than fostering these skills, the complex task final product simply demands their application, though teachers have not sufficiently developed these capacities.

"My sixth-grade son sometimes receives assignments that are inappropriate for his age. This was the case last year as well, in fifth grade. I frequently interact with children this age due to my work as a guest lecturer and private tutor, so I am familiar with their abilities. The average child, not those rare few ahead of their age, cannot be expected to invent stories or parables spontaneously, as even adults find such creative thinking challenging. Assignments like creating a fable, with no instructions or preparation, are unrealistic. Similarly, assignments to advertise a product or create a brochure are anxiety-inducing rather than educational" (Parent feedback).

Issues also arise with expectations that very young students—first, second, and third graders—should independently conduct research, which essentially becomes a task for their parents. For example,

"This year, my child's school introduced computer studies, and they were assigned online research tasks. This isn't reasonable" (Parent feedback).

"Second graders in my son's class were asked by their teacher to create a model of a complete computer. Of course, parents ended up doing the work, and later, the projects were showcased as 'talented student works' on Facebook" (Parent comment on complex tasks).

"The frequency of these assignments matters; if assigned too often, they are time-consuming. Furthermore, the topics are frequently obscure or overly complicated. For instance, last year, students were tasked with finding information on historical tools like the gudastvir and other

ancient instruments, items they have no familiarity with. The limited information available, primarily from Wikipedia, was highly technical and complex" (Parent feedback on complex tasks).

"When searching online, it takes no time to find pages of information, but sorting out relevant content is beyond a child's capacity. They end up copying disorganized fragments from sources like Wikipedia, resulting in incoherent pages of text. I sometimes encourage my son to simplify, but even then, it's a struggle" (Parent focus group).

10. Difficulties in the evaluation of students by teachers in the context of Complex Assignments performance

Complex assignments were important to reform planners, with a major focus on using them for formative assessment. Teachers often wrote formative assessments within these assignments, especially during the pandemic and its aftermath. As one school principal noted, "The teacher was assigning a score to a complex task. The product itself was meant only for developmental evaluation. If integrated with a summary, then it could be evaluated. We faced this challenge, so I stopped teachers from using developmental criteria for grading. During the pandemic, when external exams were suspended, these complex tasks were used as a basis for grading, and this practice continued afterward. The issue was that tasks were often unsuitable for the child's age, class, knowledge, and competencies, and the evaluation system assessed performance on tasks that were irrelevant for the student's level. This led to an evaluation and competition of parents, not students, which lacked educational value and purpose."

A parent focus group echoed these concerns, noting the difficulty children faced completing tasks independently. One parent shared, "These tasks are too difficult for children to complete alone, requiring significant time from children and, ultimately, more parental involvement than desirable. The purpose of the task is unclear, and the evaluation prioritizes visual appeal or skills like drawing and decorating, which don't necessarily reflect learning outcomes."

Another parent described helping a sixth-grader with a history project, noting that the volume of online information made it difficult for the child to filter relevant content. The parent explained, "My child was overwhelmed by the information and couldn't manage alone. In the end, I had to help, but it was disheartening because, despite the struggle, the task was still evaluated publicly in front of the class."

These experiences reflect a broader issue: complex assignments, when not age-appropriate or clearly supported by developmental guidance, may lead to student stress, parental involvement, and a shift from meaningful learning to competition and performance, which undermines the educational purpose of these assessments.

Although one of the key directions within the New School Model was to integrate formative assessment into the learning process, the research did not confirm a significant change in this regard. Based on the difficulties of formative assessment and its implementation, critical attitudes and questions regarding its feasibility were highlighted. Three types of problems were identified concerning the widespread implementation of formative assessment:

1. Insufficient time for regular formative assessment: This issue arose due to the large number of students and the overcrowding of the teaching process;

2. Insufficient readiness of teachers: Teachers were not adequately prepared to implement valuable formative assessments;
3. Negative attitude and mistrust towards formative assessment: This skepticism was evident among different groups within the school community.

Overall, the concept of integrating formative assessment into the teaching-learning process as part of the New School Model did not receive the attention envisioned in the reform's vision. The attitudes and arguments of the school administration, teachers, and parents generally aligned on this matter. They emphasized the priority of summative assessment among students and parents, i.e., education recipients, over formative assessment. Principals and teachers cited their own practices to illustrate this dynamic. They indicated that formative assessment, whether written or verbal, failed to serve as a meaningful signal for parents to support their children. Similarly, for students, such assessments largely failed to fulfill their intended purpose, as students tended to expect specific scores to understand their readiness.

"These evaluations are also changing now [we are talking about the change of evaluation systems within the authorization process]. This is also very good because many parents are focused on marks, and, let's say, students are less focused on knowledge. For example, when I introduce the scores of the summary, some of the students tell you, 'So far, what did I get?' And when you bring this corrected comment, it is written as a development, and they are less interested in it. I announce this at the parents' meeting; the parent nods their head, but nothing actually changes" (Teacher).

"When the evaluation system was removed at the elementary level, it was not good. It wasn't motivating for the student because it didn't matter if they learned or not; no one was evaluating them anyway, and that formative evaluation doesn't give anything to a child at a young age. They have no motivation, in fact, in terms of learning. And then it produces very poor results at the grassroots level" (Director).

"How do you manage, what does the child know, where is he, or how do you evaluate, or how do you determine the needs of the child? This unmarked teaching took everything. A child's needs are absolutely inscrutable. It is not really visible during unmarked teaching. The most important thing is that not only should the teacher know the child's needs, but also the parent, and something is lost during unmarked teaching. There is no mechanism to clearly identify the child's needs" (School principal).

The fact that the expectations for formative assessment are determined by the teacher's readiness, the completeness and goal-orientation of this assessment is clearly evident from the opinions of parents. In better cases, formative teacher assessment is a tool to increase student motivation and enthusiasm, when the teacher praises the student for work well done:

"There is little formative assessment, however, the teacher has it. Well, eighty percent don't. They are already actively moving on from the fifth and sixth grades, that is, we no longer have formative evaluations, it happens less often, however, along with the written mark, now the teacher also has it, because sometimes, for example, my son came and, for example, history impressed me so much, that's what Russian told me, that's what he told me, and that's how the situation was, and it's something like a verbal evaluation, something that has a very positive effect" (parent focus group).

However, on the other hand, misunderstandings in the case of unqualified formative assessment by the teacher increase mistrust regarding the value of assessment.

"We had a problem with Russian, precisely because he praised me, that is, I go and ask him what, that is, what can I help him with, in general, I have this question with all teachers: what, what should I help him with, if there is something that is difficult for the child and help him, Russian was a new foreign language for him last year, although he has the ability to learn a foreign language well, learns easily, I do not know Russian, and therefore I cannot check his knowledge, what he knows, so I depended on the teacher as much as possible. I go, ask him if he needs help, tell me to get involved in the processes on time, because he studies independently, I cannot check his knowledge at home and I depend on you, I explained to him from the first day. Nothing, he is very talented, very good, very versatile, well, this, this, this and finally a seven, a ten in everything and a seven in Russian" (parent focus group).

Another expectation that parents and students have is written forms of formative assessment. The attitude towards the evaluation of the verbal form is frivolous and superficial, therefore, it is not considered as a basis for conducting appropriate interventions:

"Formative assessment is done more directly, in a face-to-face conversation, by the teacher" (parents' focus group);

"As a parent, when I meet the teacher face-to-face, it is limited to formative assessment, so that he gives me a document, there is no such thing, maybe I don't understand, and for the 6th and 9th grades it is not necessary that the formative assessment Attach the evaluation" (parent focus group).

Parents' attitudes also reflected their expectations for different types of assignments to be assessed differently in terms of the form of students' evaluation. They suggested that tasks requiring less effort, individual approaches, and involvement could be assessed through formative assessment. However, completing a complex task should warrant a score-based evaluation:

"The component—by what criteria should we accept the complex task? Should it be an assessment? It is formative, but how does the teacher accept it, then make a determinative assessment? Does this formative assessment replace formative assessment? Is it possible for a child to have very good academic performance related to a specific topic and not this formative assessment?" (Parent focus group).

As noted earlier, teacher workload and class size significantly impact their ability to provide quality, outcome-oriented formative assessments. At the same time, the purpose of formative assessment is tied to the students' level of learning. Perspectives on this are mixed. Some teachers and principals believe formative assessment, particularly in written form, is more relevant and feasible at the primary level, where grades are not recorded, making formative assessment a natural and non-alternative option. However, due to limited time and numerous required activities, formative assessment often fails to become a priority:

"On the one hand, this is formative assessment—oral. I would like to point out something about this: when there are so many students in the school, and let me say especially those who teach primary and secondary school, I, for example, now teach seven classes with an average of 25 students. Let's calculate—we get a very large number. To evaluate each student in writing, even

with formative evaluation, is very difficult, very difficult. At first, we sometimes focus on the 5th graders, where scores are not written, and we write everything in detail there. Therefore, as we move to higher levels, the formative assessment becomes oral" (Focus group of teachers).

"This issue, I think, is one of the most difficult because it is not so difficult in elementary school, especially regarding development. At the elementary level, I think it is even simpler. However, at the basic secondary level, when you want to be objective, ensure the mark is unequivocal and fair, and that it is a painstaking process—it becomes a bit difficult" (Focus group of teachers).

The importance of formative assessment based on students' needs at the primary and secondary levels is highlighted by some teachers and principals. They argue that formative assessment is effective in the teaching-learning process only when students understand what they are doing well, what they need to improve, and how to implement the recommendations:

"I am in favor of evaluation in elementary school. I am also in favor of evaluation in elementary school. Who will believe me, but I am in favor of evaluation. The idea that a teacher can add or subtract someone's mark is absolutely not an argument. There is something so good and so stimulating about the sign in elementary school. Otherwise, at the upper levels, you are no longer interested. I think this sign, when it has an effect, we don't use it, and when it doesn't have an effect, we turn it on. And what do I know? I don't like unmarked teaching in elementary school. In any case, we have to offer something alternative to this unmarked teaching to keep the child mobilized. Imagine, I am sometimes surprised—children finish fourth and fifth grade and don't know the multiplication table en masse" (School principal).

"He is the head of everything in his lesson, although he cannot give feedback—whether it is a formative or summative assessment. That specific remark for that child in that period can be decisive so that, later, with this summative assessment, the student can have direction and change something in the next lesson" (Focus group of teachers).

As mentioned earlier, teachers acknowledge that they lack sufficient competencies to effectively use formative assessment in the learning process:

"I'll tell you about my experience. We literally started the grading system over to provide students with proper feedback, but in the end, we still reverted to traditional assessment. Here, we needed a lot of work in this regard. I say again that evaluation is the Achilles' heel because it directly impacts the child. It needs to be objective and impartial, and we are still working on how to overcome this problem. The truth is, it is still easier for us to stick to the old, traditional assessment, where we simply write down the grade and a comment. By the way, the New School Model, for the first time, made us select a few students from the class for individual assessment. For example, in one class, I focused most of my attention on a few students, thinking about what to write and how to work on this child. Cards and notes have helped us a lot—if they are created properly, it becomes easier to give a general, accurate assessment. I cannot say that our assessments are fully objective because we are still working on transitioning to a new approach" (Focus group of teachers).

Much of the discussion about formative assessment among teachers and school principals is based on competencies gained prior to the introduction of the New School Model. When giving examples, they frequently refer to tools and skills acquired through various projects, such as G-PriEd, the Leadership School organized by the Millennium Challenge Foundation, and the Basic Education Project. Accordingly, focus group participants mentioned using diagnostic assessments, evaluation sheets developed within these programs, and the Tangerine tool adopted during the Basic Education Project.

However, only a few teachers view complex assignments and the tools integrated into them as effective opportunities and key components of formative assessment. This is partly due to a lack of motivation to explore the specifics and advantages of working with complex tasks. Various barriers further hinder such efforts:

"This, of course, was not and is not a complete replacement for evaluation rubrics. However, when we explain to the child that the evaluation criteria are embedded in the complex task itself—within the conditions of that task—and emphasize this during presentations, to some extent the rubric is developed from there by the teacher. In fact, we call these evaluation criteria, and the student knows in advance what they are being evaluated on and what they need to address during the presentation. This somewhat resolves the issue because the student already knows, whether it's for formative or summative evaluation, what matters and what they should focus on. In this regard, these tasks are very interesting. That said, problems remain, and if resolved, everything would be perfect" (Focus group of teachers).

"I also like complex tasks, and I use them, but they require a lot of time for presentations. The only issue is that every student who worked on the task must make a presentation and receive formative assessment. With 25 students, this becomes very difficult" (Focus group of teachers).

"We still face challenges with assessments. Although we write evaluations and comments, the priority seems unclear—whether to focus on concepts, complex tasks, summative assessments, or formative evaluations. I still struggle with determining what I should prioritize" (Teacher).

11. Inappropriate use of Complex Assignments by teachers, fostering an environment that encourages tutoring

One problematic aspect of complex assignments is their reinforcement of private tutoring outside the classroom. Focus group discussions and comments revealed troubling connections between teachers and students outside of school, where highly qualified teachers use their expertise to tutor students privately. Although complex assignments in this context serve to strengthen the alternative education system, the way they shape teacher-student and teacher-parent interactions, along with the delegation of responsibilities to school administrators, can inadvertently support unethical practices by some teachers.

"In elementary school, the class teacher is often also the tutor for students in their class. I didn't have a tutor for my child in first or second grade, but this is a very bad trend," one parent stated (focus group of parents).

Another parent remarked, "It's a very good business... Unfortunately, due to my work situation, I had no one to help my child at home, so I had to turn to tutoring. But this is a disaster. Many primary school teachers rent spaces where they tutor half of their class. I'm talking about students from first to fourth grade, and the need only increases in the higher grades," (focus group of parents).

Another parent explained, "It's systemic—elementary school students go to their class teachers for tutoring, as well as for individual subject help. For instance, students preparing for physics often go to their own school teachers. The worst part is that if you go to a different tutor, not the one teaching the subject at school, it creates additional problems," (focus group of parents).

Parents also noted that complex tasks often imply a need for tutoring, as families contact tutors in advance for help with assignments. One parent shared, "It's already assumed in all complex tasks, because parents call the tutors ahead of time, saying, 'My child has this task, please help.' Then they work on it together," (parent focus group).

These practices highlight the ethical concerns tied to complex assignments, which, rather than fostering student independence, have led to an increased reliance on external, paid help, often provided by the child's own teachers. This trend raises significant concerns about equity and educational integrity.

12. An emphasis on visual effects rather than the cultivation of in-depth knowledge

Parents who are qualified to evaluate assessment criteria and judge their relevance have noted a preference for external or visual elements over the depth of content. This feedback suggests that the primary goals of complex tasks—such as reducing teacher intervention, stimulating students' metacognitive thinking, introducing constructivist approaches, and focusing on the task's educational content—are not being met. Instead, these aims are compromised by priorities embedded in the evaluation process for complex tasks.

"These assignments often involve drawing or decorations; some students are able to do this well, while others struggle. In the end, it breaks the child's heart when the teacher tells them it's okay to do what they can, but then evaluates it in front of the class," shared a parent (focus group of parents).

Another parent noted, "Our teacher likes our completed assignments and is often proud of them," indicating that visual appeal sometimes overshadows content (focus group of parents).

A teacher pointed out, "The reform focused on the process, which is very important, not just the end result. However, when teachers began posting students' work online, the reform encouraged this practice. It promised that the process was key, even if the student completed it at home with help from family. Eventually, it became more about the product. I believe teachers needed more support and resources to navigate this shift, as well as a more user-friendly portal, rather than inconvenient Word documents" (focus group of teachers).

13. Delegation of learning responsibilities to home environments instead of facilitating them at school

Parents' dissatisfaction centers not only on the volume of homework but also on the skills required to complete it—skills that, in practice, teachers and the curriculum often expect from parents. When parents lack the necessary skills, time, or resources, preparing their child for lessons becomes challenging. Complex tasks, rather than being prepared at school, are frequently assigned as homework, shifting the responsibility for instruction to the family. As a result, students often develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies for these assignments at home, usually with the help of family members. More often than not, it's parents or other family members, rather than students, who complete these tasks. The name "complex task" may itself contribute to this perception, as teachers, parents, and students tend to view it as a take-home assignment due to its label.

"A complex task is not a control writing; this class task is more than a homework assignment. The very word 'task' here, that's something that could be changed... Maybe 'task' was emphasized in the word 'complex,' making it difficult to put the task in simpler terms," explained one curriculum expert in an interview.

One parent highlighted the difficulty of managing these tasks at home: "The most important thing is that they work on it in class—whether it's a presentation or a complex assignment—so that they only need to draw or color at home. Mostly, they work on it in class, and I appreciate this because, otherwise, it's very difficult for me with three kids and so many presentations to handle."

Another parent described the added challenges with a new subject in third grade, saying, "We've added a new subject called 'Me and the Community,' where the teacher threw all the questions at us. I ended up explaining everything from start to finish to my child. This wasn't just a simple task; it took full collaboration between my child and me, with me doing most of the work. My child couldn't do it alone; it wasn't physically or intellectually possible without explanation."

An example of a complex assignment assigned to an eighth-grade student involved imagining a journey through the circulatory system, describing each detail. "The teacher gave this without a model or additional explanation and just opened the lesson with a question. Then he threatened to deduct points if the task wasn't completed correctly," recounted one parent. "Why doesn't the school offer more guidance? Where is the teacher's responsibility? Back in my day, we had models, even organ specimens, to understand things better. Now, they just read from the book and expect students to figure it all out."

14. Concerns regarding parental involvement

Parental involvement, which should be a supportive and positive component of the teaching-learning process, often takes on a distorted role within the context of complex assignments, directly impacting students' academic success. Discussions highlighted the challenges that parents face, such as time management issues, balancing support for their children, and navigating their own detailed involvement in educational tasks, including prior knowledge, preparation, and motivating their child. This situation amplifies social inequality among students, disadvantaging those with less familial support and placing them in unequal conditions. To address this, it's crucial to implement measures within schools that directly

support students—like remedial activities, after-school help, and subject clubs. However, initiating and activating such supportive programs often depends on political will and vision, which are not always emphasized within the school community.

One parent shared an example from last year, saying, “We had a case on complex waste processing. My child didn’t fully understand the recycling concepts at school and struggled to complete the assignment independently. I had to step in and work on everything with him. Later, the teacher questioned who wrote it, realizing the child couldn’t manage alone. The problem isn’t just one assignment; it’s about preparing the student better at school so they can complete future tasks independently” (focus group of parents).

Another parent expressed frustration over complex assignments, stating, “In the current semester, I haven’t had any complex tasks, but last year, I was dealing with complex tasks, which caused me migraines and stress” (focus group of parents). Parents also noted that many assignments were difficult for children to complete independently and often required substantial time, leading to more parental involvement than desirable: “In our case, there are tasks that are difficult for children to do independently, requiring a lot of time and often demanding parental support, sometimes more than desired” (focus group of parents).

One parent cited an example of an assignment where students had to “advertise a product and make a brochure.” They admitted, “I thought about it for a long time and ended up making the brochure myself because my child was anxious and didn’t want to turn in an incomplete task” (focus group of parents).

Teachers in the focus group observed that “more than half of complex tasks are completed by parents. We know parents who work on them day and night, and there was even a case where a student told the teacher, ‘I was sleeping; my mom did it’” (focus group of teachers).

15. The predominant role of parents, resulting in insufficient space for student initiatives

The challenge of complex tasks in education is multifaceted, as it reveals systemic issues with teaching practices, role expectations, and the fair evaluation of students. In particular, even when complex tasks are completed successfully, they often fail to align with the student’s own knowledge and skills due to heavy parental involvement. Parents face not only the pressure to help but sometimes the need to essentially teach their children to complete these tasks, requiring additional time and often specific teaching skills they may lack.

Interestingly, perspectives on parental involvement in these tasks vary within the school community. For some, like the school principal quoted, this involvement is seen as positive, reflecting a shared responsibility and fostering parent-child collaboration. The principal highlights that tasks done jointly by parents and children can be valuable, arguing, “It may have been in many cases that parents prepared the task. I don’t see anything wrong with that... the role of care, sharing responsibility, has positives.”

Conversely, others criticize this approach, arguing that complex tasks are often poorly suited for children’s age or development level and that involving parents distorts the intended learning outcomes. Some parents, for instance, feel that tasks like creating brochures or fables are beyond the independent capability of children at certain ages. A parent remarked, “The average child of this age is really beyond

the ability... to invent a story and a fable,” emphasizing that such assignments require advanced creative thinking that is challenging even for adults.

Furthermore, the grading of these tasks creates inequality. One parent shared their frustration, noting that work completed independently by their child was evaluated poorly in comparison to tasks completed with parental assistance: “If other parents draw, then at school the good, beautiful drawing of the parent is evaluated with a high mark, and my son's own work is evaluated with a low mark.”

These issues suggest that the role of complex assignments in assessing student abilities may need reconsideration. There is a call for schools to focus on creating in-school support systems, such as remedial programs and subject clubs, which could better prepare students without relying on parental assistance. Additionally, it indicates a need for assignments that better match students’ developmental stages and for fairer evaluation practices that consider the level of independence with which work is completed. Addressing these areas may help create a more equitable educational environment where students’ assessments reflect their abilities rather than the availability of parental support.

16. The direct replication of foreign educational models without consideration of the local context

Dissatisfaction of parents and teachers is often related to the tendency to transfer materials, approaches, and assessments based on existing international experience without considering the context. The main concern is related to the incompatibility of these models with the school culture, opportunities, and priorities of Georgia:

“Yes, it was very well formulated by my colleagues and I can't help but agree, I also think that the changes are very good, but these changes must be adapted to the society for which they are intended, this terminology often sounds very beautiful, but it is vague and practically difficult to implement, so, when some change is introduced, they should imagine who it is aimed at, which contingent, which society, and then make the changes... News Essay To translate it sometimes causes irritation, I think that they translated something and brought it in, so that it raises something somewhere, it is impossible that our mentality is not taken into account, colleagues mentioned, and what I know, let's see, we are hoping for a better future...” (teachers' focus group).

17. Inequities arising from varying levels of parental involvement

Many participants of our research study expressed opinions that, with the introduction of Complex Assignment, student inequality has increased, and the goal of providing equal opportunities has weakened. Students now depend more heavily on their parents’ time, intellect, educational background, involvement, motivation, and financial resources to complete complex tasks successfully. This reliance ultimately affects their ability to learn the subject. Evaluating students based on these tasks is often not objective and tends to reward the efforts of parents, family members, or private tutors rather than the student's own perseverance, knowledge, skills, and abilities..

“Then these complex tasks that parents draw for us mostly at home, right? I am categorically against this, I prefer him not to do it, than to do it myself, I have this principle, it turns out that I

oppress my son with this, because if other parents draw, then at school the good, beautiful drawing of the parent is evaluated with a high mark, and my son's own work is evaluated with a low mark" (parent).

"The mother gets involved in this task, she does it well, and what did her son learn? Those who don't have internet, those who don't have their mother standing by their side and their grandmother raising them, whose mother works day and night for a living wage and has three or four children, what should they do? Either he has to work or he has to study all over again, he just doesn't have time anymore. And, in general, you should first explain what the word complex means, and then write a complex task to the mothers..." (focus group of teachers).

18. Challenges related to the qualifications of Coaches

Coaches played a crucial role in implementing educational reforms, serving as an intermediary link between the Ministry of Education and schools. The reform's success relied heavily on their effectiveness. However, issues with coach qualifications, as acknowledged by reform planners, principals, and teachers, emerged as a significant challenge. While the number of coaches was determined based on school numbers, this approach fell short as the project expanded, and many coaches were selected despite known deficiencies in their qualifications, with the expectation that they would improve over time. Reform planners now view coach qualifications as one of the reform's critical shortcomings:

"That is, the intermediate link, whoever you call the coaches, and the coordinators, if they are half-ready and will grow in the process, hoping to work on themselves, I would not give these mandates; I would only give the mandate of cooperation to such people" (interview with an expert).

School principals have also expressed strong criticism of coaches, potentially due to their limited understanding of the reform at the outset and the Ministry's direct communication with teachers, which impacted the process overall:

"There are coaches. If the coaches do not understand themselves, they conduct training on issues they have barely grasped, and in such terrible Georgian that it's hard to understand whether it's Georgian or English. In the end, they told my teachers not to let Lia come in... Very few coaches knew the material well, which made it challenging to communicate to teachers who were already struggling with jargon-laden instructions" (interview, school principal).

Teachers were also affected by inconsistencies in coaches' approaches, creating confusion and increasing workload as they navigated conflicting information from different coaches:

"I think that everything goes through human resources in general, and in this case, the New School Model also depended on human resources, because one coach presented information in one way, another in a different way, leaving teachers to work through the contradictions" (interview, school principal).

There is also criticism among teachers, although more restrained. The lack of trust in some coaches' abilities, especially in cases where the teachers' experience or knowledge surpassed that of the coaches, led to irritation and occasional resistance:

"Isn't it the coach's duty to explain to the teacher what is new and unfamiliar to them? They introduce changes in such a way that no one has properly translated or understood them. A week ago, I finally understood what they were trying to accomplish... Unfortunately, I don't expect much from these changes—this is simply 'new for the sake of new' (focus group of teachers).

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the reform's effectiveness, as online meetings replaced in-person visits, which teachers found to be less effective and motivational:

"It would have been better if in-person visits to the rest of the schools had continued; the situation would have been better than what we have now, where 50 to 60 people are involved in online coaching. Few are genuinely motivated" (expert).

Overall, the issues with coach qualifications, the inconsistent delivery of reform content, and the pandemic's impact on training delivery have highlighted challenges in effectively implementing educational reforms.

19. Issues with individual contributions by students during group work on Complex Assignments, impacting their actual development of knowledge and competencies

It should be noted that complex tasks often had a group-oriented structure, meaning that students were required to complete these tasks as a team project. Participants in the study highlighted several issues that arose during group work, as well as the underutilization of the positive aspects that are typically associated with such collaborative efforts.

One teacher shared a frustration about how, despite being responsible for processing all the topics due to her strong English skills, the task was supposed to be a group effort. Instead, the group dynamics were unbalanced, with some students contributing very little, even though the tasks were ultimately completed:

"It was frustrating because I had to process all the topics, since I know English well, while others only contributed ideas. They worked physically while I worked mentally, and there were five children in the chat together, but only I saw the end result on Facebook, with Irma posting it. The children were busy, but the task was completed by me alone in English" (focus group of teachers).

A parent reflected on a similar issue with group assignments, emphasizing that an imbalanced group composition caused problems. While group work was intended to teach collaboration, the uneven distribution of responsibility meant that one student had to carry the load for the entire group. This led to frustration, particularly when the teacher failed to address the issue:

"About two years ago, my son had a group assignment where the teacher paired up kids who weren't motivated. My son had to do all the work—writing lines for four other students and recording a video. The others didn't even contribute, and since the responsibility was on my son, I spoke to the teacher. After that, there were no more group assignments, especially in that subject. I'm not saying group work wasn't needed, but the groups were poorly assigned. My son was more responsible, while others lacked interest and didn't care about his struggles. I didn't want him stressed out over schoolwork" (focus group of parents).

Another teacher pointed out that although group work can be a great idea, the way it is sometimes implemented causes frustration. The complexity of the task, coupled with the varying capabilities of students, made it difficult for many to succeed:

"This is a good idea, but it's delivered in such a complicated way that it sometimes causes frustration among teachers. The main difficulty arises when a large percentage of the class struggles to complete the task. If only 20% of the class can successfully complete the task, it can't be considered a successful practice. The reality is, in our context, if the task is manageable for a few but not the majority, it's not working" (focus group of teachers).

20. Incompatibility between the school budget and reform initiatives, along with a lack of appropriate funding for Complex Assignments

Although the motivation for schools to adopt the New School Model stemmed from the significant technical and infrastructural support provided to the pilot schools, especially during the initial stages of the reform, challenges remained concerning the execution of complex tasks. As previously noted, issues related to technology and internet access persisted. Additionally, both principals, teachers, and parents emphasized the school budget deficit, which meant that funds were insufficient to fully meet the demands of the reform, including the completion of complex tasks. As a result, in the absence of a dedicated school budget, the expenses related to these tasks were often covered by the personal finances of the school director or teachers. At the same time, parents made significant contributions to the process. The school budget and the budgeting process were not aligned with the curriculum, including the provision for teaching complex tasks.

"In elementary school, we had an official budget, and from the beginning, we were shopping and packing at school. You already know how it is, there is a teacher who demands that, yes, the school should at least give something from its budget" (Parent focus group).

21. Inadequate instruction from teachers during the preparation process for students completing Complex Assignments

Teachers did not provide adequate instruction for students to complete complex tasks. The instruction was often incomplete, particularly in terms of procedural guidance (such as time management, task division among group members) and content (including understanding key concepts, indigenous representations, and related textual content).

One parent noted: "It's good, we also like it, the child has to find out some issues related to this topic in more depth, but, I don't know, maybe it should take more time or more instructions. For example, the teacher should provide a plan outlining the specific steps that need to be taken. It just doesn't seem to work out as intended, and the children don't achieve the expected results."

Another parent shared: "Last year we had a case where the task was to process waste in nature. Even at school, the child didn't fully understand the purpose of recycling—like separating cardboard to produce

energy from it. When he was given the task, he couldn't complete it on his own, so I had to sit down and work with him. When he later brought it to school, the teacher said someone else must have written it for him. The teacher realized that the child couldn't handle it. But the issue isn't just that one task—it's the lack of follow-up to help prepare the student for the next task. There was no further guidance, and the same help was needed for the next complex task."

The teachers struggled to understand the stages through which a student should progress to complete a complex task. They couldn't provide adequate instructions, nor could they establish the right procedures and content to guide the task. This lack of step-by-step instruction and consistency, as well as inadequate guidance, were common issues in the implementation of complex tasks. This was evident in the discussions in parent-teacher focus groups.

A teacher explained: "A complex task, by nature, involves a combination of lessons, right? You need to break it down step by step, so that the child can perform the task independently, not with the help of a parent at home. In one lesson, we'll address part of the issue; in the next lesson, we'll discuss it more, and I'll explain the task itself. When the teacher introduces the topic, the task details should be given to the student immediately—what they need to do within the scope of the topic, so they feel motivated to do it. The success of this depends on the teacher's approach and how they deliver the information, because in every class, students have different abilities and skills, and not everyone will approach the task the same way."

22. A lack of connection between extracurricular activities and the teaching and learning processes;

In the context of the New School Model, with its emphasis on thematic planning, student-centered teaching, the constructivist approach, curriculum development, and complex task implementation, teachers highlighted the significance of integrating extracurricular activities into the educational process. They emphasized the need to use these activities for learning, cognitive, and developmental purposes. However, schools faced numerous challenges in planning, implementing, and integrating extracurricular activities, which hindered the achievement of the new model's goals. The issues surrounding extracurricular activities were related to conceptual, methodological, and content understanding, as well as infrastructural, financial, and logistical obstacles. This inadequate implementation negatively impacted the diversity of complex tasks and limited opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and competencies.

One parent explained: "Excursions should focus on more than just eating and drinking. These outings should carry a cognitive purpose and be closer to home. The children aren't interested in distant historic sites that don't resonate with them. For younger children, excursions to places like the Ikalto Academy become meaningless piles of stones. We need more age-appropriate educational excursions."

Another parent added: "Taking kids to the theater or on public transport to teach them traffic rules would diversify the learning process, making it more than just classroom lessons."

There was also a desire for increased collaboration with cultural institutions: "Since the second year, we've wanted stronger partnerships with theaters and museums. There should be projects and plays designed specifically for children's interests, and more consistent agreements with theaters could bring this to life."

Parents also cited examples from European systems, with one parent sharing: "I really like the European system. In Poland, my friend's children are regularly taken from school to cultural events and taught public behavior norms, which helps them develop these skills early."

23. A format that is technically and content-wise complicated.

Teachers found complex assignments, developed within rigidly formatted matrices or thematic plans, challenging to implement and understand. The structure of thematic planning itself was technically and conceptually difficult for teachers to navigate, leading to resistance toward both thematic planning and the execution of complex tasks. Additionally, frequent format changes posed significant technical obstacles, which further contributed to teachers' frustrations. One teacher expressed this sentiment:

"Complex assignments are very popular now, and it's great that everything is coordinated with a step-by-step plan for achieving goals. However, this good idea is delivered in such a complex format that, in my opinion, this is part of why some teachers have a negative attitude toward it..." (teacher focus group).

The Positive Effects of Complex Assignments

The content analysis of sources, in addition to identifying problems, shortcomings, and challenges, also revealed positive aspects related to the introduction of the new curriculum through complex tasks. However, some characteristics tied to the concept, vision, implementation process, and results of complex tasks, which were mentioned in a negative context, also include positive aspects. For example, these aspects include strengthening students' creative skills and imagination, fostering learning and teaching autonomy, enhancing independent decision-making, increasing resource versatility, and supporting teachers' professional development.

At the same time, issues and shortcomings are associated with the implementation phase, whereas positive experiences are connected to the goals, content, approaches, and student orientation, contributing to their real development in knowledge and skills. Below are some positive experiences related to complex tasks identified in the study.

1. Focus on Knowledge and Skills Development

Analysis of focus groups and interviews shows that the school community clearly recognizes the potential for students to gain complex knowledge through complex tasks and experience the development of "soft" skills. Complex tasks promote interdisciplinary knowledge, strengthen connections between subjects, and foster interpersonal skills, such as communication, audience engagement, presentation skills, argumentative reasoning, and critical analysis in the process of completing tasks.

"There were instances where students gathered with me, with their families, or outside of school. Recently, fifth graders had a complex task in history, where they chose topics themselves about

the sights of Samegrelo. The students worked in groups of three on topics they selected. In our case, they focused on the Dadiani Museum Complex. The children organized the outing independently. We managed the technical aspect of recording the video, ensuring that when the children spoke, we only recorded without interfering. We weren't even allowed to participate in editing. The children edited the videos themselves" (Teachers' focus group);

"Each subject has specific knowledge, but skills as a subject area cover general aspects. Once a student has some knowledge level, they are free to develop skills, which these complex tasks encourage. Complex tasks don't focus on just one subject; as students work on one topic, they need to develop many additional skills and gather knowledge that contributes to informal learning. They apply this knowledge in contexts useful to them" (School Director);

"Summing up these individual cases is hopeful if the approach continues as discussed, with adequate support. The reform has introduced various engaging skills and skill development tasks. Although not perfect, it increases student engagement and motivation to participate. Even if students learn incidentally through these processes and while planning engaging activities, it is beneficial. The ability to present is crucial, yet many people lack it. These types of assignments effectively build that skill along with many others, and if the approach is maintained, results should follow" (Teachers' focus group).

2. Integration of life experiences and practical applications

Another positive aspect is the connection of complex tasks with real, authentic experiences, which enhances the practical application of knowledge. These assignments focus not only on providing students with life-important knowledge but also on encouraging them to put this knowledge into practice during the learning process.

"Yes, students are more interested in the practical side than the theoretical, especially when they are directly involved in the process. It becomes more engaging and creative for them. However, when we approach theory or more challenging material, naturally, they show less enthusiasm. But, when the tasks are enriched with fun activities, their engagement and interest increase. Of course, some of it is very challenging; it's still difficult for us to involve all students and lead them to results with complex tasks" (Teachers' focus group).

3. Enhancement of communication and audience management skills

Complex tasks allow students to share their work, opinions, visions, and actions with an audience, which is another positive aspect.

"By the way, there are fewer complex tasks this year, and group work has become more prominent. In previous years, group tasks worked very well, and what I appreciate most about group work is that it fosters a different kind of communication among children. It's friendlier, and they get to know each other better and help one another, which is something that is lacking in this generation" (Parents' focus group);

"I truly like the idea of these complex tasks, the involvement, teamwork, and collaboration they require" (Parents' focus group);

"Complex tasks are very useful. They usually do them in subjects like English, Citizenship, and Georgian. Apart from learning teamwork and cooperation, students also practice different forms of communication, and if you ask me, they handle it well on their own" (Parents' focus group).

4. An engaging process that fosters student motivation

The motivation and high involvement of students in completing complex tasks are frequently discussed. For interested students, complex tasks present a pleasant and interesting challenge, providing them with various means for developing, creating knowledge, and applying it in practice.

"When students give presentations, yes, sir. 'Micro,' Isa... they watched it in a small cinema and then viewed their project on the big screen to see their work from a different perspective" (Teachers' focus group);

"The children are so self-motivated and active—it's a kind of creativity. They share ideas and thoughts with each other, which I find very effective based on their reactions, motivation, and determination. It's interesting, they remember things better, and there's more critical thinking involved than with textbooks, which can be overwhelming with information. Complex tasks combine various types of knowledge, and you can see their interest from their actions. I think it's very beneficial" (Parents' focus group);

"Maya answered a question and mentioned how, in her classes, she is very satisfied, as the students are highly motivated. I would add that complex tasks are like mini-projects, right? They're classroom-type projects, and teaching results from these projects are not new; they're quite well-established and provide better outcomes for students. Project-based or complex tasks give better results in all areas. Nino has done well in imparting the skills she teaches, along with motivation. Students are more engaged and happy when they work on projects like these" (Teachers' focus group).

5. Cultivation of a cooperative culture

Although the effective implementation of complex tasks was often hindered by the low level of cooperation between departments and teachers, research participants noted that the process itself facilitated the establishment of a collaborative culture. Teachers and schools began to work together, and the school community increasingly recognized collaboration as an essential part of school life. Therefore, within the context of Complex Assignments, study participants viewed the gradual formation of a cooperative culture as a positive development. Teachers highlighted improving cooperation trends, including reasoning, planning, sharing experiences, discussing results, and creating joint work for complex tasks.

"I'll go back to that New School Model. The only tangible thing it achieved was fostering mutual cooperation. Teachers had an individualistic attitude; everyone acted independently and thought,

'it's me only.' Now, there's more collaboration among departments. I worked for 30 years before this, and I know how things were. Teachers worked in isolation, sometimes fearing that if they excelled, it would overshadow others. But now, for the school's prestige, teachers are more committed—whether it's fulfilling their duties or going beyond them to enhance the school's reputation" (Focus group of teachers).

6. Access to methodological and educational resources for teachers

Teachers highlighted the abundance of resources and the increased interest in using them, which the transition to complex tasks had brought. They appreciated the materials for enabling the planning and delivery of engaging lessons, which they considered a novelty in the school education system.

"They offer us many complex tasks with very interesting materials. There's a lot to choose from. Personally, I adapt the materials to my classes, aligning them with the students' general level and abilities. This process is still being introduced, but I believe that after two or three years, it will be well-balanced" (Teachers' focus group);

"We are creating resources. Personally, I have started developing a beginner's guidebook with various activities. I'm not sure how much I will achieve, but my goal is to create a resource that can be passed down for use by future generations of elementary students" (Teachers' focus group).

7. Increased freedom for students to express their opinions

Research participants believed that the nature of complex tasks fosters free thinking and encourages students to express their opinions more openly. These tasks provide opportunities for students to articulate their views, support them with well-reasoned examples, engage in debates, and defend their perspectives. This was seen as a direct benefit of complex tasks.

"What I appreciate most is how beneficial this is for the student. They have the opportunity to express their opinion, even if it is unacceptable to me or others. As long as they defend it with arguments, it demonstrates independent thinking. This freedom of expression, even during exams, allows students to share their views from a personal angle, giving them and the teacher a sense of liberation. These are new shifts in education, enabling individuals to think, judge, and express themselves" (School principal).

8. Ability to respond effectively to students' needs

Thematic planning and complex assignments gave teachers more opportunities to respond to students' needs, interests, and abilities and to consider the context of their students, class, and school in the case of assignments. The flexibility of thematic teaching and complex tasks provided opportunities for teachers to do this, provided these possibilities were well understood, and the teacher planned the appropriate learning process and complex tasks, taking into account the needs, interests, and abilities of the students. Research participants discuss this important issue and emphasize this positive aspect of complex tasks:

"From the third grade, he taught me and society, and from the fifth grade, the one who became the head of the class taught our Georgia, now citizenship, you know how it is? He introduced a modern style, but look now, I will make a parallel. He introduced it in such a dose that it is not annoying for me, see, I have it equally. I have a presentation, I may have a diagram, something to do, and many times in the program, what is assigned, the page can be turned and so on. Something to do, something that is fun for the kids. Here, I like the involvement of teachers in this dose, when, yes, they can close their eyes to the program, ignore the program, and do what is acceptable for that particular class" (School principal).

9. Promotion of student cooperation and peer education

The development of a culture of cooperation between departments and teachers, as well as mutual cooperation among students, and peer education, was identified by study participants as a positive outcome related to complex tasks. As complex tasks were often performed in groups, which had their own shortcomings, challenges, and disadvantages, there was still a positive side that helped build a culture of cooperation among students and a culture of peer education, which was perceived as a positive element in the school community:

"The thing I want to touch on about the complex task is that some of the complex tasks that are done in the classroom, here's what you mentioned, when they did group work on Halloween, the thing is that some of the tasks that can be done alone... a child can't handle it alone, or it can be very boring and difficult. In group work, these complex tasks can be completely overcome, and in general, there is something to do within the group. When it's divided into groups, it's good that teachers do it in group work. Very often, they will use and work in pairs because, when the task is a bit difficult, after giving suitable instructions, it is possible to do something in groups and overcome it. Some child is good at something, some child is not good at something, and accordingly, ideas are generated. Someone will come up with something, so some kind of joint work will come out" (Focus group of teachers).

"By the way, there are no more complex ones this year, and group work has come to the fore. There were group works in previous years, and they worked very well. What I like most about group work is that children develop a different kind of communication with each other. They are better, friendlier, and, in a way, know each other better, get to know each other better, and help each other, which is very lacking in this generation" (Focus group of teachers).

10. Greater utilization of technology in both classroom and home environments

The research revealed the inadequate readiness of schools in terms of technology, despite steps taken by the Ministry's leadership. As a result, the performance of complex tasks was transferred to students' families, although in some cases, unfavorable situations were observed here as well. Despite this problem, the study clearly identified the active use of technology in the learning process, both in the classroom and generally in school and at home, to complete complex tasks. This change and greater inclusion of technology in the educational process was positively evaluated by participants in the study:

"In terms of technology, they are used even more often in the senior class. For example, the teacher slowly introduces it to the first-grade student and gets them used to it. For example, once a week, they teach Georgian, mathematics, alphabet, etc., using the computer. Even more often with the senior class, because it has more subjects and the projector knows well what it is. For example, in the first grade, you know, mother, the teacher hung a piece of paper on the blackboard and played a movie there. Little by little, these technologies will also be involved" (Parent).

"I just can't imagine how this is possible without technology and how anyone can do it if they can. Here's how we do it: I can now share the screen with you, roughly how. Here, we used the classroom actively for complex tasks. The complex tasks, the matrices themselves, are put by the teachers in the class folder with their virtual classes, and the complex tasks are performed here in this classroom. This year, we were also lucky. This year, the Ministry gave us 25 new computers after a long effort. Now there is one computer laboratory for a school with 180 children, where there are 25 computers. It is enough for them to come in and work on those complex tasks on the spot" (Interview with the school principal).

11. Flexibility and provision of unlimited time for task completion

Both teachers and coaches identified time flexibility as an advantage of complex assignments compared to the process of planning and implementing standard lessons. Teachers focused on exhausting the topic and developing relevant knowledge, competencies, and skills for students, in contrast to the formal 45-minute lesson process, which had more restrictions regarding time allocation. This positive trend was evident in interviews with coaches and focus groups of teachers:

"I would say that it is framed in different ways; otherwise, we would have done the same thing. For example, I told you that I have 45 years of work experience. I said, 'You want a character map, you want to continue the story, you want whatever you want; we did everything, but separately.' The best thing about this complex is that it is not in time. We are burning," I say these words vulgarly. In slang, more precisely, we don't run out of time because I can exceed the time until we exhaust, step by step, this issue of access to children" (Focus group of teachers).

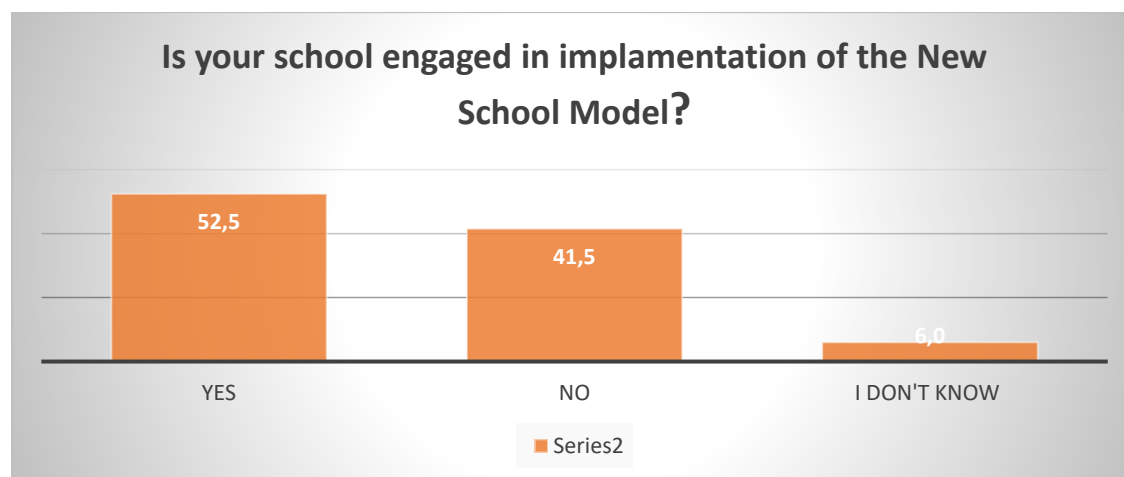
To sum, It can be noted that, despite the many problems and challenges associated with complex tasks, overall, they were one of the important components that schools and teachers successfully implemented in the first task of the New School Model: "Development and implementation of school curriculum based on constructivist educational principles." Compared to the other two components—developing new school curricula and introducing formative assessments—complex tasks were easier to implement. While working on complex tasks, many shortcomings were identified, but the concept was acceptable to the school community. If the shortcomings identified during implementation are addressed, the use of complex tasks in the educational process could become an important step forward.

Chapter 8. Teacher's Survey Results

In the teacher questionnaire, we mainly used a 5-point Likert scale to assess attitudes and experiences. The survey also included nominal scales with "Yes/No" options. Additionally, teachers were asked several optional open-ended questions that did not impact the completion quality control of the questionnaire. All other questions required responses, and only by responding to the latter could participants be processed to the next page. Overall, the survey covered a broad spectrum of topics related to educational reform, including curriculum changes, professional development, technology use, and evaluation issues.

As noted, n=631, out of which 331 (52.5%) teachers were from schools involved in the New School Model, 262 (41.5%) were from non-participating schools, and 38 (6.0%) could not specify/did not know if their school was involved in the implementation of the New School Model. This distribution of responses among teachers is informative regarding their participation in school life.

Figure 13. Participating Teachers by New School Model Involvement

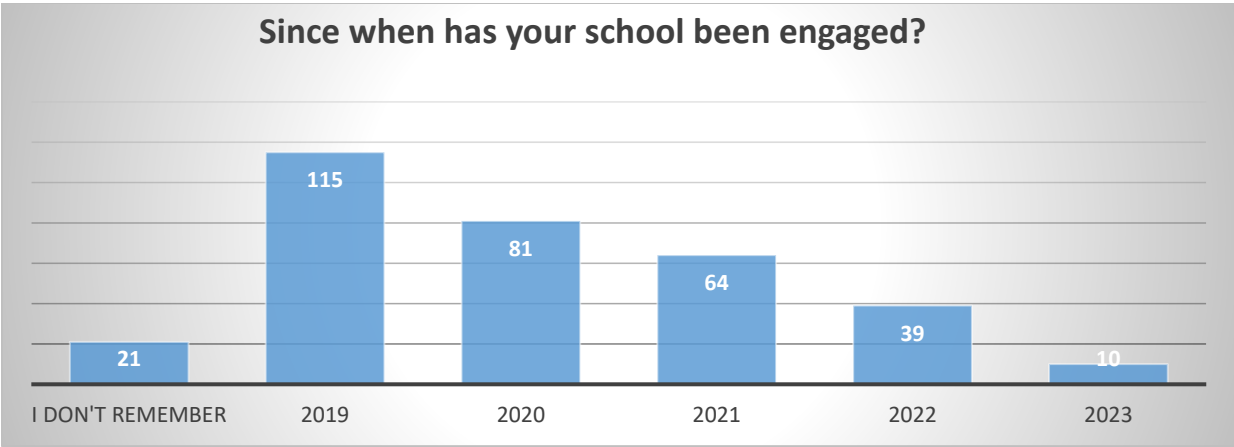


Among the surveyed teachers, the largest proportion, over 36.9%, falls upon those who have been teaching in a school involved in the New School Model since 2019, the first year of implementation. More specifically, teachers are distributed by the year of joining the New School Model reform as follows:

- In 2019 - 115 teachers (36.9%)
- In 2020 - 81 teachers (26.0%)
- In 2021 - 64 teachers (20.5%)
- In 2022 - 39 teachers (12.5%)
- In 2023 - 10 teachers (1.6%)

If we analyze responses across all surveyed teachers, more than half, including those who reported their school was involved in the implementation process, cannot specify the year of their school's involvement.

Figure 14. Participating Teachers by Stages of Joining the New School Model



Regarding the type of location where teachers live/work, 421 teachers (66.7%) work in city schools, 189 (30.0%) in rural schools, and 21 (3.3%) in schools located in small towns. This distribution of surveyed teachers by location more or less aligns with the national distribution indicators by region. The teacher distribution in city, rural, and small-town schools, according to New School Model implementation statistics, shows proportions consistent with the overall status at the final stage of the reform.

Table 9. Participating Teachers by New School Model Involvement and Type of Settlement

| Is the school involved in implementing the New School Model? | | | |
|--|-----|-----|------------|
| | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| City | 61% | 33% | 6% |
| Rural | 31% | 63% | 6% |
| Small town | 71% | 29% | 0% |

Based on professional status, the participating teachers are distributed as follows: 45 (7.1%) are mentors, 206 (32.6%) are lead teachers, 354 (56.1%) are senior teachers, 12 (1.9%) without a status, 5 (0.8%) are practitioners, and 9 (1.4%) are candidate teachers. Although the survey was conducted through a convenient selection method and did not involve stratification by professional status and maturity, it was considered significant to mention status in the context of demographic information as support to the analysis of teachers’ opinions. However, due to the sampling method, interpreting the results demographically was not considered appropriate.

Teacher Profiles

At the beginning of the survey, we asked teachers to describe their professional development opportunities, both within and outside the education system, specifically in connection with the new curriculum implementation. Teachers were asked if they had received professional training related to the new curriculum. It turned out that approximately 30% of surveyed teachers (189) had not undergone any such training. Among those who had, a variety of responses regarding the type of training provider, the training was offered was as follows:

Table 10. Types of Professional Development Activities

| Type of Activity/Provider | Number of Teachers |
|--|--------------------|
| Training organized by the Teacher Professional Development Center | 138 |
| Training organized by the Ministry's New School Model implementation group | 265 |
| School-organized internal professional development activities | 102 |
| University-organized programs | 62 |
| Workshops and seminars organized by NGOs or international organizations | 71 |

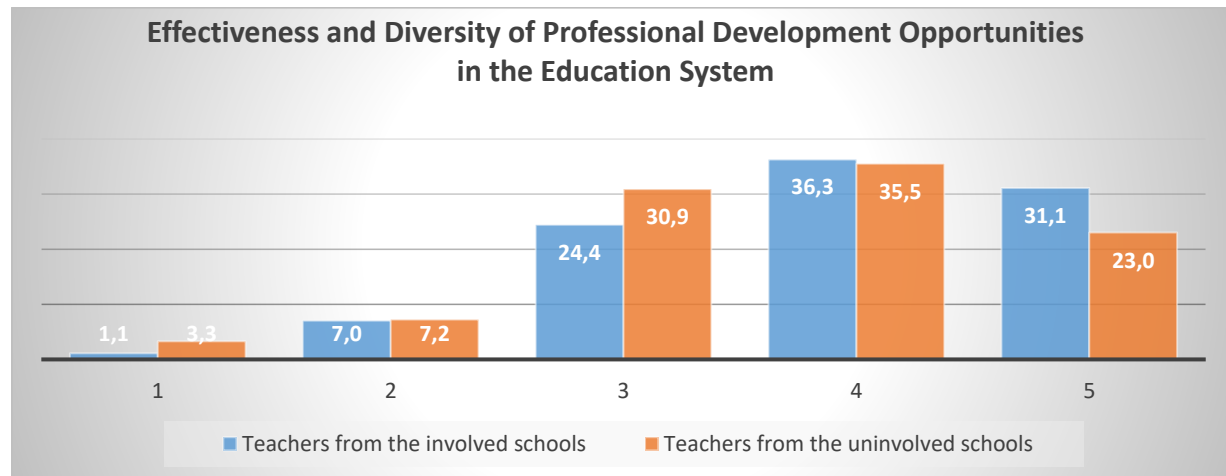
The types of professional development activities mentioned by the surveyed teachers included the following areas: developing complex assignments, designing school curricula, implementing and monitoring curriculum processes, revising and developing curricula, utilizing ministry-provided resources, creating websites, developing complex assignment plans and tasks, creating thematic matrices, teaching strategies, subject methodologies, inclusive education approaches, differentiation of students, entrepreneurial skills, technology integration and use in the educational process, case-based teaching, project-based learning, data analysis, pedagogical action research, classroom management, child rights and conventions, education for sustainable development, implementing sustainable development principles in teaching, critical-thinking-oriented strategies, bullying prevention, media literacy, planning of complex tasks, establishing a collaborative school culture, gender issues in education, cyberbullying prevention through school community engagement, fostering critical thinking, and using formative assessment in teaching.

Additionally, certain programs and competencies were cited as types of activities, or activities that did not specify the aspect of professional development they addressed, including the "60-credit teacher retraining program," "career advancement scheme," "teacher professional standard," "improving the quality of teaching," "training of lead teachers," "familiarization with the third-generation plan structure," and "lectures, seminars, context-based examples."

Of the 442 teachers who participated in various professional development activities, nearly 55% believe that the professional support they received for curriculum planning was either fully adequate or sufficient.

Regarding teachers' opinions based on involvement in the New School Model, the distribution of responses reflects differences in perceived effectiveness and diversity of professional development opportunities.

Figure 15. Effectiveness and Diversity of Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers in Schools Involved and Not Involved in the New School Model



Although over a third of teachers in both groups rate the effectiveness and diversity of professional development opportunities at 4 out of 5 maximum points, a significant difference appears in the maximum 5-point ratings and the neutral 3-point ratings. Teachers in schools not involved in the New School Model are less likely to rate the effectiveness and diversity of professional development opportunities at the maximum five points.

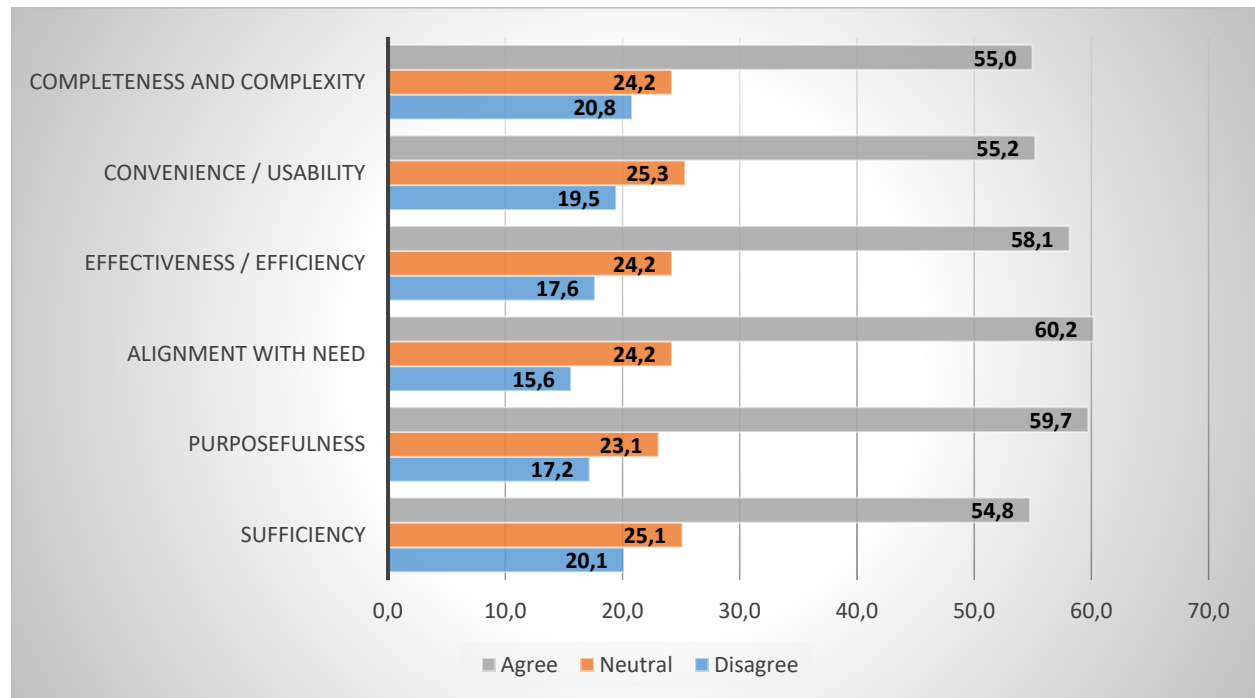
Teachers were also asked to evaluate the professional development activities across several aspects (adequacy, relevance, alignment with needs, effectiveness, convenience, completeness, and complexity). Teachers' responses show a high or very high frequency of agreement, with more than 60% of participating teachers positively evaluating the alignment of activities with their needs.

Table 11. Evaluation of Professional Development Programs

| <i>On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the professional support you received according to the following aspects ("1" meaning practically insignificant, and "5" meaning transformative)</i> | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Professional Development Aspects | Strongly Disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly Agree (%) |
| Adequacy | 3.6 | 16.5 | 25.1 | 32.6 | 22.2 |
| Relevance | 2.0 | 15.2 | 23.1 | 30.1 | 29.6 |
| Alignment with Needs | 3.2 | 12.4 | 24.2 | 29.0 | 31.2 |
| Effectiveness | 2.9 | 14.7 | 24.2 | 31.4 | 26.7 |
| Convenience | 4.1 | 15.4 | 25.3 | 25.3 | 29.9 |
| Completeness and Complexity | 4.5 | 16.3 | 24.2 | 28.7 | 26.2 |

The chart below combines responses where teachers rated aspects as either 4 or 5, as well as 1 or 2. The distribution of responses is as follows:

Figure 16. Evaluation of Professional Development Programs by Low and High Ratings



Furthermore, teachers were asked to rate their access to external professional development opportunities on a scale from 1 to 5, where a rating of 4 meant sufficient and 5 meant fully adequate access according to their needs. The question was framed as follows: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your access to external professional development opportunities ("1" meaning practically insignificant and "5" meaning complete access)?" Notably, over 65% of teachers believe their access to external professional development opportunities is either adequate or fully adequate in meeting their needs. Simultaneously, 63.5% of teachers rated the professional development opportunities provided within the education system (e.g., by the ministry and its affiliated organizations) with a score of 4 or 5 regarding their effectiveness and diversity.

Teachers' self-assessment of their professional readiness is generally high. There is not much difference in their evaluations of the specific teaching directions listed in the questionnaire. On the other hand, the standard deviation varies across different components of readiness, as do the mean and variance (spread).

More specifically:

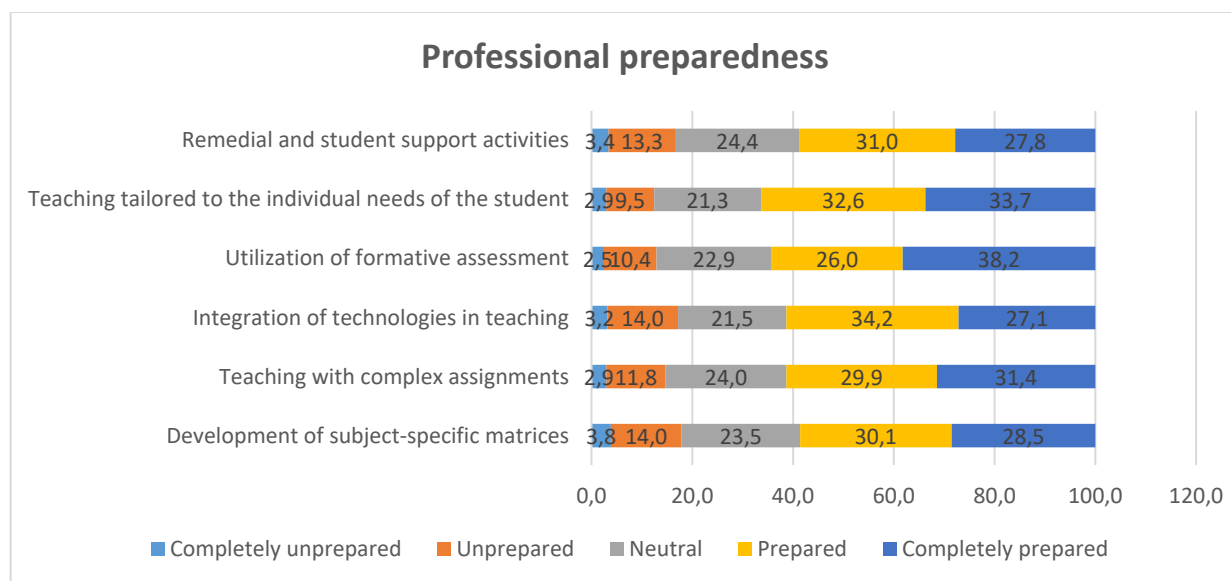
- **Development of subject matrices** – Mean value of 3.65, which indicates that teachers rate their professionalism highly, while the variance (1.311) shows variation in responses. The standard deviation (1.145) also suggests that responses are not entirely consistent.

- **Teaching through complex tasks** – Mean of 3.75, also indicating a positive self-assessment of readiness, though differences are evident (variance 1.234). The standard deviation (1.109) further indicates variation in responses.
- **Integration of technology in teaching** – Mean of 3.68, showing readiness and a generally high self-perception, though overall lower than the previous two areas. The standard deviation (1.111) suggests that some participants are less certain about their readiness than others.
- **Use of formative assessment** – Mean of 3.87, which is the highest self-assessment. However, the standard deviation (1.112) confirms differences in responses.
- **Teaching tailored to individual student needs** – Mean of 3.85, the second-highest self-assessment. This area shows the highest consistency in responses (St.D 1.083, variance 1.174).
- **Remedial and supportive activities for students** – Mean of 3.67, also high but not as high as in other areas. The standard deviation (1.119) once again confirms differences among teachers' self-assessment scores.

Thus, the highest self-assessments were recorded in "formative assessment" and "teaching tailored to individual student needs." Lower and medium self-assessments, as indicated by standard deviation and variance measures, suggest areas for improvement, particularly in developing subject matrices and implementing remedial and support activities.

For a more illustrative comparison of differences, the following chart shows that between one-quarter and one-third of teachers believe they have very high professional readiness across all of the above-listed components of teaching.

Figure 17. Self-evaluation of teachers about the own professional readiness



We considered it important to observe teachers' self-assessment of their professional readiness in connection with other variables, specifically their perception of professional development opportunities available in the education system (activities and events organized by the ministry and its associated legal entities). In this specific analysis, professional development opportunities rated on a 5-point scale for their

effectiveness and diversity were treated as the dependent variable. The selected aspects of self-assessed professional readiness were treated as independent variables. Data from the regression model confirm significant differences in teachers' evaluation of professional support activities ($R\text{-square} = 0.179$, $p < 0.001$). The multiple regression model explains 17.9% of the variance ($R\text{-square} = 0.179$), indicating the effectiveness and diversity of professional development opportunities. The main predictors identified were readiness for complex tasks and formative assessment. Other aspects of professional readiness, such as technology integration, subject matrices, individual student needs, and support activities, emerged as less influential predictors.

The ANOVA results further validate the high statistical significance of the regression model ($F(6, 435) = 15.825$, $p < 0.001$). The model indicates that the predictors, taken together, reliably forecast the outcome variable.

Based on the coefficients, two predictors show a statistically significant positive relationship with two aspects, specifically: professional readiness for teaching through complex tasks ($\beta = .198$, $p = .048$) and readiness to use remedial and support activities ($\beta = .211$, $p = .014$). Interestingly, professional readiness for formative assessment usage is negatively associated with the outcome, though this connection is not statistically significant ($\beta = -.182$, $p = .056$).

Correlation analysis shows that all predictors are in a statistically significant positive correlation with the assessment of the effectiveness and diversity of professional development opportunities in the education system ($r = .318$ to $r = .385$, $p < .001$). However, specific statistical data indicate that, while each aspect of professional readiness is positively associated with the perceived effectiveness of professional development opportunities, the overall predictive power is relatively low.

We separately analyzed the opinions of teachers in schools involved and not involved in the New School Model, which allowed us to see how school involvement impacts teachers' perceptions of system support and their professional readiness. For this analysis, we used an independent samples T-test and Levene's test to assess variance equality. The results for each type of professional activity are as follows:

Professional readiness for creating educational resources: Results show a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of perceived readiness to create educational resources ($t(591) = 5.730$, $p < .001$). The average difference between the groups is 0.419, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.275, 0.562]. This indicates that teachers in schools involved in the New School Model have a significantly higher self-assessment of their readiness in this area.

The same result applies to **readiness for developing subject matrices** ($t(420) = 2.728$, $p = .007$), with a mean difference of 0.309 and confidence interval [0.086, 0.531]; **using complex tasks in teaching** ($t(420) = 2.944$, $p = .003$), with a mean difference of 0.323 and confidence interval [0.107, 0.539]; and **readiness for technology integration** ($t(420) = 2.969$, $p = .003$), with a mean difference of 0.327 and confidence interval [0.111, 0.544]. In all three areas of professional activity, teachers in schools involved in the New School Model report higher self-assessments.

No significant difference was found for **readiness for using formative assessment** ($t(420) = 0.677$, $p = .499$), with a mean difference of 0.076, confidence interval [-0.144, 0.295]. Similarly, no significant

difference was observed in **self-assessment of readiness for student-centered teaching** based on school status ($t(420) = 1.452$, $p = .147$), with a mean difference of 0.158 and confidence interval [-0.056, 0.372]. This means that both groups rate their readiness similarly in these professional activities.

The same holds true for **readiness for implementing student support and remedial activities**, where no significant difference was found between teachers in schools involved in the New School Model and those in non-participating schools ($t(420) = 1.382$, $p = .168$). The mean difference is 0.156, with a confidence interval of [-0.066, 0.379].

Thus, the study results indicate that teachers' self-assessments differ in their readiness to implement professional activities that are directly related to the main focus areas of the New School Model. Professional activities representing general competencies of teachers, which have been key components of professional development activities even before the implementation of the New School Model, do not show differences in self-assessment based on school status.

The study also analyzes teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy in schools involved in implementing the New School Model compared to those in non-participating schools. According to the independent T-test results, perceptions of professional autonomy in the teaching process significantly differ between teachers in participating and non-participating schools, with a statistically significant difference ($t(629) = 4.336$, $p < 0.001$), where teachers involved in the New School Model report more positive results.

Using ANOVA, we also examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy and their self-assessed readiness for implementing constructivist approaches. The analysis shows that positive self-assessment of readiness for integrating constructivist approaches significantly predicts teachers' sense of autonomy in the teaching process. This relationship is statistically significant, though its practical significance is relatively low. Specifically, the model is statistically significant as follows ($F(1, 629) = 18.801$, $p < 0.001$).

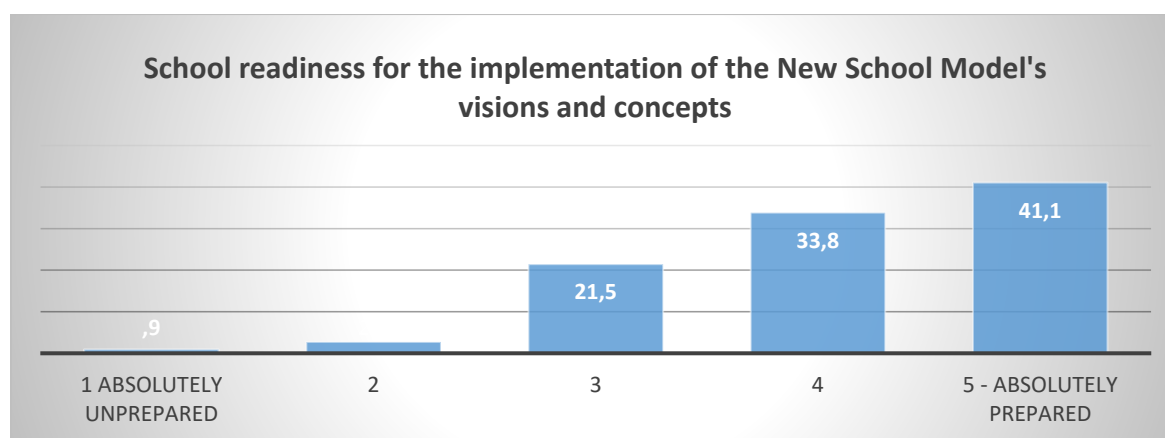
Overall, from the list of professional activities offered, we analyzed teachers' readiness to integrate constructivist approaches and formative assessment in relation to autonomy. The analysis confirms a link between teachers' self-assessed readiness for these professional activities and their perceived increase in autonomy. However, the statistical results indicate the influence of many other factors (not included in the specific statistical model) that likely play a significant role in shaping teachers' perception of autonomy.

These results underscore the complexity of teacher autonomy and its relationship with various aspects of educational reform, indicating that motivation for implementing new approaches is connected to autonomy. However, this is only part of the picture. Other factors, such as school culture, leadership styles, political environment, and individual teacher characteristics, likely also play an important role in defining and perceiving teacher autonomy.

As shown below, autonomy in the teaching profession as a dependent variable and various dimensions of professional readiness as influencing factors reveal that **P is significant**³, meaning the professional readiness factor significantly impacts teachers' perception of autonomy in the learning process. This implies that the **p-value** shows a statistically significant relationship between professional readiness and teacher autonomy. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ("Sig. (2-tailed) = .000"), it confirms that professional readiness significantly affects teachers' perception of autonomy.

We also deemed it important to determine how teachers assess their school's readiness to implement the visions and concepts of the New School Model. Accordingly, this question was posed to teachers working in schools involved in the model's implementation. The frequency distribution of teachers' responses shows that nearly 75% rate their school's readiness highly, giving a score of 4 or the maximum of 5.

Figure 18: School readiness for the implementation of the New School Model's visions and concepts



The following question aimed to determine how important teachers consider the visions and concepts of the comprehensive education reform for their school. Approximately the same number of teachers view the reform as important for their school. Teachers' responses to the

questions—"On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your school's readiness to implement the visions and concepts of the New School Model?" and "How would you rate the relevance of the New School Model's visions and concepts to your school's needs on a scale of 1 to 5?"—show a mean value (Mean) of 4.11 for both questions; the standard error of the mean is .049, the mode is 5, and the median is 4.00. A slight difference is visible in the standard deviation of responses (0.893 vs. 0.897) and in the variance (0.798 vs. 0.805), with the school's readiness being slightly more variable. However, the difference is not significant enough to necessitate independent interpretation.

The questionnaire included a question to investigate teachers' perceptions of the declared aspects of the comprehensive education reform. Teachers were asked to rate each aspect's importance for their school on a 5-point scale. These factors include:

³ P denotes the p-value, a statistical measure used in hypothesis testing to determine the significance of the results.

1. Development and implementation of a school curriculum based on constructivist educational principles;
2. Integration of digital technologies in the teaching and learning process;
3. Development of effective school management approaches;
4. Creation of an assessment system that supports advancement and development.

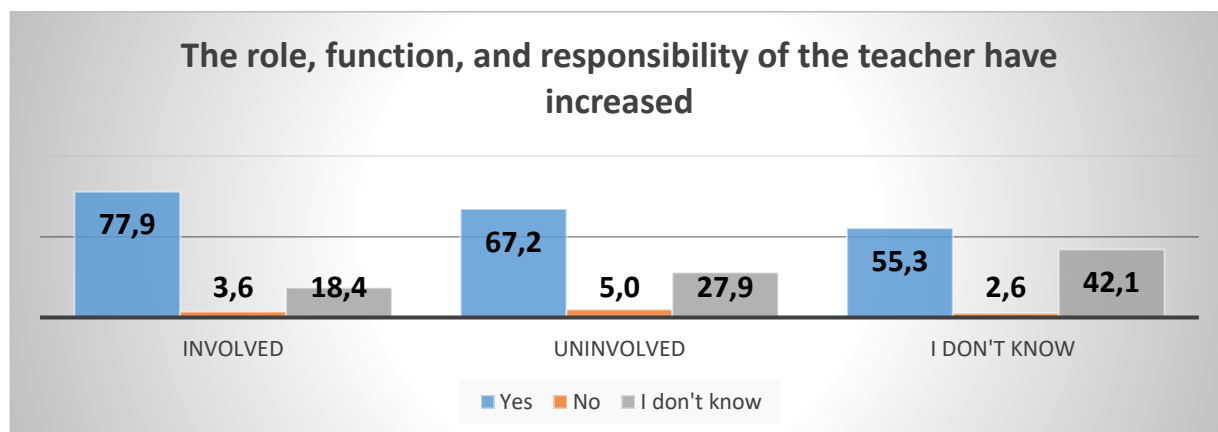
To determine the internal consistency of each factor, we used **Cronbach's alpha**. According to the results, the agreement achieved for the four factors is extremely high, indicating that teachers' responses in rating these factors are highly consistent. The very high reliability score for these four factors (Cronbach's alpha = 0.971) suggests that teachers' evaluations are not only consistent but also demonstrate high internal agreement in measuring the same underlying factor (comprehensive education reform).

Teacher Autonomy

The survey showed that 72% of respondents believe that their role, function, and responsibility have increased in implementing the national curriculum activities since the reform began, while only 4% think otherwise. However, 23% of teachers responded that they do not know. Meanwhile, 79.9% of teachers are satisfied with the increase in their role, function, and responsibility, while 20.1% are not. Notably, no teacher chose the "don't know" option in the satisfaction question, clearly expressing their attitude toward the increased role, function, and responsibility.

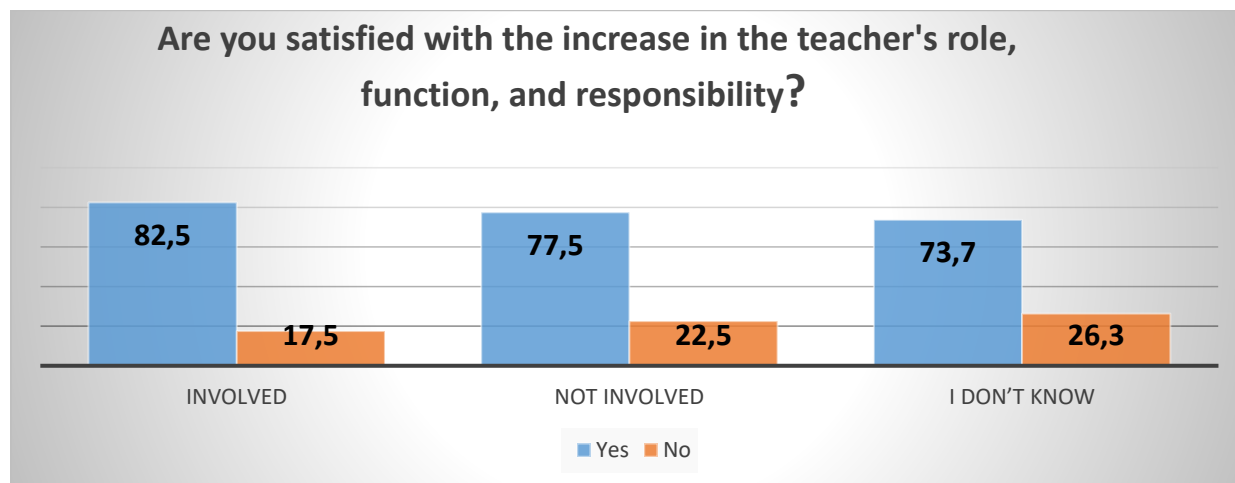
When we look at the same data broken down by teachers in schools involved and not involved in the reform, the frequency trends in responses are the same, despite some variation in the distribution of "yes," "no," and "don't know" responses. However, those teachers who are unaware of their school's status in relation to the New School Model are more likely to not see an increase in their role, function, and responsibility.

Figure 196: Teachers' perception of their own responsibility in the schools by the status



On the other hand, regarding satisfaction, teachers in schools not involved in the New School Model or those who do not know the status of their school are more often dissatisfied with the increase in their role and function.

Figure 20: Teachers' satisfaction with their role by the school status



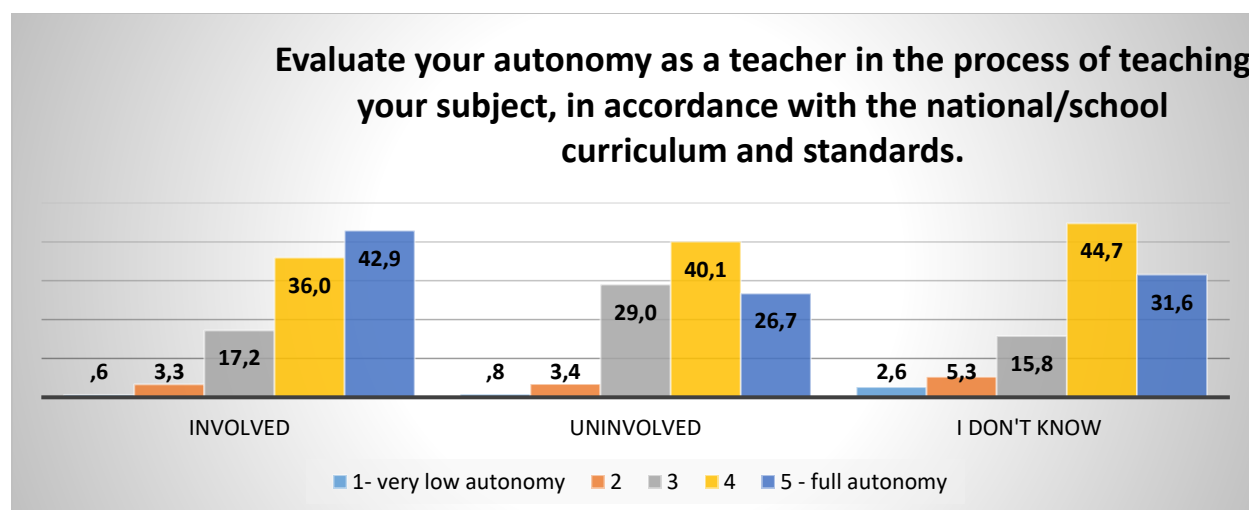
We used **chi-square analysis** to examine the relationship between the increase in teachers' role, function, and responsibility and their satisfaction. The results confirm a significant association between these two categorical variables (Value = 114.068a, Df=2, $p = .000$). Both Pearson's chi-square and the likelihood ratio test (Value = 98.130, Df = 2, $p = .000$) reject the null hypothesis of independence, indicating a significant connection between these variables. Moreover, there is a significant linear relationship between the variables (Value = 65.347, Df = 1, $p = .000$), and the test is valid since none of the expected values is less than 5.⁴

Teachers' assessments of their professional autonomy in conducting subject-specific teaching in accordance with the national or school curriculum and standards are unambiguously positive, with a mean score above 4 on the 5-point scale and relatively low standard deviation and variance (Mean = 4, St. Deviation = .886, Variance = .786).

As noted, examining teachers' responses by school involvement—those involved, not involved, and those unaware of the school's status—reveals interesting differences in teachers' perception of autonomy. Specifically, teachers involved in the implementation of the New School Model are significantly more likely to rate their professional autonomy at the highest level of 5 than those who are unaware of their school's status or do not work in an involved school. Meanwhile, teachers in non-involved schools are more likely (nearly 30%) to rate their autonomy as neutral.

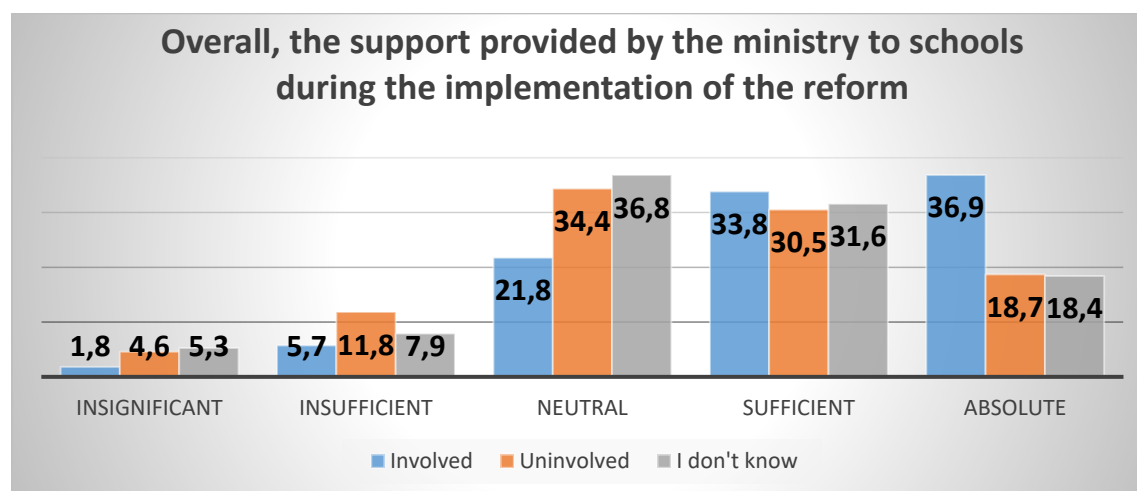
⁴ a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.23

Figure 21: Teachers perceived autonomy by the school status



It is noteworthy that alongside the high positive assessment of professional autonomy, there is also a significant difference in the perception of ministry support/assistance between teachers from involved and non-involved schools during the reform process. Specifically, over 70% of teachers in involved schools rate support as sufficient or absolute, while in non-involved schools, 30% rate it as sufficient, and only 18.7% rate it as absolute. Teachers who do not know their school's status in relation to the New School Model most frequently choose a neutral position when evaluating ministry support overall.

Figure 22: Teachers' assessment of the support provided by the ministry



In the framework of our survey, we aimed to determine the frequency of teachers' professional activities across various teaching processes. The activities included:

- Lesson planning
- Creating educational resources
- Developing thematic matrices and complex assignments

- Additional support and correctional programs for students
- Collaboration with colleagues
- Evaluation of student assignments

To assess frequency, teachers were offered a 5-point Likert scale with options: “Never - Rarely - Sometimes - Often - Daily.” Analysis revealed the intensity of activity usage based on teachers' self-assessments.

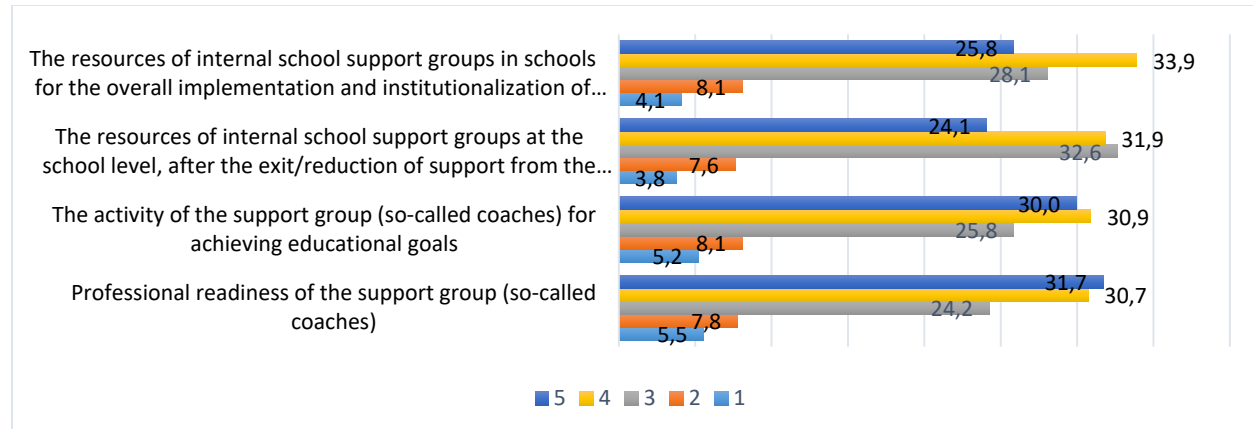
The data for each activity were distributed as follows:

- Lesson Planning: Average score 3.96, median 4.00, mode 5. Standard deviation 1.076.
- Creating Educational Resources: Average score 3.72, median 4.00, mode 4. Standard deviation 1.080.
- Developing Thematic Matrices and Complex Assignments: Average score 3.42, median 3.00, mode 3. Standard deviation 1.139.
- Additional Support Programs: Average score 3.48, median 4.00, mode 4. Standard deviation 1.168.
- Collaboration with Colleagues: Average score 3.92, median 4.00, mode 5. Standard deviation 1.100.
- Evaluation of Student Assignments: Average score 4.00, median 4.00, mode 5. Standard deviation 1.093.

Variance ranged from 1.157 to 1.364, and Kurtosis values ranged from -0.155 to -0.806. Summarily, teachers reported the highest frequency for lesson planning, collaboration with colleagues, and student assignment evaluation. A lower frequency was noted for creating matrices and complex assignments. Mode "3" ("Sometimes") appeared only for matrices and complex assignments, though mean and median were higher, and standard deviation and variance were lower. The Kurtosis values indicate a platykurtic distribution, suggesting consistency in teachers' frequency ratings across activities.

We were also interested in teachers' assessment of support received in implementing various teaching aspects. Questions addressed external professional assistance from coaches and curriculum implementation support groups, as well as the potential and resources of in-school support teams.

Figure 23: Teachers' assessment of support received in implementing various teaching aspects



Notably, the coaches' readiness was most frequently rated as "5" (31.7%), with a score of "4" given by just over 30% for both readiness and in-school assistance. A quarter of respondents rated in-school support resources for reform implementation as "5," with a third rating it as "4." A similar frequency distribution appeared for school-level support resources after the cessation of external support.

Additionally, teachers' perception of autonomy positively correlated with the ratings for all support groups and mechanisms, showing statistically significant two-way correlations. According to Pearson's correlation model, the strongest statistically significant correlations emerged between professional readiness of support groups (coaches) and their level of activity with teachers' autonomy. Specifically:

- Coaches' professional readiness showed a moderate positive correlation with teacher autonomy ($r = .528$).
- Support group activities aimed at achieving teaching goals showed a relatively strong correlation ($r = .547$).
- In-school support resources ($r = .514$) and resources in general for reform implementation ($r = .520$) also correlated positively with teacher autonomy.

As noted, all correlations are statistically highly significant ($p < .001$).

Another significant trend revealed in the survey relates to the manner and content of teachers' expressed opinions. More specifically, in several open-ended questions that were part of the survey, teachers provided detailed responses. Many of these responses positively evaluate the reform for its innovativeness; however, critical viewpoints were also recorded:

"Before the reform, I was planning and implementing project-based learning with students (from Intel's educational series since 2012), 1:1 electronic learning, and, since 2014, using innovative reading teaching methods, literature, and strategies offered by G-PriEd. Therefore, the reform was not innovative; I was involved from the beginning, and it saddened me to see that education experts don't utilize each other's experience and want to be the sole implementers of new ideas.

There was no novelty – tasks oriented on multiple skills (PBL-Intel) were already planned and executed this way. Technology use was not new – some teachers have been using it since 2010, and as for the reading teaching methodology shared by G-PriEd, it is critical in the teaching-learning process so that 'complex assignments' don't become just the student's concern but rather allow the teacher to facilitate a process-oriented teaching approach (as outlined in the national curriculum goals) rather than a results-oriented one, as is currently the case...”

Educational Resources for Reform Implementation

We considered it essential to evaluate the frequency and appropriateness of educational resources used by teachers in the teaching process within the scope of the current reform. According to the data, showing the mean scores and variance of responses for educational resources used in the teaching process, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The subject-specific textbook is the most frequently used resource (Mean = 4.03). The moderate distribution standard deviation (Std. Deviation = 1.168) also indicates a relatively stable frequency of use among teachers.
- Subject-specific guides are also quite frequently used (Mean = 3.65, Std. Deviation = 1.164), though their usage frequency is slightly lower than that of textbooks.
- Video guides have an average usage frequency (Mean = 3.35), indicating they are used less frequently than other resources, although their standard deviation (Std. Deviation = 1.194) suggests variability in their use among teachers.
- Complex assignment banks (Mean = 3.58) and sample matrices (Mean = 3.54) are used with average frequency but show a significant standard deviation (Std. Deviation = 1.183 and 1.196), indicating differing levels of use among teachers.
- Online resources (Mean = 3.76) and resources created by teachers themselves (Mean = 3.75) are used relatively frequently, indicating that teachers often rely on online materials and their own developed resources. The standard deviation (Std. Deviation \approx 1.1) for online and self-developed resources also indicates consistent use by teachers.

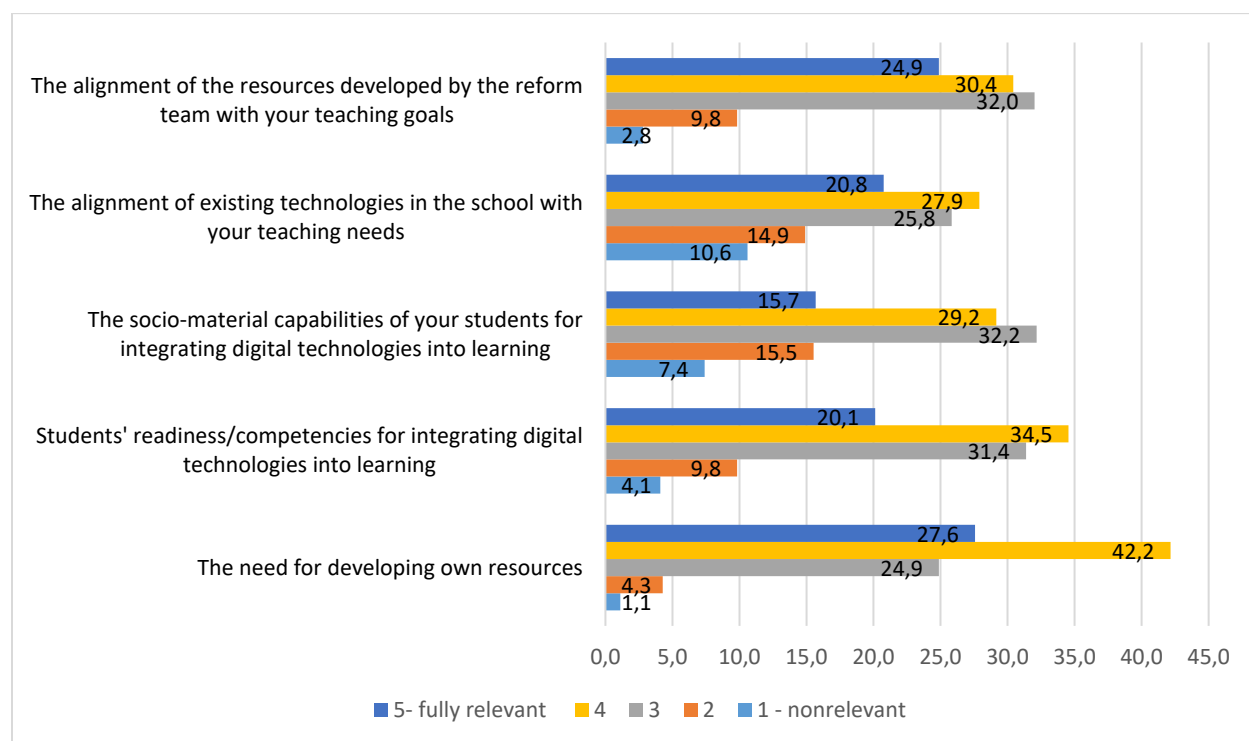
Textbooks are the most commonly used resource, while others, such as video guides and complex assignment banks, are used less frequently. This data suggests that teachers focus more on traditional resources, though online and self-created resources also play an important role in the teaching process.

In addition to the frequency of resource use, we also considered it important to understand teachers' perspectives on the alignment of resources with new curriculum goals. Thus, we explored whether teachers perceive available materials as aligning with these goals and how they use resources based on this perceived alignment. In other words, we were interested in whether each resource's frequency of use aligned with teachers' perception of its alignment with the curriculum goals. Correlation analysis confirms that all resources used are positively correlated with the intensity of teachers' perceived alignment of these resources with the curriculum.

The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showing particularly high correlation between specific resources used and their perceived alignment.

We also found it insightful to analyze teachers' views by comparing the frequency distribution of responses to several survey questions. Teachers rate the alignment of each aspect on a scale from 1 to 5, considering the alignment of students' social-material capacities and their skills/preparation for using digital technology with educational goals, as well as evaluating the necessity of creating their own resources, the adequacy of technological infrastructure in schools, and the appropriateness of resources developed by the reform team.

Figure 24: Teachers' assessment of the reform objectives alignment with the various education aspects



According to the data, attitudes towards factors that integrate resources and digital technologies in the learning process vary across different directions. The majority of respondents see the need to develop their own resources (42.2%) and the importance of students' readiness to use digital technologies in learning, rating them as "relevant" (34.5% - 4 points). Relatively lower percentages were recorded regarding students' socio-material conditions (29.2%) and the school's technological resources (27.9%). The assessment of the resources developed by the reform team as "completely relevant" stands at 24.9%. Notably, the assessment of students' socio-material conditions as relevant is the least frequently rated with the highest score of 5 (15.7%).

Teacher Motivation

The survey included questions on the presence of professional motivation among teachers and the specific sources of this motivation. As shown in the tables below, the majority of teachers confirm

motivation for integrating constructivist approaches, new assessment systems, and digital technologies, regardless of whether the school they work in is involved in implementing the New School Model.

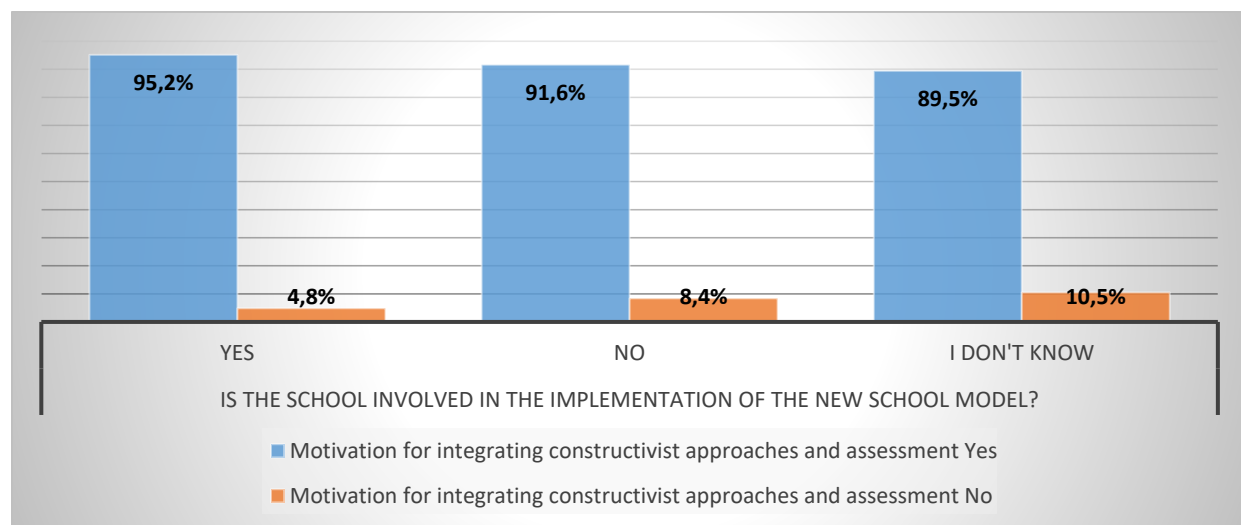
The following table clearly shows the distribution of teachers' responses concerning motivation:

Table 12. teachers' responses related to their professional motivation

| | | Motivation for Constructivist Approaches, New Assessment Systems, and Integration of Digital Technologies | | Total |
|--|--------------|---|----|-------|
| | | Yes | No | |
| Is the school involved in implementing the New School Model? | Yes | 315 | 16 | 331 |
| | No | 240 | 22 | 262 |
| | I don't know | 34 | 4 | 38 |
| Total | | 589 | 42 | 631 |

The proportionate distribution of data confirms that, despite the substantial number of motivated teachers, the proportion of teachers affirming motivation is higher among those involved in implementing the New School Model than those who are not involved or unaware of the school's status.

Figure 25: Assessment of motivation for the adoption of the constructivist approaches and formative assessment among the teachers by the school status



According to the Pearson Chi-Square test results for the same data, with a significance level of 3.963, degrees of freedom (df) is 2, and p-value (Asymptotic Significance) = 0.138, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05. Therefore, a p-value of 0.138 indicates no statistically significant relationship between school involvement and motivation for integrating constructivist approaches, new assessment systems, and digital technologies at the 0.05 significance level. However, the p-value of the Linear-by-Linear Association (0.049), slightly below 0.05, may suggest a certain linear trend, implying that extended

observation of the connection between school involvement and motivation for constructivist approaches, assessment systems, and technology adoption could be interesting.

We were also interested in teachers' opinions on other specific sources of motivation that align with the goals of the general education reform. Therefore, teachers who confirmed the presence of motivation were asked to evaluate their stance on each specific source of motivation related to the reform's vision.

Table 13: descriptive statistics regarding the different sources of motivation

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------------|----------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Sources of Motivation | Mean | St. Deviation | Variance | Skewness | Skewness Std. Error | Kurtosis | Kurtosis Std. Error |
| Student achievements | 3.82 | 1.074 | 1.153 | -.589 | .101 | -.464 | .201 |
| Support systems identified in the teaching process | 3.73 | 1.089 | 1.185 | -.385 | .101 | -.816 | .201 |
| New opportunities for professional development | 3.80 | 1.082 | 1.172 | -.496 | .101 | -.726 | .201 |
| Proposed systems for recognizing professional development | 3.71 | 1.097 | 1.204 | -.444 | .101 | -.718 | .201 |
| Opportunities for the development of the school community | 3.77 | 1.089 | 1.187 | -.499 | .101 | -.657 | .201 |

The results show that teachers highly value each proposed source of motivation. However, there are some differences in the average score of sources, as well as in standard deviation and variance, which may stem from individual experiences and perspectives and the differing perceptions of motivators. Negative skewness indicates that higher ratings are more prevalent among teacher assessments, while low kurtosis suggests that the distribution of responses is less extreme.

More specifically:

- **Motivation - Student Achievement Results:** Mean: 3.82 - the highest score, indicating that participants most often consider this source a particularly important motivator. Standard Deviation: 1.074 - shows some variability in responses. Skewness: -.589 - negative skewness reveals that the data is left-skewed, meaning more teachers provided higher scores. Kurtosis: -.464 - suggests a relatively flat distribution, indicating less extremity in the data.
- **Support Systems Discovered in the Teaching Process:** Mean: 3.73; objectively high, though lower than other sources. Skewness: -.385 - negative skew, indicating generally positive ratings for support systems. Kurtosis: -.816 - indicates a relatively broad distribution of responses.
- **New Professional Development Opportunities:** Mean: 3.80 - overall high rating, suggesting that participants view new opportunities for professional development as a motivator. Skewness: -

0.496 - again shows a trend toward higher ratings. Kurtosis: -0.726 - indicates a less extreme distribution of responses.

Professional Development Recognition Systems: Mean score: 3.71 – Slightly lower than other motivation sources, indicating that existing recognition systems are somewhat less motivational compared to other sources. However, skewness: -0.444 shows a negative skew, pointing to predominantly positive evaluations, while kurtosis: -0.718 indicates a low level of extremity in the distribution.

Opportunities for School Community Development: Mean score: 3.77 – This score is lower than the average for other sources, but higher than the professional development recognition systems as a motivation source. Skewness: -0.499 is close to zero, suggesting a well-balanced distribution of responses, while kurtosis: -0.657 also points to low extremity in the distribution.

It is noteworthy that motivation towards "constructivist approaches, new assessment systems, and digital technology integration within the reform" does not statistically correlate with any aspects of professional preparedness. All correlation coefficients in the Spearman's two-tailed correlation model are close to zero, with p-values (Sig. (2-tailed)) exceeding 0.05, indicating that teachers' motivation is not directly related to self-assessed aspects of professional readiness.

Table 14: Correlation between the motivational sources

| Spearman's rho | Subject-Specific Matrix Development | Teaching with Complex Tasks | Technology Integration in Teaching | Implementing Formative Assessments | Student-Centered Learning | Remedial and Support Activities |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Motivation for Constructivist Approaches, New Assessment Systems, and Digital Technology Integration within the Reform | -.074 | -.039 | -.083 | -.047 | -.068 | -.078 |
| | .121 | .411 | .080 | .322 | .155 | .101 |
| | 442 | 442 | 442 | 442 | 442 | 442 |

An independent samples T-test was applied to detect possible differences in teachers' motivation sources and their ratings among schools involved in the New School Model reform versus those that are not. Teachers who were uncertain about their school's involvement in the reform were excluded from the comparison. The test results show:

- **Motivation Source: Student Achievements** – Levene’s test ($F = 3.524$, $p = .061$) shows equality of variances. T-test results ($t(587) = 2.220$, $p = .027$) indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with a mean difference of 0.196 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.023 to 0.370.
- **Motivation Source: Support Systems Identified in the Teaching Process** – Levene’s test ($F = 1.869$, $p = .172$) indicates a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t(587) = 3.454$, $p = .001$), with a mean difference of 0.308 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.133 to 0.483.
- **Motivation Source: New Professional Development Opportunities** – Levene’s test ($F = 1.757$, $p = .186$) also indicates a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t(587) = 2.270$, $p = .024$), with a mean difference of 0.202 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.027 to 0.377.
- **Motivation Source: Recognition Systems for Professional Development** – Levene’s test ($F = .154$, $p = .695$) shows a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t(587) = 2.918$, $p = .004$), with a mean difference of 0.263 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.086 to 0.440.
- **Motivation Source: School Community Development Opportunities** – Levene’s test ($F = 2.436$, $p = .119$) also shows a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t(587) = 2.499$, $p = .013$), with a mean difference of 0.224 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.048 to 0.400.

Thus, for all five variables, statistically significant differences are observed in perceptions of motivation sources between the two groups of teachers. In each case, the mean difference is positive, indicating that teachers involved in the New School Model consistently rate all motivation sources more highly. The most notable difference is in the "support systems identified in the teaching process," while the smallest difference is in "student achievements through new teaching methods." This suggests that professional development events focused on the reform may be influencing not only teachers’ professional motivation but also their perception of support from the system. However, achieving a stronger motivational influence from student-focused results may require more time and effort within the reform framework.

School Environment and Opportunities

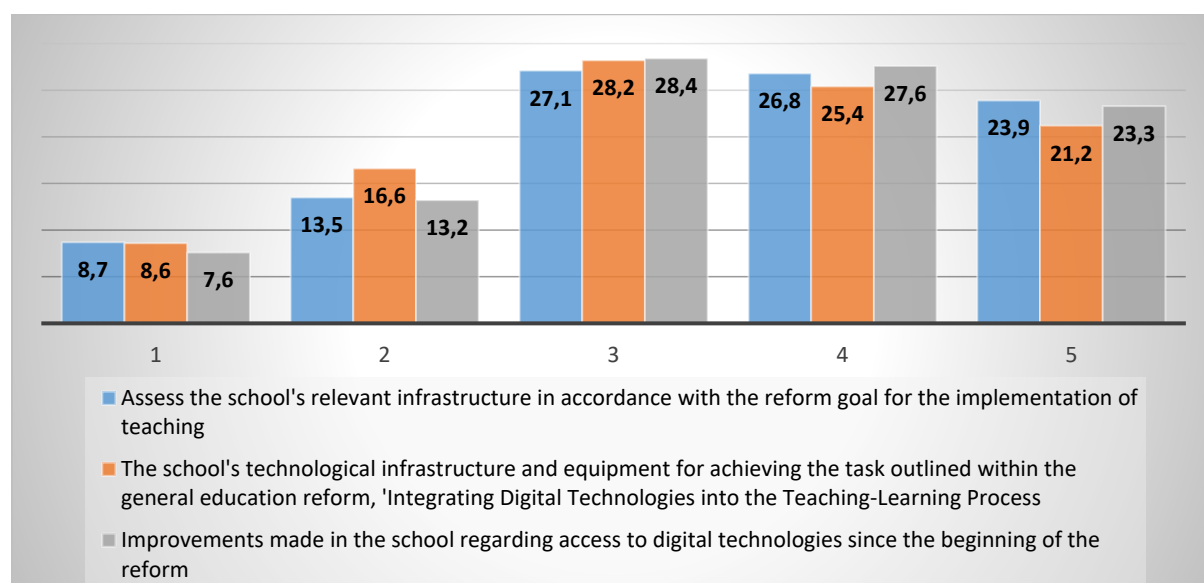
Within the survey, teachers evaluated the alignment of school infrastructure with the reform's objectives across three aspects:

- **Evaluate the school's infrastructure regarding its alignment with the reform goals for teaching implementation.**
- **Evaluate the school's technological infrastructure and equipment to achieve the objective of "integrating digital technologies in the teaching-learning process" within the general education reform.**
- **Evaluate the improvements in digital technology accessibility in schools since the reform began.**

All three aspects generally assess the reform's effectiveness from the perspective of infrastructure suitability in achieving the New School Model's objectives. Analysis of teacher responses shows that the item focused on improvements through ministry efforts aligns logically with the other two items that assess school capacities and alignment with reform objectives. Less than a quarter of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with existing infrastructure and ministry efforts. In contrast, many teachers reported high satisfaction: **50.9%** for ministry efforts and **46.6%** for technological infrastructure alignment with the

reform's digital integration goals. Additionally, **50.7%** rated the overall school infrastructure highly in terms of alignment with reform goals, mirroring satisfaction with the ministry's efforts.

Figure 26: Assessment of the infrastructural and technological alignment with reform objectives and schools' needs



Teachers' Reflections on Reform Innovation

A total of 294 teachers shared their perspectives on the innovation within the current reform, particularly its vision for the teaching-learning process and anticipated outcomes:

"It's innovative and beneficial. However, the shortage of coaches in schools slowed down the process, leading to uneven implementation."

"Complex assignments are a new approach to reform innovation, though selection of coaches could be improved."

"Education serving human needs is essential, but sustainable development of the system alone is insufficient for societal progress."

"I don't see the results yet, so I can't view the implemented changes as successful."

"The set objectives don't align with the current reality, and the pathways to achieving them are challenging."

"This reform doesn't truly reflect the reality."

"I'd say it's the most innovative reform implemented so far. Never before have teachers had this level of creative freedom or such student- and community-focused curricula."

"The reform is necessary, but I notice that complex assignments are becoming monotonous, especially in primary and secondary levels."

"The reform needs further refinement and a phased implementation. Many teachers are frustrated and confused by the new system."

"The reform is innovative and well-aligned with student needs."

"It's very innovative; students can see how math, for example, applies to real life. However, complex tasks should be limited as they're time-consuming and should be integrated across subjects to highlight connections."

"Before the reform, I used project-based learning with my students (since 2012) and innovative reading strategies introduced by G-PriEd since 2014. Thus, the reform wasn't new for me; rather, I was disappointed by experts' lack of collaboration."

"There wasn't any novelty; multi-skill assignments and tech use weren't new to us. Since 2010, many teachers have incorporated these methods. G-PriEd's reading strategies are essential in ensuring that complex assignments don't burden students, shifting the focus to the learning process rather than outcomes."

These reflections reveal diverse perspectives on the reform's effectiveness and innovation, with some teachers commending the increased creative and student-centered opportunities while others highlight operational challenges, alignment issues, and calls for gradual implementation to mitigate teacher frustration.

Additional teacher reflections underscore both positive and critical feedback on the reform's aspirations and practical hurdles encountered:

- "The reform concept aimed at highly innovative changes, but the actual implementation was much less than envisioned. The process has been overly uncontrolled and unexamined over the years, resulting in outcomes that don't justify the expenses."
- "The significance of the reform and its societal value are not fully understood by the school community."
- "Textbooks were designed with access to electronic resources in mind, but these cannot be utilized during lessons. Despite using Microsoft products daily and my ability to plan an entirely digital lesson, two key barriers exist: schools lack proper equipment, and students often lack the basic skills needed for digital work. Many do not even have computers at home to continue their work. Although we transitioned to constructivist approaches long ago to tailor methods to students' needs, assessments remain undefined. Schools lack technology, so it's unclear where this integration is supposed to happen. If the ministry's push continues without allowing teachers free time, I would consider leaving the profession."

- "The changes were timely and innovative, but digital technology integration required much more effort. Teachers' readiness and motivation fell short of the reform's needs and students' requirements."
- "It fully aligns with 21st-century education needs, though teachers are less prepared, while it's essential for students."
- "It's complete chaos."
- "This matrix writing and assessment strategies are ineffective, tiresome, and miss the point. The focus in schools should be on students and teachers, not paperwork."
- "Requirements are excessively high and mismatched with available resources. There's more bureaucracy than resources in schools, resulting in low student motivation."

These insights reflect a wide range of reactions, highlighting both the reform's visionary alignment with 21st-century educational needs and the practical obstacles in infrastructure, teacher readiness, and bureaucratic demands. Many teachers value the reform's student-centered approach but face resource limitations and logistical barriers that affect motivation and hinder effective implementation.

Chapter 9. Research Findings

Findings Related to Inclusion in the New School Model

- Schools included in the New School Model were selected based more on political party PR strategy rather than on educational relevance, focusing primarily on those with the appropriate infrastructure and readiness. In some instances, schools were included despite the school community and administration not considering it appropriate.
- Even schools with large student population were not included in the New School Model due to difficulties in equipping them adequately.
- Schools most in need of support, such as those in high-mountainous areas, rural settings, or with small student populations and non-Georgian-speaking communities were not selected as pilot schools in New School Model and therefore were put at a disadvantage situation.

New School Model's Compatibility with Other Educational Reforms

Professional Development and Career Advancement of Teachers

- The research revealed that the New School Model, in its concept, administration, procedure, and substance, conflicted with the existing teacher professional development and career advancement scheme, making it difficult to implement the vision set by the New School Model in terms of teacher support and growth.
- Two models of teacher professional development operated simultaneously within the system. The first model was centered on teachers performing activities outlined by a formal scheme to accumulate credits, which translated into career progression and financial rewards through teacher bonuses. The second model, implemented at the school level within the New School Model focused on professional development through coaches and support groups, leading to improved teaching practices and the effective design and implementation of the school curriculum.
- Participants in the study assessed the New School Model as promoting real professional development because the involvement of support groups allowed for active observation, improvement, and continuous professional development of teachers. This was a dynamic, ongoing process that fostered the growth of teacher attitudes, knowledge, and competencies.
- The formal professional development scheme for teachers was perceived as a process focused solely on earning credits, with little emphasis on changing actual practices or enhancing teacher knowledge and competencies. In contrast, the New School Model provided an ongoing opportunity for genuine professional development. The simultaneous operation of two distinct models created challenges for reform authors, trainers, schools, and teachers, ultimately hindering the effective implementation of the New School Model.
- From a practical and professional development standpoint, the New School Model's approach was seen as more acceptable; However, most teachers viewed the professional development scheme positively for two reasons: 1) its approaches were clearer, more understandable, and tested, and they aligned directly with the Ministry's declared policy; and 2) the career advancement and financial motivation systems were clearly established within the scheme.
- Younger teachers were more motivated and focused on implementing the New School Model, while older teachers tended to focus more on formal procedures and status, showing less receptiveness to the new model's innovations and proposals.

- The research highlighted the emergence of two distinct groups of teachers. One group focused on innovation, development, and changes in teaching practices to improve student academic performance, while the other prioritized formal procedures for career advancement and financial motivation. It is worth noting that, according to study participants, the latter group was more prevalent in the system, which also impacted the effective implementation of the New School Model.
- Under the universal approaches of the New School Model, it was not possible to adequately advance and target the strengthening of those teachers who were able to internalize and implement the positive aspects of the reform. As a result, the role and importance of teachers in implementing the New School Model became reduced to following rules and instructions routinely.
- Due to the existence of two different approaches, both teachers and schools felt that the New School Model was not an integral part of the reform but rather a temporary, additional project. The incompatibility between the two systems led to teacher overload and disillusionment with both. Teachers were overwhelmed by excessive training, leaving them with less time to focus on the actual teaching process.
- The research showed that these two reforms differed not only in terms of procedures and systems of benefits or incentives but also in their conceptual and substantive vision. They fostered different approaches to teaching: the formal scheme was focused on delivering standard lessons with specific phases and time allocations, while the New School Model provided greater flexibility in thematic teaching, including time and lesson structuring. However, teachers were not given the professional confidence to determine when and how to apply either approach, depending on the context, tasks, and desired outcomes.
- The research also revealed an institutional contradiction between the state bodies responsible for implementing these two reforms.

Compatibility of School Textbooks with the Methodological and Conceptual Vision of the New School Model, and Availability of Additional Resources

- The issue of non-compatibility between existing licensed school textbooks and the concept-based pedagogy of the New School Model was emerged in the study at the early stage of the reform, especially given teachers' attachment to their textbooks.
- Even with newly created licensed school textbooks based on the pedagogy of concepts, teachers pointed out existing problems that hindered the realization of the New School Model's approaches. Replacing existing textbooks and adjusting school-level texts, particularly in schools heavily reliant on textbooks with fewer resources, proved to be a significant challenge.
- Beyond the immediate issue of textbook compatibility with the New School Model, the study uncovered broader issues related to school textbooks that indirectly impacted the effectiveness of the New School Model's implementation. These issues include overloaded textbooks, an overemphasis on rote memorization, inconsistency with child developmental stages, use of overly complex scientific language with younger students, failure to consider contextual relevance when selecting texts, and an overload of uninteresting topics that cause students to lose interest and motivation.
- Despite the reform acknowledging these challenges related to textbooks, the issue of availability and accessibility of alternative and additional resources remained a significant hurdle. This challenge became particularly acute in certain subjects when working with Complex Assignments. Teachers cited not only a lack of appropriate resources but also difficulties in providing existing materials to students, which was exacerbated by insufficient school resources and financial constraints.

School Leadership and the Vision of School Leadership: The Role of the School Principal in Reform Implementation and Current Challenges

- One of the significant challenges of the New School Model lies in the role of school leaders. In many cases, school principals were unable to effectively ensure the implementation of the reform due to issues related to their readiness, motivation, lack of qualification and competence, and unclear functional roles and involvement.
- The reform overlooked the importance of school principals delegating responsibilities minimally or bypassing them altogether and engaging directly with teachers. This approach proved ineffective and hindered the sustainability of the program's goals.
- Policy planners did not adequately consider the existing hierarchical governance system in Georgia's general education institutions, where school principals hold significant authority and influence. This oversight led to low involvement from heads of resource centers and school directors, ultimately hindering teacher engagement and commitment to the project. As a result, the introduction of a non-hierarchical model, based solely on a vertical governance approach, negatively impacted the effective implementation of the New School Model in schools.
- The reform was not accompanied by the development of proper tools for selecting school principals.
- There was no ongoing professional development program for school leaders in the wake of the reform, which would have empowered existing principals to become leaders capable of implementing the New School Model.
- Systems of autonomy, accountability, and support for school leaders were not developed, although these elements were crucial for the success of the New School Model and the proper role of school leaders in its implementation.
- Research revealed that many principals were disengaged from the implementation of the New School Model, viewing it as insufficiently important.
- In some cases, the limited involvement of school principals in the reform caused not only professional but personal dissatisfaction. As a result, they could not contribute to the institutionalization of the model or its objectives and outcomes.
- The increased responsibilities and time demands placed on school principals under the New School Model, even without formal recognition or financial rewards, further diminished their motivation to support the reform.

The System of Admission to Higher Education and the New School Model

- Georgia, primarily due to the structure of the higher education admission system and its dominant influence on student motivation. Secondary school students view school primarily as a stepping stone for university entrance, and this focus is reinforced by the importance of passing entrance exams. As a result, students are highly motivated to excel in subjects that directly impact their exam scores, often neglecting the broader objectives of general education, including the development of essential competencies and skills.
The current examination system, which predominantly emphasizes specific subjects required for university admissions, has led to a narrowing of the educational focus. This approach discourages students from valuing knowledge and skills that are not directly tied to passing exams. Consequently, the broader goals of education, such as fostering critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning, are sidelined in favor of exam-driven learning. This phenomenon, where the pursuit of academic success for the sake of entrance exams takes precedence over holistic education, limits the effectiveness of efforts to implement more comprehensive, student-

centered models. The emphasis on passing entrance exams served as a stronger motivator for students than acquiring general knowledge and education.

- In regard to Complex Assignments, a key component of the child-centered school curriculum with a constructivist teaching approach, the expectation was for students to develop knowledge, skills, and competencies aligned with the higher education admissions system. Without such a connection, applying these educational practices in school life becomes difficult, as students, parents, and teachers struggle to see the relevance between school education, the reforms introduced, and university admissions.
- Teachers believe that the success of any reform is tied to its relevance to the higher education admissions system. If school experiences and education do not influence this system, any reform or instructional improvement will likely fail. Thus, a significant portion of teachers advocate for aligning school subjects, assessments, and students' overall school experience with the higher education admissions process.
- Similarly, parents often fail to see the value of schools in fostering knowledge and properly preparing students. Often, their primary concern during the school-leaving period is their child's preparation for the unified exams, which they see as a separate process from school education. This disconnect also extends to their perception of the New School Model reform and its implementation
- The principle of teaching through Complex Assignments, which emphasizes an in-depth understanding of concepts, conflicts with the content required for higher education entrance exams. In fact, this approach often led to skipping key topics that are critical for passing these exams. As a result, teaching through Complex Assignments limited students' ability to adequately prepare for the entrance exams.

Public School Authorization Process

- Participation in the New School Model aided schools in the authorization process due to the alignment between these two reforms.
- Among the various reform steps, the public school authorization process was the most compatible with the visions and concepts of the New School Model, representing a positive example of institutional cooperation and coherent educational policy.
- However, the focus on preparing for the authorization process reduced the school community's interest in the broader impact and significance of the New School Model as a reform, redirecting attention to the authorization process itself. For schools undergoing or preparing for authorization, the new school reform became primarily associated with meeting the conditions necessary for authorization.
- The New School Model aimed not at external evaluation, but at the comprehensive transformation of schools, emphasizing institutional autonomy and development according to each school's unique plan, pace, and capabilities. Unlike the authorization process, this allowed schools and principals to assess their own capacity and readiness for autonomy. In contrast, the authorization process required schools to identify the necessary resources to meet external requirements, without fully addressing their readiness for independence.

Coherence of Reform, Institutional Coordination, and Common Vision

- **Initial Support:** At the start, the reform had strong financial and political backing, reflected in the infrastructural and technical support provided to schools. However, this support dwindled over time.

- **Insufficient Ministry Coordination:** Not all Ministry units were involved in implementing the New School Model. Coordination among these units was weak, resulting in poorly synchronized actions.
- **Phased Support Decline:** In the first stage of the reform, there was clear support. In the second stage, although support was not outright withdrawn, it was insufficient. By the final stage, there were attempts by Ministry leadership to block the reform's progress.
- **Lack of Broader Reforms:** The New School Model failed to spark necessary reforms in teacher professional development, school management restructuring, redefining the role of school leaders, and the introduction of new assessment systems. Additionally, it did not link school admissions with students' knowledge and experience gained during their school education.
- **Coach Qualification Issues:** As the number of coaches increased, participants identified coach qualifications as a major issue. Coaches' visions often did not align with the stated goals of the reform, either due to improper training or intentional conceptual opposition.
- **Expectations from Coaches:** It was misguided to assume that underprepared coaches would improve over time. In reality, they struggled to contribute effectively, even as the reform progressed.
- **Subject-Specific Challenges:** Coaches assigned to all subject areas at the elementary level faced difficulties. For example, a coach specializing in Georgian language instruction struggled to address mathematics or science subjects, leading to frustration among teachers who could not apply the given guidance to their subjects.
- **Lack of Communication with Coaches:** Coaches were not adequately informed about the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and parents regarding the implementation of Complex Assignments.
- **Limited Authority of Coaches:** Coaches served as intermediaries between schools and the Ministry but had no power to address problems themselves, only relaying information to higher authorities.
- **Low Educational Resource Center (ERC) Involvement:** Local Educational Resource Centers were minimally involved, which signaled to schools that this was not a systemic reform aligned with the Ministry's broader policy. The failure to utilize the resource centers' coordination capabilities undermined the reform.
- **Impact on Schools:** Schools, principals, and teachers—especially those relying on guidance from resource centers—struggled with focus and involvement due to the lack of clear support from this strategic link.

Perceptions of the Reform by Different Stakeholders

- **Parents:** Most parents were unaware of the New School Model, its goals, or its practical implications. Their primary concern was supporting their children in completing Complex Assignments without understanding the broader purpose or long-term benefits, which sometimes led to frustration and aggression.
- **Focus on Formal Procedures:** Parents were better informed about formal processes, such as school authorization, rather than the content or purpose of the school curriculum.
- **Teachers:** Teachers often misunderstood key elements of the curriculum, particularly the use of Complex Assignments and formative assessment. The teacher training for the reform was inadequately planned, and schools were expected to prepare to implement the new curriculum independently.
- **School Leaders:** School leaders were not sufficiently informed, involved, or supportive of the reform, contributing to its uneven implementation.

Development and Implementation of School Curriculum Based on Constructivist Educational Principles

The development and implementation of school curricula based on constructivist educational principles revealed several challenges and areas for improvement. Here's a summary:

School Curricula Development

- **Weakest Component of Reform:** The development of school curricula was identified as one of the weakest aspects of the reform. Schools struggled to use curriculum development as a tool for autonomy, relying instead on adapting existing Ministry-provided materials.
- **Missed Opportunity for Autonomy:** Curriculum development did not lead to real autonomy, where schools could make decisions based on their specific needs and capabilities. Instead, it became a top-down request without much room for original or context-specific adaptations.
- **Focus on Adapting Ministry Resources:** Schools mostly focused on adapting existing textbooks and resources from the Ministry rather than creating unique, context-specific curricula tailored to their needs. This reduced the potential for innovation in school curricula.
- **Impact on Authorization Process:** Despite these shortcomings, the curriculum development process had a positive effect in helping schools prepare for the public school authorization process.
- **Impact on School Culture:** In schools where the curriculum development process was genuinely engaged, it fostered stronger relationships between school management, teachers, and parents, positively affecting school culture.
- **Professional Development:** The curriculum development process was crucial for the professional growth of schools and teachers, enhancing their understanding of curriculum design and its role in education.
- **Unprepared Principals:** School principals were often unprepared to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by curriculum development and were not equipped to lead the process effectively.

Originality and Authenticity of School Curricula

- **Repetitive Content:** A significant portion of schools curricula simply copied the content of the national curriculum, often without any modification. In many cases, schools even retained the original page numbering from the national curriculum, indicating a lack of adaptation to local school needs.
- **Irrelevant Norms:** Some copied elements of the national curriculum were not relevant or appropriate for individual schools, suggesting a lack of customization to suit specific school contexts.
- **Absence of School-Specific Cultural Elements:** The reviewed curricula lacked important elements related to school culture, such as descriptions of school holidays, events, sports competitions, or trips. This absence suggests that schools were not incorporating local traditions and activities into their curriculum planning.

Changes in School Curricula According to the Second and Third Generation of the National Curriculum

- There is no significant methodological difference in how schools developed their curricula following the introduction of the second and third-generation national curricula. In both cases, school curricula largely replicate the provisions of the national curriculum. Subject-specific curricula, where they exist, generally follow the content and sequence of thematic units from the textbooks provided by the Ministry.

- Some members of the school community note visible differences between the second and third-generation national curricula. However, they lack the necessary competencies and tools to implement these differences effectively. As a result, the New School Model did not fully address these challenges, nor did it adequately empower teachers to implement the positive changes introduced in the updated curriculum.
- Documents from schools involved in the piloting phase frequently include subject-specific curricula written in a new format, incorporating so-called "Complex Assignments." These pilot schools were also more likely to have implemented school projects whose goals and methods align more closely with the teaching-learning approach envisaged by the New School Model. Quantitative research further supports this, indicating that teachers involved in the pilot are likelier to appreciate and employ diverse approaches to implementing subject curricula.
- Urban schools not involved in piloting the national curriculum were more likely to introduce subject-specific curricula than rural or township schools that were also excluded from the piloting process.

Realization of Constructivist Principles

- The school curricula developed within the framework of the New School Model attempt to build the educational process primarily on constructivist principles. This effort is particularly evident in subject-specific curricula, though it is less pronounced in other elements of the school curriculum, such as mission statements and definitions of teaching-learning principles. Consequently, we can observe a positive transformation of curricula influenced by teachers' initiatives; however, this transformation has not extended to improvements in the school's overarching vision due to the complex challenges encountered in implementing the new model.
- Methodological gaps are identified in subject curricula designed according to constructivist approaches.
- Some existing curricula still rely on thematic content rather than conceptual understanding. For instance, a Complex Assignments assigned in one case fails to exhibit elements of a constructivist approach. Although students are instructed to write a report on a learned topic, the cognitive processes involved remain unclear.
- The subject curricula incorporate elements characteristic of constructivist approaches, particularly in descriptions of the learning process. For instance, students are planned to develop responses to critical thinking questions, engage in subject projects, and acquire diverse educational experiences. Assignments may include creating presentations, hypothetical travel diaries, brochures, posters, and CVs.
- Nevertheless, there is skepticism regarding the implementation of these subject curricula, as they often appear more formal than genuinely adaptive to students' learning needs. This is evidenced by issues such as the monotony of subject curricula and content errors.
- Tasks and their descriptions frequently repeat across the subject curricula of various schools. For example, among 30 selected schools involved in piloting the Third Generation National Curriculum, eight schools were assigned identical tasks in their history curricula. Students in different institutions are required to conduct imaginary interviews with Zviad Gamsakhurdia and develop Giorgi Brtskinvale's CV, among other assignments.

Integrating Technology into Subject Curricula

- In the school curricula developed according to the third generation of national curricula, the integration of technology is more pronounced than in the previous generation's curricula.

- Descriptions of subject curricula and Complex Assignments indicate that students are expected to utilize the Internet for class projects. They must search for information and conduct research using online resources.
- Some subject curricula also include online multimedia materials as supplementary resources for acquiring subject knowledge.
- The use of digital technologies in constructing and presenting students' own work is evident in subject curricula developed according to the third generation of curricula.

Integrating Complex Assignments into the Learning Process

The content has been organized under several rubrics that encompass key issues and ideas related to Complex Assignmentss, allowing for a detailed analysis. This analysis juxtaposes, on one hand, the problems and challenges identified by the school and the interested community, and on the other hand, the positive aspects and strengths highlighted by community representatives in broader discussions. The identified problems and shortcomings are primarily related to administrative aspects, while the positive experiences pertain to goals, content, and the development of knowledge and skills. More specifically, the study of these issues has facilitated the identification of the following directions:

| <i>Problems/Obstacles/Challenges</i> | <i>Positive and Strong Points</i> |
|---|---|
| 1. The duration required to complete the task, alongside time management challenges; 2. Complex Assignments and additional costs for teachers and students' families; 3. The multiplicity of Complex Assignments leading to reduced coordination within the school; 4. Students' apprehension regarding Complex Assignments; 5. Issues related to collaboration among teachers from different departments in schools; 6. Challenges related to technology, internet access, and resources; 7. Issues concerning teachers' competence; 8. Problems associated with the professional development of teachers; 9. Misunderstanding of Complex Assignments, alongside inadequate expectations for the age and standards of teachers; 10. Difficulties in the evaluation of students by teachers in the context of Complex Assignments performance; 11. Inappropriate use of Complex Assignments by teachers, fostering an environment that encourages tutoring; 12. An emphasis on visual effects rather than the cultivation of in-depth knowledge; | 1. Emphasis on the development of knowledge and skills; 2. Integration of life experiences and practical applications; 3. Enhancement of communication and audience management skills; 4. An engaging process that fosters student motivation; 5. Recognition of students' inclinations and special skills through specific roles in group assignments; 6. Cultivation of a cooperative culture; 7. Mitigation of challenges arising from disparities in academic preparation among students in relation to task requirements; 8. Access to methodological and educational resources for teachers; 9. Increased freedom for students to express their opinions; 10. Ability to respond effectively to students' needs; 11. Promotion of student cooperation and peer education; 12. Greater utilization of technology in both classroom and home environments; 13. Flexibility and the provision of unlimited time for task completion. |

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| 13. Delegation of learning responsibilities to home environments instead of facilitating them at school; 14. Concerns regarding parental involvement; 15. The predominant role of parents, resulting in insufficient space for student initiatives; 16. The direct replication of foreign educational models without consideration of the local context; 17. Inequities arising from varying levels of parental involvement; 18. Challenges related to the qualifications of coaches; 19. Issues with individual contributions by students during group work on Complex Assignments, impacting their actual development of knowledge and competencies; 20. Incompatibility between the school budget and reform initiatives, along with a lack of appropriate funding for Complex Assignments; 21. Inadequate instruction from teachers during the preparation process for students completing Complex Assignments; 22. A lack of connection between extracurricular activities and the teaching and learning processes; 23. A format that is technically and content-wise complicated. | |
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Assessment System: Emphasis on Formative Assessment

Although one of the primary objectives within the framework of the New School Model was to integrate formative assessment into the educational process, research did not reveal a significant transformation in practices in this area. Challenges associated with implementing formative assessment have led to critical perspectives and questions regarding its feasibility and relevance, influenced by various factors. Broadly speaking, three primary concerns have emerged regarding the widespread adoption of formative assessment:

1. **Insufficient Time Resources:** There is a lack of adequate time for regularly conducting formative assessments, attributed to the large number of students and the overcrowded nature of the teaching process.
2. **Inadequate Teacher Readiness:** Teachers often lack the preparedness necessary to implement effective formative assessment practices.
3. **Negative Attitudes and Mistrust:** Different segments of the school community generally have skepticism and lack of trust in formative assessment as a concept.

Findings from the Quantitative Part of the Study

Perception of the Reform by Different Groups and Information About the Reform (Teachers)

- Even those teachers who work in the schools involved in the first stage of the reform implementation do not have information about their school's involvement, indicating insufficient institutional readiness for the model's implementation.
- The reform has had varying impacts on different aspects of teachers' professional activities. However, its influence is particularly significant in areas directly related to the reform's vision, such as the creation of matrices and Complex Assignments, as well as the planning of additional support/remediation programs for students. There is minimal impact, however, in areas such as lesson planning, collaboration with colleagues, and the effect of the reform on the assessment of students' work.
- Teachers' perceptions of their school's readiness to implement the reform are directly related to their assessment of the effectiveness of various aspects of the reform. Accordingly, those teachers who believe that the school was well prepared to implement the reform are more inclined to rate the resourcefulness of the school's intra-school support groups for reform implementation and institutionalization in general. Additionally, perceptions of the school's infrastructure for recognizing the validity of teaching practices, as well as evaluations of the technological infrastructure and equipment for implementing digital technologies, contribute to a positive overall assessment of the support provided by the Ministry during the reform process.
- Teachers hold different attitudes toward the main concepts formed during the introduction of the New School Model, indicating that the reform is not equally understood or appreciated by different groups of teachers. For example, in the case of constructivist approaches, significant variation in perceptions among teachers is evident. The differing attitudes of teachers, not only based on their readiness but also concerning specific aspects of the reform, highlight the need for individualized and diversified interventions to support teachers, as well as the necessity for holistic approaches to understanding reform visions.
- Teachers' opinions confirm a positive correlation between their perception of the relevance of the visions and concepts of the New School Model to the needs of their own school and the primary goals articulated by the reform. Furthermore, the concept involving the development and implementation of a school curriculum based on constructivist educational principles, along with the integration of digital technologies in the teaching-learning process, shows a higher correlation than the concepts related to the development of effective school management approaches and aspects of creating a developmental assessment system.
- Teachers' perceptions of the reform's relevance to the needs of the school uniquely determine their positive attitudes toward each element of the reform; specifically, the positive assessment of the teaching-learning process, the improvement of school culture, and the ability to focus on learning while taking into account the needs of the students.

Professional Development of Teachers: Schema Compatibility, Readiness, and Autonomy

- The teachers' survey indicates that even among those working in schools involved in the reform, opportunities for participation in professional development activities were not equally available. Moreover, teachers in schools implementing the New School Model often cite professional

development activities conducted by various organizations, including universities, civil society, and international programs, as supportive of the new curriculum's implementation. This finding is positive, as it suggests that teachers do not perceive the reform of curriculum implementation within the New School Model as a separate initiative but rather connect it to their overall professional development. However, it also confirms that, beyond professional development activities focused on the new curriculum, additional opportunities play a significant role in strengthening teachers professionally. Notably, just over half of the teachers consider the support they received to be sufficient.

- Overall, teachers report high self-esteem regarding their professional training, although differences are evident across various aspects of training. For instance, teachers express less readiness concerning the development of subject matrices and the implementation of remedial and support activities for students, while they report the highest readiness in using formative assessment and adapting teaching to meet individual student needs. This distribution suggests that in areas of professional activity that have been the focus of professional development for an extended period, the perception of readiness is greater than in those activities directly associated with the New School Model and the introduction of the third-generation national curriculum.
- The perception among teachers in schools implementing the New School Model regarding their own professional readiness is significantly higher, both in specific aspects and overall, compared to teachers of schools not involved at piloting stage of New School Model. .
- Teachers who have a particularly high self-esteem regarding their professional readiness are more likely to express satisfaction with their increased roles and responsibilities within the New School Model. A positive correlation between two variables can suggest a relationship influenced by socially and professionally conditioned responses, particularly when individuals modify their behavior or responses to align with what they perceive as more "appropriate" or socially desirable. However, this satisfaction is not directly linked to the school's involvement in curriculum reform.
- Teachers in schools participating in the new curriculum reform are more inclined to believe they possess high professional autonomy in the teaching process and frequently rate their autonomy positively.
- Teachers from schools implementing the reform also report greater involvement in various aspects of professional activity, including those uniquely related to the vision of the new curriculum. Examples include collaboration with colleagues, evaluation of student work, and lesson planning.
- The high perception of teachers' professional autonomy positively influences their assessment of the importance of both external and internal school support, independent of other factors.

Introduction of Constructivist Approach

- The majority of teachers express a high motivation to integrate constructivist approaches, new assessment systems, and digital technologies. This motivation is notably higher regarding all sources of motivation in schools participating in the reform for the introduction of the new curriculum. The difference between these two groups of teachers is statistically significant across all sources. However, for teachers, the results achieved by students remain the most important source of motivation, regardless of the school's status.
- Teachers who perceive themselves as having high professional autonomy place greater value on the practice of teaching with Complex Assignments. Those who rate their professional autonomy higher exhibit a significantly positive attitude toward working with Complex Assignments. This suggests that enhancing teachers' autonomy may be an effective strategy for improving the acceptance and implementation of teaching methods involving Complex Assignments.

Additionally, teachers with a strong perception of autonomy are more likely to believe that students maintain a positive attitude toward the teaching-learning process involving Complex Assignments. A less pronounced positive relationship also exists between teachers' perceptions of autonomy and their favorable evaluation of the use of formative assessment.

- The reform's potential to enhance school teaching and learning, as positively perceived by teachers, significantly predicts its positive impact on students' academic performance.
- Overall, the teachers' survey confirms statistically significant positive changes resulting from the introduction of the New School Model, which, despite critical views and attitudes, are tangible.

Chapter 10. Recommendations According to the Research Findings

Policy Recommendation 1: Extending the Benefits of the New School Model to Rural, Highland, and Non-Georgian Speaking Schools

Findings/Justification of the Research: The New School Model has left certain schools—specifically those in mountainous regions, rural areas, schools with small student populations, and non-Georgian speaking schools—in an unequal position, lacking the necessary support tools.

Intervention:

- Develop infrastructure, technological resources, and professional development support tools tailored to the New School Model specifically for rural, highland, and non-Georgian schools.
- Create and implement a management and support program aimed at rural, mountainous, non-Georgian speaking, and small-contingent schools to realize the conceptual and methodological foundations of the New School Model.
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Policy Recommendation 2: Ensuring Compatibility of the New School Model with Other Areas of Education Reform

Professional Development and Career Advancement of Teachers

Findings/Justification of the Study: The research indicated that the New School Model conflicts conceptually, administratively, procedurally, and substantively with existing schemes for the professional development and career advancement of teachers. As a result, implementing the vision defined by the New School Model in terms of professional development and support for teachers poses challenges.

Intervention:

- Transform the professional development and career advancement scheme for teachers, and develop relevant tools within the New School Model at the school level.
- Link successful practices to formal procedural frameworks (If such successful practices are in place)
- Support successful practices through monetary policies aimed at the professional development of teachers.
- Create and develop a school-based system for teacher evaluation.
- Encourage schools to integrate support groups and coaching systems into their culture, either at the school level or through inter-school collaboration.
- Align teacher professional development approaches with the conceptual and methodological foundations of the New School Model.
- Conceptualize new pathways for the professional promotion of teachers, focusing on enhancing professional motivation through both monetary incentives and positive growth. This could include roles such as lead teachers, mentor teachers, or coach teachers, with specific activities integrated into the existing professional development framework.

Compatibility of School Textbooks with the Methodological and Conceptual Vision of the New School Model

Findings/Justification of the Research: At the initial stage of the reform, the compatibility of existing licensed school textbooks with the pedagogical approaches underpinning the New School Model was highlighted as a significant issue, particularly given teachers' reliance on these textbooks.

Intervention:

- Fully adapt school textbooks, teachers guides to align with the concepts and positive practices of the New School Model, emphasizing constructivist approaches, Complex Assignments, and formative assessments.
- During the teaching process, utilize technologies to create and adapt school textbooks for digital, distance, or online teaching, as well as for integrating technological resources in face-to-face instruction.
- Develop tools for the use and mutual sharing of learning resources created by teachers or other stakeholders.
- Streamline school textbooks by reducing overloaded content, presenting scientific language in a manner understandable to students, and ensuring contextually relevant text selection. Focus on authentic approaches rather than merely formal applications of pedagogy and constructivism while emphasizing engaging topics for children.

School Leadership and Vision of School Leadership: The Role of the School Principal in the Implementation of the Reform and Current Challenges

Research Finding/Justification: A significant issue within the New School Model relates to school leaders, many of whom have struggled to implement the reform effectively. Contributing factors include readiness, motivation, qualifications, competence, functional distribution, and overall involvement.

Intervention:

- Strengthening school leaders through relevant professional development activities includes diagnosing school needs, assessing school culture and environment, adapting the national curriculum to the school context and needs, supporting and evaluating the development and implementation of matrices and complex tasks, and familiarizing them with internal and external student assessment systems. It also involves selecting, introducing, supporting, guiding, and managing staff at the school level, as well as planning and supporting project-based, extracurricular, and non-formal learning-teaching assessments. Additionally, it focuses on transforming school leaders into learning process leaders by introducing various models of authority, gradual development systems, establishing specific outcomes, and recognizing their achievements. Establish a system for the selection, certification, and continuous professional development of school leaders, focusing on the development and implementation of the school curriculum.
- Fully delegating the management of the learning process to school principals involves developing appropriate tools for the design, implementation, and evaluation of school curricula, professional development of teachers, data collection and analysis, and the identification and delegation of responsibilities to lead teachers. It also requires ensuring an appropriate level of school autonomy that aligns with the institution's performance outcomes..

- Creating a system of accountability for school leaders toward the school community involves establishing clear mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness in developing and managing the school curriculum and guiding the educational process. This includes regular feedback loops, transparent performance metrics, and active involvement of stakeholders—such as teachers, parents, and students—in assessing school leadership and fostering continuous improvement.
- Develop support systems for school leaders that employ differentiated approaches based on the specific needs of their schools.
- Reform Educational Resource Centers to enhance their involvement and accountability in relation to curriculum and academic achievements.
- Professionalize Educational Resource Centers by establishing a permanent professional development and support system for guidance and management of the educational process.
- Develop a professional advancement scheme for school leaders that allows principals to progress according to their professional maturity, aligning their authority and salary policies with their level of expertise.

The System of Admission to Higher Education and the New School Model

Research Finding/Rationale: The implementation of the New School Model at the secondary level had challenges and difficulties. The higher education admission system and the prioritized subjects of exams influence secondary school students' motivation to study specific subjects. Students perceive the school's role as primarily preparing them for higher education, leading them to focus exclusively on subjects relevant to the admissions process, while neglecting general education and the development of essential knowledge, competencies, and skills. Passing entrance exams often serves as a stronger motivator than acquiring a well-rounded education.

Intervention:

- Assess the role of school life and school activities in higher education admission systems while implementing the conceptual approaches of the New School Model.
- Reflect academic results achieved within the framework of the New School Model in the secondary-level admissions systems.
- Revise entrance exam tests to emphasize the knowledge and competencies acquired through the New School Model.

Public School Authorization Process

Research Finding/Justification: The New School Model emphasizes the transformation of schools as institutions rather than focusing on external evaluation. This approach considers complex elements and aspects, requiring schools to develop their plans and pace according to their capabilities and autonomy. In contrast, the authorization process compelled schools and principals to question their capacity for autonomy, with the expectation that they would secure resources to meet authorization requirements.

Intervention:

- Integrate the positive visions established during the implementation of the New School Model into the authorization reform, emphasizing holistic school development and replacing the existing strong accountability focus with institutional capacity building.
- Shift emphasis in the authorization process toward content rather than bureaucratic tools.

- Load the authorization process with practices of quality development and evaluation, prioritizing substantive engagement over formal procedures, and utilizing the successful experiences from the New School Model in this area.

Perception of the Reform by Different Groups (Authors and Planners of the Reform, Principals, Teachers, Parents)

Research Findings/Justification: Parents lack information about the New School Model, including its goals, concepts, and daily practices. Teachers have misconceptions regarding the curriculum, particularly concerning Complex Assignments and formative assessment. Teacher training for this transition was inadequately planned, with the assumption that schools and teachers would undergo joint training to develop and implement the curriculum. Additionally, school leaders exhibited low awareness, involvement, and support for the reform, while coordination among various state institutions and stakeholders was weak, leading to fragmented visions and efforts.

Intervention:

- Actively involve parents, teachers, school administration, educational resource centers, and all interested parties in the planning, implementation, and transformation of educational reforms through direct communication. Fostering communication with the school community can be achieved through various events, including open house days, the encouragement of parent-initiated projects, designated tutoring hours, and other interactive formats that promote collaboration and transparency.
- Strengthen institutional coordination during the reform implementation process.
- Ensure consistency across reforms and eliminate contradictory directions among various agencies' activities.
- Develop and implement intermediate evaluation mechanisms to assess the reform's progress, involving the school community and various Ministry agencies. These evaluations should focus on determining the relevance of efforts made and enabling timely modifications. This approach will enhance information flow, accountability, understanding of roles, ownership, and connections between reforms.

Policy Recommendation 3: Strengthen Institutional Coordination and Cooperation

Research Findings/Rationale: Insufficient coordination among different structural units hindered the effective implementation of the New School Model, particularly in the later stages of its initial rollout. Strengthening cooperation will foster a shared vision, ensuring that all stakeholders work towards common goals.

Intervention: Establish clear and ongoing coordination mechanisms among all structural units of the Ministry of Education to ensure a coherent approach to the implementation and maintenance of reforms.

Policy Recommendation 4: Sustain Financial and Political Support Throughout Reform Implementation

Findings/Justification: In the early stages of the reform, broad financial and political support was evident, manifested through infrastructural and technical assistance for the schools involved in the project. However, this support diminished over time.

Intervention: Ensure that general education reform receives sustained financial and political backing at all stages of its implementation. Establish institutional mechanisms to guarantee the sustainability and irreversibility of reforms.

Policy Recommendation 5: Strengthen Educational Resource Centers (ERCs) as Key Decentralization Units

Findings/Justification: Educational Resource Centers have emerged as crucial structural and strategic links in implementing the New School Model. However, their coordination competencies and authority are underutilized, leading to challenges in engaging schools, principals, and teachers who rely heavily on directives and recommendations.

Intervention: Strengthening educational resource centers by redefining and professionalizing their roles and responsibilities, delegating parts of educational reforms to these centers, and establishing them as strategic units for implementing reforms. In this model, resource centers would be equipped to provide schools with tailored consultations, coaching, and professional development activities. These centers would offer training to various groups within the school community and support school leaders in partnership, taking on the school support functions previously managed by coaches and support groups under the New School Model.

Policy Recommendation 6: Integrate the New School Model with Other Educational Reforms

Research Findings/Justification: The New School Model has not effectively initiated or aligned with other relevant reforms, such as professional development for teachers, structural management changes, the redefinition of school leaders' roles, the introduction of new assessment systems, national assessments, and the school admission system for higher education.

Intervention: Align the New School Model with broader educational reforms by defining a meaningful vision and orienting each element toward common goals, thereby enhancing the interconnectedness of knowledge and experience across initiatives.

Policy Recommendation 7: Develop a Culture of Leadership at the School Level

Research Findings/Rationale: The existing system of coaches and support groups has not proven effective in the long term. Since these groups left, the institutional sustainability of the reform has faltered.

Intervention: Develop tools for the career advancement of teacher leaders at the school level, establish a functional workload for these teachers, and create an appropriate salary payment system. Delegate educational process responsibilities to teacher leaders and create opportunities for targeted professional development, thereby enhancing the role of school leaders in implementing reforms at the school level.

Policy Recommendation 8: Strengthen Expertise in School Curriculum Development and Implementation

Research Findings/Rationale: Research indicates that school curriculum development remains a weak aspect of educational reform, with teachers often lacking the necessary experience to develop effective curricula. The expectation that schools can independently create original curricula is unrealistic.

Intervention: Develop specialized training programs for school leaders and teachers that focus on the principles of curriculum development, particularly emphasizing constructivist approaches. Support groups should have a dual function: (a) assist in creating mission statements, objectives, and curricula tailored to each school's unique context; and (b) prepare school leaders and teacher leaders to integrate the changes introduced by the support group into the school culture through ongoing professional development, teacher evaluation, and the establishment of effective tools for guiding the learning process. Additionally, create and offer a comprehensive library of curriculum recommendation schemes and implementations tailored to the diverse types of schools in Georgia, aiding schools in making contextually appropriate decisions.

Policy Recommendation 9: Support Schools in Developing Authentic Curricula and Relevant Learning Resources

Research Findings/Rationale: Schools often replicate materials developed by the Ministry and struggle to create original and authentic curricula. This practice limits the relevance and adaptability of curricula to their specific educational contexts.

Intervention: The Ministry of Education and Science should establish a support system that provides schools with access to learning resources, templates for curricula and Complex Assignments, as well as opportunities for ongoing consultation with curriculum experts. By combining expert knowledge and access to diverse learning resources with an understanding of local culture, context, traditions, and unique educational goals, schools can develop curricula that are meaningful and contextually relevant. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Education and Science should establish incentive systems to encourage teachers to create new Complex Assignments. These mechanisms could include both financial rewards and opportunities for professional growth, such as conferences, competitions, and other platforms where teachers can showcase their tasks to the wider pedagogical community.

Policy Recommendation 10: Foster a Culture of Collaboration in Curriculum Development

Research Findings/Rationale: Collaboration in curriculum development has a positive impact on school culture and professional development. However, such practices are not widely adopted or studied in schools of Georgia.

Intervention: Institutionalize collaborative curriculum development processes that involve school leadership, teachers, students, parents, and the community. Support and recognize schools that establish a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement, fostering collaboration in developing and implementing the school curriculum. Additionally, encourage inter-school collaboration among staff to share best practices and strengthen school communities. Promote and support inter-school collaboration to facilitate the adoption of best practices and strengthen school communities. Examples of such initiatives include establishing school networks, hosting conferences, organizing online or in-person

workshops, and supporting exchange programs that allow educators to observe on-site practices and share experiences.

Policy Recommendation 11: Develop and Implement School Curriculum Guidelines

Research Findings/Rationale: Current school curricula often lack essential elements that build school culture, such as activities related to school traditions, sports, and other extracurricular activities.

Intervention: Develop comprehensive guidelines for school curricula that mandate the inclusion of elements promoting school culture, such as holidays, sports events, and extracurricular activities. These guidelines should allow schools to incorporate culturally relevant and innovative practices. Additionally, provide necessary financial support for organizing elements that promote school culture, ensuring they align with the school's visions and priorities.

Policy Recommendation 12: Ensure Methodological Consistency in Curriculum Development

Research Findings/Rationale: Research indicates that there is no significant methodological difference in how schools develop curricula across different generations of the National Curriculum.

Intervention: Integrate the school curriculum development process into the school culture, enriching it with relevant content. Shift from a bureaucratic approach to making curriculum development a mandatory aspect of the authorization and educational reform processes. Emphasize the importance of developing school curricula based on specific needs rather than mere compliance. If schools are not adequately prepared, an alternative solution is to provide guidelines on how to integrate the ESS (Educational Standards and Strategy) into the school curriculum. Additionally, the development of school curricula should be carefully planned to avoid the direct copying of existing documents. It is essential that teachers collaborate before the start of the school year to review and discuss the key components of the curriculum, focusing on areas for improvement and adaptation to the specific needs of their students.

Policy Recommendation 13: Diversify and Contextualize Curriculum Content and Assignments

Research Findings/Rationale: The repetition of identical tasks across many subjects, such as history, limits the educational variety and reduces opportunities for creativity and critical thinking among students. Teacher feedback confirms that developing original, contextual tasks is one of the most challenging aspects of their roles.

Intervention: Focus on the professional development of teachers within their specific school contexts, targeting the creation of unique, context-driven tasks. This approach should emphasize the ability to address everyday needs and challenges rather than relying solely on the development of centrally defined knowledge and skills. Specifically, one approach could be organizing presentations and discussions of tasks developed by teachers during pedagogical council meetings within the school. It is also essential to allocate time for teachers to collaborate on these assignments, particularly within departmental or subject-related groups, to ensure that tasks are tailored and improved according to the needs of both teachers and students.

Policy Recommendation 14: Integrate Technology More Effectively into the Curriculum

Research Findings/Rationale: The increased emphasis on technology in third-generation national curricula is positive; however, it is essential to ensure that this integration is meaningful and enhances learning outcomes.

Intervention: Develop a comprehensive framework for integrating technology into school curricula that extends beyond basic Internet browsing or multimedia skills. This should include training for teachers on incorporating advanced digital tools such as educational software, online collaboration platforms, and data analysis tools into their teaching practices. Training programs must be tailored to the teachers' varying abilities rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach. Encourage the use of technology to facilitate project-based learning, virtual field trips, and interactive simulations that deepen students' understanding of subjects and enhance engagement. Additionally, ensure that schools and teachers are adequately prepared to implement these technologies based on specific subject requirements, providing needs-based development opportunities.

Policy Recommendation 15: Promote the Development of Digital Literacy Skills

Research Findings/Rationale: As students increasingly rely on the Internet for projects and research, it is crucial to ensure they develop strong digital literacy skills to navigate, evaluate, and analyze online information effectively.

Intervention: Integrate digital literacy as a core component of the school curriculum with specific learning outcomes across all subjects. Focus on valuing sources, understanding digital ethics, and responsible technology use. Empower teachers to guide students in developing these skills, enabling them to use technology to enhance their learning and critical thinking abilities. Move beyond merely assigning tasks that require internet research, emphasizing the development of digital literacy skills. Leverage school technological resources to support this focus.

Policy Recommendation 16: Improve Time Management by Institutionalizing Collaborative Approaches

Research Findings/Rationale: The time allocated by the curriculum often fails to allow the completion of necessary Complex Assignments across subjects. This creates challenges for both teachers and students in managing time effectively.

Intervention: Implement interdisciplinary integration for Complex Assignments. Base these tasks on learning goals and needs rather than strictly adhering to quantitative parameters and requirements.

Policy Recommendation 17: Minimize the Additional Costs of Complex Assignments for Teachers and Parents

Research Findings/Rationale: Complex Assignments can impose extra financial burdens on teachers and students' families, creating barriers to effective participation in educational activities.

Intervention:

- Provide financial support to schools and allocate additional resources within the school curriculum tailored to the specific contexts and needs of each school. Ensuring that complex assignments are worked on during class time, rather than as homework, can help shift the focus of learning to the classroom. This approach would allow students to engage more deeply with tasks, receive immediate feedback, and collaborate with their peers under the teacher's guidance, rather than attempting to complete challenging work independently outside of school hours.

Policy Recommendation 18: Improve Coordination and Communication in Schools

Research Findings/Rationale: The volume of Complex Assignments, training for the New School Model, and other mandated activities can overwhelm teachers, leading to burnout and disengagement from professional development.

Intervention: Base the professional development of teachers on the specific needs of the teaching context rather than on obligations imposed by various agencies. Enhance inter-agency cooperation to ensure that policy implementation is coordinated, integrated, and does not unduly burden students or teachers.

Policy Recommendation 19: Develop a Collaborative School Culture Among Teachers, Administration, and Parents

Research Findings/Rationale: The lack of collaboration between teachers and departments has led to fewer opportunities for developing the school curriculum and effectively implementing Complex Assignments.

Intervention: Promote a collaborative culture within schools by facilitating regular interdisciplinary meetings and collaborative planning sessions. Creating a school culture rooted in cooperation and transforming teachers' competition and personal interests into collective opportunities is essential. It is important to eliminate practices that hinder collaboration, such as fighting for teaching hours, linking lessons to salary increases, or recognizing success based on the failure of others. Instead, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment where achievements are celebrated collectively can promote a positive and productive school culture.

Policy Recommendation 20: Improve Technology Infrastructure and Access

Research Findings/Rationale: Insufficient technology, internet access, and resources hinder the effective implementation of Complex Assignments at the school level.

Intervention: Increase investments in technology infrastructure improvements specifically aligned with the implementation of school curricula and academic programs, rather than general infrastructure upgrades. Ensure that all students—particularly those in rural, highland, small-contingent, or non-Georgian-speaking schools—have access to essential technology and internet resources.

Policy Recommendation 21: Enhance Teacher Competence and Professional Development

Research Findings/Rationale: Many teachers lack the necessary competencies and professional skills to effectively carry out Complex Assignments in their daily practice. Current policies and contexts often hinder teachers from recognizing their need for additional support.

Intervention: Expand professional development programs and create targeted systems for teacher training at the school level, focusing on the specific skills required to design, manage, and evaluate Complex Assignments. Encourage teachers to engage in self-reflection and communicate their professional needs to facilitate appropriate support.

Policy Recommendation 22: Emphasize Depth of Knowledge Over Visual Effects

Research Findings/Rationale: Teachers often prioritize external, visual effects in student work rather than fostering in-depth knowledge during the execution of Complex Assignments.

Intervention: Shift the focus from the final product to the learning objectives themselves, ensuring that the outcomes defined by these objectives are achieved through meaningful engagement and understanding.

Policy Recommendation 23: Rethink Approaches to Complex Assignments as Homework

Research Findings/Rationale: Complex Assignments are often delegated to students for completion at home, relying heavily on parental support. This can disadvantage students who lack a supportive learning environment.

Intervention: Maximize the completion of Complex Assignments within the school environment, utilizing available resources to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities. Limit the delegation of Complex Assignments as homework to create a more balanced approach. This approach should minimize the need for teachers to work on complex assignments at home. Furthermore, such meetings should be subject to negotiation and agreement, ensuring that the process is collaborative and flexible for all involved

Policy Recommendation 24: Balance Parental Involvement While Maintaining Student Autonomy

Research Findings/Rationale: Excessive parental involvement in Complex Assignments can limit student initiative and autonomy, transforming these assignments into a means for parents to achieve learning goals instead of fostering student competencies.

Intervention: Equip schools and teachers with strategies to enhance appropriate parental involvement. Align the difficulty of Complex Assignments with students' knowledge and abilities, promoting independence and critical thinking skills. Encourage parents to support their children's development by creating a conducive learning environment without taking over the tasks. Additionally, breaking down complex tasks into simpler components and providing more stages and time to work on each element will support better learning outcomes and reduce the pressure on students.

Policy Recommendation 25: Align School Budgets with Educational Reforms

Research Findings/Rationale: A mismatch between school budgets and the demands of educational reforms has impeded the effective implementation of Complex Assignments at the school level.

Intervention: Advocate for increased funding or the reallocation of resources to ensure schools have the financial capacity to implement Complex Assignments effectively.

Policy Recommendation 26: Strengthen the Relationship Between Extracurricular Activities and Classroom Learning

Research Findings/Rationale: The connection between extracurricular activities (For example excursions, student clubs activities. student council activities) and classroom learning is often unclear, limiting their educational potential and reducing the effectiveness of Complex Assignments.

Intervention: Integrate extracurricular activities more closely with classroom instruction by aligning them with the goals of Complex Assignments, fostering a more cohesive learning experience.

Policy Recommendation 27: Simplify the Format of Complex Assignments and Curricula

Research Findings/Rationale: The current Complex Assignments formats and thematic matrices pose challenges for teachers in planning and execution. A simplified format would alleviate bureaucratic pressure and streamline the teaching process.

Intervention: Develop and implement simplified formats (for example, non-matrix-based, mathematical, or narrative type) for matrices, curricula, and Complex Assignments that are easier for teachers to use while maintaining educational content.

Policy Recommendation 28: Strengthen Individual Student Support and Remedial Programs

Research Findings/Rationale: Effective individual support and remedial programs are crucial for maximizing student potential and improving classroom performance. Teachers, management, and parents must collaborate to provide targeted support.

Intervention: Facilitate professional development activities to diagnose student needs and create individual support plans. Ensure schools receive the necessary resources and financial support to sustain teachers' professional motivation and recognize their efforts.

Policy Recommendation 29: Link Teachers' Professional Motivation to Student Academic Performance

Research Findings/Rationale: Teachers derive significant motivation from observing their students' academic achievements and progress.

Intervention: Equip schools with effective in-school assessment tools and train teachers to use these tools, enabling them to measure and visualize student progress throughout the learning process.

Policy Recommendation 30: Empower Teachers to Implement Formative Assessments Actively

Research Findings/Rationale: Many teachers lack the readiness to effectively utilize formative assessments, which are vital for student growth.

Intervention:

- **Professional Development:** Provide targeted training programs focusing on formative assessment techniques, including design, administration, and interpretation.
- **Ongoing Support:** Establish mentoring programs where experienced teachers guide less experienced colleagues in implementing formative assessments.
- **Awareness Raising:** Inform all school stakeholders—administrators, teachers, parents, and students—about the benefits of formative assessments in enhancing learning outcomes.
- **Assessment Integration:** Ensure that formative assessments are linked to summative assessments. This will allow students and teachers to track learning progress and understand the value of formative assessments in improving results.
- **Flexibility in Implementation:** Allow schools and teachers to adapt formative assessment practices to their specific contexts and student needs, fostering innovation and responsiveness.

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