



Nato Gugava*
Nino Vasadze**

The Effectiveness of Mandatory Qualification and Certification Procedures for Teacher Candidates in Georgia

[Skuteczność obowiązkowych procedur kwalifikacyjnych i certyfikacyjnych dla kandydatów na nauczycieli w Gruzji]

Abstract

Education is a top priority for any state, and teachers play a crucial role in enhancing its quality. Their professional knowledge, skills, and teaching approaches directly impact the effectiveness of the learning process and students' academic success. In response to the evolving challenges of the 21st century, the education system must remain flexible, adapting to contemporary requirements while ensuring that teachers are equipped with the expertise needed to manage instruction effectively and help students reach their full potential and achieve the best possible results.

It is worth noting that, according to national legislation, teachers in general education institutions must follow professional teaching standards, the code of professional ethics, and the responsibilities outlined by their Sector Benchmark. They are also required to acknowledge each student's individuality and to implement differentiated teaching strategies that support students' personal, social-emotional, and cognitive development. In addition, teachers should enhance student achievement by reflecting on their own work and analyzing student assessments. They should embrace innovation in their teaching practices, effectively integrate information and communication technologies into the learning process, and remain committed to ongoing professional development. Accordingly, teachers' high qualifications and professionalism are essential for enhancing the quality of school education. For this very purpose, Georgia has imposed new requirements on teachers since 2010 and introduced teacher certification exams. Although Georgia has established qualification requirements for aspiring teachers and introduced teacher training programs, there are still educators in the system who do

* **Nato Gugava** – PhD in Public Administration, Associate Professor (in Law) at Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani University, Tbilisi, Georgia (affiliation); <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8191-6170>; nato.gugava@sabauni.edu.ge / dr nauk o administracji publicznej, profesor uczelni (prawo), Uniwersytet Sulchana Saby Orbelianiego, Tbilisi, Gruzja (afiliacja).

** **Nino Vasadze** – PhD candidate in Public Administration of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani University (Sabauni), Tbilisi, Georgia (affiliation); <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7729-4863>; n.vasadze24@sabauni.edu.ge / doktorantka nauk o administracji publicznej na Uniwersytecie Sulchana Saby Orbelianiego, Tbilisi, Gruzja (afiliacja).

not meet the state's minimum competency standards. It is therefore worth examining how teachers are hired in schools, as, despite regulations and competency requirements in the education system, there are still cases where teachers lack the fundamental skills needed to facilitate a successful, results-oriented learning process.

With this in mind, this paper will examine the effectiveness of teacher selection and qualification requirements in Georgian general education institutions, their alignment with national regulations and international standards, and the key reforms Georgia should consider to modernize its education system. In this process, assessing the effectiveness of qualification requirements for teacher recruitment is particularly crucial, as it serves as the foundation for attracting and retaining highly qualified, professional educators. Ultimately, this has a direct and measurable impact on the quality of education and students' academic success.

Keywords: teacher selection, qualification requirements, general education institutions, competitions, teacher competence, certification exam.

Introduction

In response to the growing challenges of the 21st century, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate a successful, results-driven learning process. However, many students in Georgia face difficulties in developing the competencies needed to succeed in higher education and the labor market.¹ One contributing factor is that not all teachers possess the fundamental skills needed to effectively support student learning.² The relevance of the issue of selecting competent teachers in general education institutions is also confirmed by the Development Strategy of Georgia – Vision 2030, which emphasizes that modernizing the teacher training system and attracting and retaining qualified staff are key to establishing a student-centered learning environment in general education schools.³ However, the strategic document does not specify the concrete steps planned to achieve this goal.

¹ Center For Civil Integration And Inter-Ethnic Relations, Teacher Certification, Professional Development, and Career Advancement from 2005 to 2023, p. 10.

² R. Li, H. Kitchen, B. George, M. Richardson, E. Fordham, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris 2019, p. 12.

³ Ordinance of the Government of Georgia #517 on the Adoption of the Development Strategy of Georgia – Vision 2030.

It is worth noting that since 2010, the Georgian government has introduced new teacher qualification requirements, including certification exams.⁴ Yet, a study by the Center For Civil Integration And Inter-Ethnic Relations found that between 2010 and 2014, only 41.6% of applicants who took the professional skills test met the minimum competency threshold. Between 2010 and 2015, results varied by subject: foreign language teachers had a higher success rate, while elementary school, physics, and mathematics teachers had a low rate.⁵ Until 2016, a significant number of teachers failed to meet state competency standards. In response, exam questions were simplified, and the minimum competency threshold was lowered.⁶ Despite these adjustments, by 2023, approximately 5,000 non-status teachers remained in the system without having met the state's minimum competency requirements.⁷

At the same time, a study by the National Center for Educational Research (NCER) revealed a sharp imbalance between supply and demand in the teacher labor market: while the number of individuals seeking to enter the profession has increased, demand for new teachers remains low.⁸ Nevertheless, schools continue to employ teachers who have not attained full professional status.

University educational programs play a crucial role in shaping teacher qualifications. However, in some cases, these programs fail to produce highly competent graduates, as indicated by both labor market analyses⁹ and research on university curricula.¹⁰ These studies confirm that university programs in Georgia are not aligned with labor market demands,¹¹ including teacher training programs, which often fall short in preparing qualified professionals.¹²

In addition to the above, it should also be noted that in order to attract skilled educators to the profession, changes were made to the sectoral characteristics of the teaching profession and a teacher training educational program was introduced.¹³ Admission to these programs requires candidates

⁴ Order No. 1101 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, dated December 4, 2009 On the Regulation of Teacher Certification and the Approval of a Sample Teacher Certificate

⁵ Center For Civil Integration And Inter-Ethnic Relations, Teacher Certification, Professional Development, and Career Advancement from 2005 to 2023, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7, 10.

⁷ National Center for Educational Research (NCER), Assessment of Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme, 2023, p. 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹ M. Amashukeli, D. Lezhava, N. Gugushvili, Educational Outcomes, Employment Market and Job Satisfaction in Georgia, Tbilisi 2017, p. 7.

¹⁰ L. Ingvarson, J. Schwille, M. T. Tatto, G. Rowley, R. Peck, S. Senk, An Analysis of Teacher Education Context, Structure, and Quality-Assurance Arrangements in TEDS-M Countries, Michigan, Amsterdam 2013, p. 48.

¹¹ M. Amashukeli, D. Lezhava, N. Gugushvili, Educational..., *ibid.*

¹² L. Ingvarson, J. Schwille, M. T. Tatto, G. Rowley, R. Peck, S. Senk, An Analysis..., *ibid.*

¹³ Order No. 69 of the Director of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), dated February 11, 2016 On the Approval of the Sectoral Characteristics of the Teacher Training Educational Program.

to score at least 60% on the relevant subject competency test.¹⁴ However, the effectiveness of training and retraining processes—particularly for individuals transitioning from other fields who have demonstrated subject competence but lack formal teaching experience—has not been thoroughly studied.

Given these challenges, it is evident that teacher competence in general education institutions remains a critical issue. As such, the teacher selection process plays a fundamental role in ensuring educational quality. In Georgia, state regulations define qualification requirements for aspiring teachers, outline procedures for entering the profession, and establish rules for competitive hiring processes.¹⁵

Thus, the aim of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher qualification requirements in public general education institutions and to develop recommendations for improving state policies in this area. To achieve this goal, the study primarily employs a documentary research methodology, analyzing legal frameworks governing teacher recruitment and professional entry requirements. This analysis also examines the experiences of Poland and Estonia. These countries were selected based on key criteria that influence the effectiveness of their education systems.¹⁶ First and foremost, special attention was given to the high efficiency of the education systems in both countries, as evidenced by students' academic achievements,¹⁷ and the degree of educational equity.¹⁸ Furthermore, it is essential to consider the historical and contextual factors that have shaped the development of each country's education system. These factors were the primary reasons for selecting Poland and Estonia for analysis. By employing both inductive and deductive methods, this study examines their experiences, ultimately contributing to the development of well-founded recommendations for the Georgian education system.

¹⁴ Teacher training educational program; <https://bte.iliauni.edu.ge/ganatilebis-skola> [accessed: 30.10.2024].

¹⁵ Order No. 174/N of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia, dated August 20, 2019 On the Approval of the Procedure for the Start and Termination of Teacher's Activity.

¹⁶ OECD, PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity (vol. II): Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris 2013.

¹⁷ P. Santiago, OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016, Paris 2016.

¹⁸ OECD, Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris 2013.

Requirements for Candidates Applying for Public School Teaching Positions Through Open Competition

In many countries of the world, the selection of highly qualified teachers is a key focus in efforts to improve the quality of education.¹⁹ Like in many other nations,²⁰ in Georgia, the teaching profession is regulated,²¹ requiring candidates to meet specific qualification standards. One of the most important steps in this process is the state certification exam, which serves not only to assess a candidate's professional knowledge but also to evaluate the relevance of their pedagogical skills.²² In the selection process for teachers, public general education institutions adhere to state-established standards, which ensure existence of unified qualification requirements.²³ Drawing on international experience, key determinants of a teacher's professionalism²⁴ include the level of education achieved, teaching experience²⁵ ability to collaborate with colleagues,²⁶ teacher's university ranking, subject matter expertise, and pedagogical knowledge²⁷—assessed through certification exams—as well as the content of their completed academic programs.²⁸ According to established regulations, candidates seeking employment as teachers in general education institutions in Georgia through an open competition²⁹ must meet one of the following criteria: they must have obtained certification before 2015 or, in all other cases, must hold the relevant higher education qualifications.³⁰

¹⁹ OECD, *Teachers Matter – Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, OECD Publishing, Paris 2005, p. 38.

²⁰ J. Tummmons, *Professional Standards in Teacher Education: Tracing Discourses of Professionalism Through the Analysis of Textbooks*, 'Research in Post-Compulsory Education' 2014, 19, 4, pp. 417–432.

²¹ Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 76.

²² *Ibid.*, Article 2, Paragraph z13.

²³ Order No. 174/N..., *ibid.*

²⁴ N. Andguladze, *Professional Capital and Teacher Appraisal in Georgia*, Ilia State University, Tbilisi 2016, *passim*.

²⁵ R. J. Marzano, D. J. Pickering, J. E. Pollock, *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD 2001.

²⁶ R. J. Marzano, *A Theory-Based Meta-Analysis of Research on Instruction*, Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Aurora, CO 1998.

²⁷ A. Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times*, Cassell, London 1994.

²⁸ A. Hargreaves, M. Fullan, *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*, Teachers College Press, New York 2012, p. 94.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 7.

³⁰ Order No. 174/N..., *ibid.*, Article 2.

Teacher education in general education institutions

Education of subject teachers

Teacher qualifications are a crucial factor in the overall success of an education system. Well-qualified educators play a key role in delivering high-quality instruction, directly influencing students' academic achievements.³¹ Individuals entering the teaching profession without prior teaching experience before 2015 and without certification granted before this period must meet the educational requirements established by the state. There are three pathways to meeting these requirements: completing an integrated bachelor's and master's degree program, enrolling in a teacher training educational program, or Teacher Seeker Program.³² Individuals who obtain a Master of Education degree through an integrated bachelor's and master's program in teacher training are granted the status of a senior teacher upon entry into the profession³³ and are exempt from the teacher certification exam. Similarly, individuals holding a doctorate or an equivalent academic degree in a subject or field of education included in the national curriculum are also exempt from the exam.³⁴ In all other cases, candidates must demonstrate their competence by successfully passing the teacher certification exam. It is important to note that, at present, the integrated bachelor's and master's degree program is available only in the fields of primary education and history-geography-citizenship.³⁵ Thus, this system enables individuals to directly enter the education system, positively impacting teachers' career advancement. However, this approach is currently limited to specific subjects, including primary education, history, geography, and citizenship. Such a selective approach creates disparities in the career advancement opportunities for teachers of other subjects, while also posing challenges for schools in attracting qualified personnel for critical disciplines such as mathematics, physics, biology, and others. Therefore, it is essential to expand the integrated bachelor's and master's program to include additional subjects, allowing a broader range of teachers to pursue higher education and facilitating an evaluation of the effectiveness of direct entry into schools for these individuals.

In addition to the aforementioned pathways, there is another route to entering the teaching profession. A candidate may be employed as a teacher-in-training, provided they participate in a Teacher Seeker Program,³⁶

³¹ J. H. Stronge, J. L. Hindman, *Hiring the Best Teachers*, 'Educational Leadership' 2003, 60, 8, p. 49.

³² Ordinance No. 241 of the Government of Georgia, dated May 23, 2019 On the Approval of the Scheme for Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement, Article 7.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ National Assessment and Examinations Center, *Guide for Applicants 2024*, pp. 465, 751.

³⁶ Order No. 169/N of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia, dated August 16, 2019 On the Approval of the Procedure for the Registration of Teacher Candidates and the Completion of the Te-

which must be successfully evaluated. Teachers who participate in such programs tend to remain in the profession nearly twice as often as those who do not.³⁷ To be eligible for the Teacher Seeker Program, candidates must hold a bachelor's or master's degree in a subject or subject group specified by the national curriculum. The candidate is given a two-year period to complete the program, during which they must complete both academic and practical pedagogical courses. Additionally, they must demonstrate subject competence by passing a teacher certification exam organized by the National Assessment and Examinations Center, in accordance with established regulations.³⁸ It is important to note that the internship program in Poland closely resembles the Teacher Seeker Program in Georgia.³⁹ The qualification process for intern teachers is governed by the National Induction Scheme, established in 2000 and maintained under the post-2022 regulations. This scheme provides structured support to early-career teachers, ensuring they receive guidance during their initial years in the profession. The induction phase is a comprehensive program in which novice teachers engage in the same responsibilities as experienced educators while receiving a salary for their work.⁴⁰ The school-based induction program highlights the importance of professional development and support for new teachers. Unlike teacher-in-training program, it does not require individuals to pass a subject-specific examination. Instead, it focuses on providing additional training, personalized support, and school-based guidance to help early-career teachers navigate their professional journey effectively.⁴¹ The commission is notified of the assessment of the teacher's professional achievements and the report on the implementation of their professional development plan. As part of the evaluation process, the teacher participates in an interview, during which they present their professional accomplishments, knowledge, and skills. They also respond to questions from the commission members regarding the required competencies. Following this assessment, the teacher may be granted the opportunity to become a contract teacher.⁴² Estonia adopts a similar approach to that of Poland. Through a structured one-year program, novice teachers receive support in adapting to the

acher Candidate Period, as well as the Sample and Issuance Procedure for the Document Confirming the Completion of the Teacher Candidate Period.

³⁷ S. M. Johnson, *The Workplace Matters Teacher Quality, Retention, and Effectiveness*, National Education Association, Washington 2006, p. 8.

³⁸ Order No. 169/N..., Article 8, Paragraph 1.

³⁹ J. Kordziński, K. Krakowiak, *The Support System of Novice Teachers, Country Report, Poland, Cooperation Partnerships in School Education Project*, ZNP [Warszawa] 2022, p. 5.

⁴⁰ J. Madalińska-Michalak, *Teacher Education in Poland (1970–2024): Policy Development, Legislation, and Period-Specific Challenges*, 'Journal of Education for Teaching International Research and Pedagogy' 2024, 50, 5, p. 15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² J. Kordziński, K. Krakowiak, *The Support...*, p. 8.

school environment while enhancing their professional competencies.⁴³ Thus, teacher development systems in all three countries share a common goal: to support novice teachers and foster their professional growth. These programs facilitate professional development and career progression by incorporating practical activities essential for integrating new teachers into real classroom environments. Each system includes professional training and mentoring components; however, key differences exist among them. In Georgia, the program emphasizes formal assessment and competency verification, whereas Poland's system is more practice-oriented, offering greater personal support to novice teachers. While Georgia prioritizes exams, the induction schemes in Poland and Estonia focus on strengthening teachers' professional stability. Overall, the Polish and Estonian models appear more supportive and flexible, whereas the Georgian system adopts a more academic and formal approach.

In addition to Teacher Seeker Program, another pathway into the teaching profession is completing a teacher training educational program. Individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in any subject and have completed a teacher training educational program as part of their undergraduate studies, along with demonstrating subject competency, are eligible for employment in schools.⁴⁴

The legislation provides exceptions for teachers of sports and arts subjects, including music and fine and applied arts. In addition to individuals with higher education, those with relevant vocational education are also eligible to enter the teaching profession, provided they complete a teacher training educational program.⁴⁵ Universities adhere to existing regulations by offering enrollment in sports teacher training educational programs to individuals with either higher education or relevant vocational education. Admission is contingent upon passing an examination that confirms their competence in physical education and sports.⁴⁶ Universities have different approaches to the prerequisites for admission to the fine and applied arts and music teacher training educational program. For admission to the mentioned programs, some universities require a Bachelor's, Master's and/or equivalent academic degree in a subject/subject group corresponding to the National Curriculum, along with a certificate confirming the passing of a subject exam.⁴⁷ However, some universities accept applicants into teacher training programs regardless

⁴³ Eisenschmidt E., *Implementation of Induction Year for Novice Teachers in Estonia*, Tallinn University Publisher, Tallinn 2006, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Ordinance No. 241 of the Government of Georgia, dated May 23, 2019 On the Approval of the Scheme for Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement, Article 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Academic Council of the State Teaching University of Physical Education and Sport of Georgia, Resolution No. 6, dated December 4, 2019 Approved Teacher Education Program (Physical Education and Sport).

⁴⁷ Order No. 174/N..., Article 3.

of their field of study. Individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree can enroll if they have demonstrated subject competence by passing an exam administered by the National Assessment and Examinations Center.⁴⁸ It is important to note that educational programs designed to train teachers of music, as well as fine and applied arts, do not recognize relevant professional education as a prerequisite for admission. Moreover, these programs overlook the opportunity provided by legislation,⁴⁹ for individuals with relevant vocational education to enter the teaching profession in artistic disciplines. Consequently, it becomes evident that the requirements for teachers of arts and sports subjects differ across universities and programs. Some institutions fail to acknowledge the legal provision that allows individuals with vocational education to pursue teaching careers, thereby restricting access to these programs for such individuals and limiting their career development opportunities.

The law does not specify the prerequisites for admission to educational programs for training teachers in arts, sports, or other subjects, allowing universities the autonomy to establish their own admission criteria. As a result, some universities require applicants to hold higher education in a relevant field in addition to passing a subject competency exam, while others accept higher education in any field as sufficient for admission. Furthermore, the subject competency exams have been simplified.⁵⁰ Consequently, it can be argued that the standards set for admission are not particularly stringent.⁵¹

Estonia has long established uniform professional standards for teachers across all subjects, including physical education, art, and music.⁵² These standards outline the competencies and responsibilities required of educators, ensuring consistent educational quality nationwide.⁵³ In Estonia, individuals who complete a teacher education program and obtain a bachelor's or master's degree are qualified to teach in schools. If an individual holds a bachelor's degree in a different field, they must complete a master's degree in pedagogy to enter the teaching profession.⁵⁴ A similar standard has been established by the state in Poland. According to current regulations, the minimum qualification for teaching at the primary level (grades I–III) is a bachelor's degree, which entails a three-year study period. However, under new regulations, a master's degree will soon be mandatory. Presently, the minimum qualification for teaching in the second stage of primary school

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Center For Civil Integration And Inter-Ethnic Relations, *Teacher Certification, Professional Development, and Career Advancement from 2005 to 2023*, pp. 7, 10.

⁵¹ R. Li, H. Kitchen, B. George, M. Richardson, E. Fordham, *OECD Reviews...*, p. 24.

⁵² A. Schleicher, *Schools for 21st Century Learners: Strong Leaders, Confident Teachers, Innovative Approaches*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris 2015, p. 48.

⁵³ A. Schleicher, *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from Around the World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris 2012, p. 63.

⁵⁴ Riigikogu [Parliament], *Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act* [passed: 09.06.2010].

(grades IV–VIII) and secondary school is a master's degree.⁵⁵ Alternative pathways to teaching qualifications in Poland are rare and are primarily available for prospective foreign language teachers, a system introduced to address the shortage of qualified language educators.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the current teacher salary policies in both Poland and Estonia create opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of the teacher selection process, enabling schools to employ highly qualified individuals.⁵⁷ However, in Estonia, due to a shortage of teachers, there is an ongoing discussion regarding the potential reduction of qualification requirements for teachers in subject areas with high demand.⁵⁸ Additionally, efforts have begun to plan and manage the effective training and distribution of teachers,⁵⁹ with the aim of balancing the need to increase the number of educators while maintaining high standards of qualification.⁶⁰

As the analysis demonstrates, both Estonia and Poland impose higher qualification requirements for teachers compared to Georgia. In Georgia, teachers of sports and arts can enter the profession with a diploma that confirms vocational education, thereby simplifying the process of entering the general education workforce. However, it is important to note that not all universities recognize this pathway, and in many cases, higher education remains a prerequisite for entering the profession. Alternative routes are less accessible in Estonia and Poland. In Estonia, working as a teacher generally requires completing a pedagogy program, while in Poland, alternative pathways are available only for foreign language teachers, and their introduction is directly tied to the shortage of qualified educators in this field. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Georgia's teacher salary policy is not sufficiently competitive, which hinders the profession's ability to attract new staff and gain prestige. In contrast, the competitive salary policies in Estonia and Poland effectively attract teachers and support their professional development, positively impacting the overall quality of education. However, Estonia still faces a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas.

In conclusion, for the education system to improve in quality and competitiveness, it is essential that both the state and universities address existing needs. A key measure is raising the minimum qualification requirements, as

⁵⁵ J. Madalińska-Michalak, *Teacher...*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ J. Madalińska-Michalak, *Teacher...*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Eurydice, *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe, 2013*, p. 14; Eurydice, *Facts and Figures*, 2015, p. 19.

⁵⁸ J. Lampert, A. McPherson, B. Burnett, *Still Standing: An Ecological Perspective on Teachers Remaining in Hard-To-Staff Schools*, *Teachers & Teaching* 2023, 30, 1, p. 119.

⁵⁹ B. H. See, R. Morris, S. Gorard, N. El Soufi, *What Works in Attracting and Retaining Teachers in Challenging Schools and Areas*, *Oxford Review of Education* 2020, 46, 6, p. 679.

⁶⁰ Ä. Leijen, L. Lepp, K. Saks, M. Pedaste, K. Poom-Valickis, *The Shortage of Teachers in Estonia: Causes and Suggestions for Additional Measures from the Perspective of Different Stakeholders*, *European Journal of Teacher Education* 2024, 47, 5, p. 16.

this would help attract highly skilled professionals to the field and enhance the overall quality of education. Additionally, universities should establish standardized admission policies that align with legislative requirements to ensure equal opportunities for all applicants pursuing teacher training educational programs. This will reduce arbitrary restrictions and facilitate inclusion in the educational process. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify subject areas experiencing teacher shortages and explore alternative pathways into the profession. Exceptions to standard qualification requirements should be permitted only in cases where there is a demonstrated shortage, ensuring that established criteria remain upheld in disciplines with an adequate supply of educators. Finally, the state must implement a more competitive salary structure for teachers, particularly in high-demand subjects, to attract and retain highly qualified professionals while enhancing the overall prestige of the teaching profession.

Education of Special Education Teachers

Inclusive education is an educational approach that ensures the protection of the rights of students with special educational needs and promotes their full participation in the learning environment. A critical component of this process is the training and employment of qualified special education teachers, who play a key role in implementing inclusive practices in schools while addressing the diverse needs of students.⁶¹ Since 2013, efforts to strengthen inclusive education have been supported by the National Center for Teacher Professional Development, which has developed several training modules aimed at enhancing teacher competencies in this field.⁶² Additionally, Ilia State University introduced a master's program for special education teachers.⁶³ Initially, special education teachers did not hold official teacher status, and there were no bachelor's or doctoral programs dedicated to their preparation at the university level.⁶⁴ Later, a special teacher certification exam was developed.⁶⁵ Currently, a structured admission process is in place for special education teacher training programs, requiring applicants to hold at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent and to have passed the basic professional skills examination.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Order No. 16/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, dated February 21, 2018 On the Approval of the Rules for the Implementation, Development, and Monitoring of Inclusive Education, as well as the Mechanism for Identifying Students with Special Educational Needs, Article 6.

⁶² Civic Development Institute, *Inclusive Education Practice in Georgia*, p. 45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Civic Development Institute..., p. 59.

⁶⁵ Order No. 04/N of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia, dated January 22, 2021 On the Approval of the Procedure for Conducting the Special Teacher Examination.

⁶⁶ Order No. 113/N of the Minister of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia, dated July 1, 2024 On the Approval of the Procedure for Admission to the Educational Program for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers.

There are several alternative pathways to becoming employed as a special education teacher in schools. The first route applies to individuals who hold a Master of Education or an equivalent academic degree and have either passed the special education teacher examination required by Georgian legislation or obtained a special education teacher training certificate.⁶⁷ The second pathway is available to those who have completed an integrated bachelor's and master's degree program in teacher training, earning a Master of Education degree while also completing a specialized training module in special education within the program. A third option allows individuals with an academic degree in special education or a Doctorate in Educational Sciences—provided they have defended a dissertation on inclusive education—to enter the profession as leader teachers.⁶⁸ Another alternative is available to those who hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent and a master's degree in special education or possess a special education teacher training certificate.⁶⁹ Additionally, individuals with a background in psychology or occupational therapy may qualify for employment as special education teachers if they have either passed the special education teacher exam or obtained a special education teacher training certificate.⁷⁰ For those seeking employment in general education institutions that serve students with visual or hearing impairments, multiple sensory impairments, or behavioral and emotional disorders, an additional requirement applies: candidates must have completed a specialized certification program tailored to teaching students with the specific educational needs associated with these impairments.⁷¹

It is important to acknowledge that there are currently special education teachers employed within the system who do not meet the state's established qualification standards. However, individuals hired before 2018 were granted the opportunity to take the special education teacher certification exam, with a deadline for completion set for January 2025.⁷²

Regarding international practices, Estonia's qualification requirements for special education teachers closely resemble those in Georgia. Specifically, individuals seeking employment as special education teachers must hold a master's degree or an equivalent qualification, possess formal training in special education, and demonstrate proficiency in the Estonian language.⁷³ Similarly, school psychologists and speech and language therapists in Estonia are required to have a master's degree or an equivalent qualification in their

⁶⁷ Order No. 174/N..., *ibid.*, Article 3.

⁶⁸ Ordinance No. 241 of the Government of Georgia, dated May 23, 2019 On the Approval of the Scheme for Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement, Article 21.

⁶⁹ Order No. 174/N..., *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Law of Georgia on General Education, Article 613.

⁷³ Riigikogu [Parliament], Basic Schools... (*ibid.*) [passed 09.06.2010].

respective fields.⁷⁴ Poland follows comparable standards for special education teachers. A candidate must hold a master's degree in special education. However, it is also possible for individuals with a master's degree in another field to enter the profession if they have completed a qualification course or have conducted research in special pedagogy or inclusive education.⁷⁵ Notably, in these countries, university-based teacher training programs include practical teaching experience as an integral component. The primary objective of this practice is to equip future educators with hands-on experience in teaching and classroom management by applying their theoretical knowledge in real-world educational settings.⁷⁶

Based on the above analysis, it is evident that while several master's and certificate programs for special education teachers have been established across the country, their effectiveness and accessibility remain limited. The qualification requirements set for special education teachers in Georgia allow candidates to enter the profession through multiple alternative pathways. This flexibility can be viewed positively, as it facilitates staffing in the event of teacher shortages. However, such an approach also carries certain risks. In particular, permitting individuals with lower academic qualifications to enter the field through alternative routes may undermine the overall quality of inclusive education. As observed in Estonia and Poland, alternative pathways into special education teaching are far more restricted, with stringent requirements in place to ensure professional competence. These countries are trying to make the inclusive education system more professional. Despite the existence of certification exams in Georgia, a significant number of special education teachers currently employed in the system do not meet modern professional standards. In response, the state introduced measures in 2018 that provided these individuals with an opportunity to obtain certification within a designated timeframe. However, this temporary solution does not fully address the issue. A more systematic approach is required, with clearly defined policies to ensure that all special education teachers meet contemporary professional standards.

While aspects of Estonia's and Poland's practices align with Georgia's experience, their models highlight the need for further strengthening of the inclusive education system. This includes implementing higher qualification standards for special education teachers, enhancing professional development opportunities, and ensuring continuous updates to their training and expertise.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Poland: Standardisation of Special Education Teacher Position; <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/poland> [accessed: 15.12.2024].

⁷⁶ J. Madalińska-Michalak, *Teacher...*, p. 11.

Teachers Certification Exam

The primary objective of teacher evaluation reforms across various countries has been to enhance the professionalism of educators and ensure their competencies align with modern educational standards.⁷⁷ However, in Georgia, the establishment of a unified and stable evaluation system has proven challenging, as frequent shifts in educational policies have hindered the effective assessment of interventions.⁷⁸

Currently, the majority of individuals aspiring to work as teachers in Georgian schools must pass a certification exam to demonstrate their competence in accordance with current legislation. This exam is designed to assess whether an applicant's knowledge and skills meet the professional standards required of a teacher.⁷⁹ The exam is administered in all subjects included in the national curriculum.⁸⁰ While the exam is open to anyone, and there are no restrictions on participation, individuals who fail to meet the teacher education requirements specified in the Law of Georgia on General Education are prohibited from using the results for teaching purposes.⁸¹

In recent years, many school principals in Georgia have expressed doubts about the validity of certification as an accurate measure of a teacher's subject-specific and professional knowledge.⁸² However, research conducted across different periods and countries presents varying conclusions on the impact of certification. In some cases, it is argued that teacher certification does not significantly influence the quality of teaching.⁸³ Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent that student performance is influenced more by factors such as individual abilities, family circumstances, and other external conditions, rather than being solely attributable to the actions of the teacher.⁸⁴ However, a number of studies provide evidence to the contrary.⁸⁵ Some researchers argue that certification is a valid and effective tool for assessing teachers' professionalism, allowing for an accurate evaluation of

⁷⁷ OECD, *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, Paris 2015.

⁷⁸ R. Tchanturia, R. Apkhazava, *Continuous Professional Development System for Teachers*, Education Coalition 2022, p. 20.

⁷⁹ Order No. 1101 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, dated December 4, 2009 On the Regulation of Teacher Certification and the Approval of a Sample Teacher Certificate.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 11.

⁸¹ Registration for teachers and aspiring teachers – 2024 <https://naec.ge/#/ge/post/3138> [accessed: 01.12.2024]

⁸² N. Andguladze, *Professional...*, *passim*.

⁸³ R. Murnane, B. R. Phillips, *What do Effective Teachers of Inner-City Children Have in Common?*, 'Social Science Research' 1981, 10, 1, pp. 83–100.

⁸⁴ D. Ballou, M. Podgursky, *Reforming Teacher Preparation and Licensing: What Is the Evidence?*, 'Teachers College Record' 2000, 102, 1, pp. 2–7; *idem*, *Reforming Teacher Preparation and Licensing: Continuing the Debate*, 'Teachers College Record' 2000, 102, 1, pp. 5–27.

⁸⁵ L. Darling-Hammond, *Futures of Teaching in American Education*, 'Journal of Educational Change' 2000, 1 (Dec.), pp. 353–373.

their qualifications and competencies.⁸⁶ According to these scholars, certification remains one of the primary means by which the professional level of teachers is measured.⁸⁷ Despite differing opinions on the matter, teacher certification continues to hold relevance in various countries. Its effectiveness, however, is contingent upon the alignment between university education and the certification system.⁸⁸ For instance, in Estonia, teachers undergo a certification process after completing their training curriculum, ultimately earning a professional teaching qualification⁸⁹ awarded by the Estonian Teachers Association.⁹⁰ In this regard, Estonia, like Georgia, has multiple categories of teachers. However, Estonia's competency-based career structure, which includes a certification stage, is currently voluntary.⁹¹ Similarly, in Poland, career progression is voluntary, with teachers required to take an exam to change their status from a contract teacher to a tenured teacher or to attain a higher position.⁹² It is important to note that the contract teacher position is permanent, and teachers can choose to take the exam before the relevant commission. The exam consists of several components, including a written part and an interview.⁹³

In summary, the effectiveness and impact of teacher certification systems on teaching quality and student outcomes are influenced by several factors, including system stability, political and legal environments, and support for teachers' professional development. While Georgia has a certification system in place, the frequent changes to this system raise questions about its true effectiveness. In contrast, certification systems in other countries are more stable and effectively integrated with professional development processes, leading to positive results. Unlike Georgia, in Poland and Estonia, certification primarily serves to foster professional growth. In Georgia, however, teacher certification is mandatory for entering the profession, with certain exceptions. Therefore, it is recommended that a stable, long-term development strategy be implemented to systematically evaluate the certification process. Furthermore, the certification system in Georgia should not only serve as a prerequisite for entering the profession, but also as an effective tool to encourage and support the ongoing professional development of teachers.

⁸⁶ L. Darling-Hammond, J. Bransford, (eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco 2007; *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. New York, Simon Schuster 1996.

⁸⁷ L. Darling-Hammond, *Research and Rhetoric on Teacher Certification: A Response to Teacher Certification Reconsidered*, 'Education Policy Analysis Archives' 2002, 10, p. 36.

⁸⁸ OECD, *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, Paris 2013, p. 93.

⁸⁹ Riigikogu [Parliament], *Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act* [passed 09.06.2010].

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ P. Santiago, *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris 2016.

⁹² E. Kolanowska, *The System of Education in Poland 2020*, Foundation for the Development of the Education System, Warszawa 2021, p. 103.

⁹³ E. Kolanowska, *The System...*, p. 106.

Conclusion

In Georgia, while standards for entering the teaching profession have been established, these regulations lack uniformity and offer different approaches depending on the subject area. To enhance the quality and effectiveness of both teaching and learning, it is crucial to attract qualified and motivated individuals into the education system. This, in turn, will contribute to the overall improvement of the education system and elevate the social status of the teaching profession. When compared to national standards as well as the experiences of Poland and Estonia, it becomes evident that the qualification requirements for teachers in Georgia are relatively low. As a result, they are insufficient in ensuring the recruitment of highly competent professionals into the field. Notably, there is a lack of subject-specific needs assessments and an identification of areas with shortages in qualified educators. Furthermore, integrated bachelor's and master's degree programs tailored to all subject areas are not available for those pursuing teaching careers. Although teacher training programs exist for various subjects, the legal prerequisites for admission to these programs remain undefined. Universities are granted the autonomy to establish their own criteria, which creates inequality among prospective applicants. Additionally, the requirements for arts and sports teachers are inconsistent, varying by subject and institution, and do not account for the possibility of training individuals with vocational education backgrounds as teachers—a provision permitted by law.

Consequently, to attract qualified and motivated teachers, enhance the education system, and elevate the prestige of the teaching profession in society, the following recommendations should be implemented:

- ◆ Establish uniform and transparent qualification requirements for teachers across all subject areas to ensure the recruitment of highly qualified professionals into the education system.
- ◆ Conduct a needs assessment to identify subject areas with shortages, and introduce alternative pathways into the profession solely for teachers in those areas of deficiency.
- ◆ Introduce integrated bachelor's and master's degree programs across all subject areas to provide aspiring teachers with equal opportunities to obtain higher pedagogical education in their chosen fields.
- ◆ Define clear and standardized criteria for admission to teacher training programs, creating a unified system that guarantees equal opportunities for all applicants in accordance with relevant legislation.
- ◆ Increase teacher salaries to attract and retain highly competent professionals, demonstrating societal appreciation for the importance of the teaching profession.

Abstrakt

Edukacja jest priorytetem dla każdego państwa, a nauczyciele odgrywają kluczową rolę w podnoszeniu jej jakości. Ich wiedza zawodowa, umiejętności i podejście do nauczania mają bezpośredni wpływ na skuteczność procesu uczenia się i sukcesy uczniów w nauce. W odpowiedzi na zmieniające się wyzwania XXI wieku system edukacji musi pozostać elastyczny, dostosowując się do współczesnych wymagań, a jednocześnie zapewniając nauczycielom wiedzę specjalistyczną niezbędną do skutecznego prowadzenia zajęć i pomagania uczniom w pełnym wykorzystaniu ich potencjału i osiągnięciu przez nich jak najlepszych wyników.

Warto zauważyć, że zgodnie z ustawodawstwem krajowym nauczyciele w placówkach oświaty ogólnej muszą przestrzegać profesjonalnych standardów nauczania, kodeksu etyki zawodowej oraz obowiązków określonych w sektorowych wytycznych. Są oni również zobowiązani do uznania indywidualności każdego ucznia i wdrażania zróżnicowanych strategii nauczania, które wspierają rozwój osobisty, społeczno-emocjonalny i poznawczy uczniów. Ponadto nauczyciele powinni poprawiać wyniki uczniów poprzez refleksję nad własną pracą i analizę ocen uczniów. Powinni wprowadzać innowacje do swoich praktyk nauczania, skutecznie integrować technologie informacyjne i komunikacyjne z procesem uczenia się oraz pozostawać zaangażowani w ciągły rozwój zawodowy. W związku z tym wysokie kwalifikacje i profesjonalizm nauczycieli mają zasadnicze znaczenie dla poprawy jakości edukacji szkolnej. W tym właśnie celu Gruzja od 2010 roku nałożyła na nauczycieli nowe wymagania i wprowadziła egzaminy certyfikacyjne dla nauczycieli. Chociaż Gruzja ustanowiła wymagania kwalifikacyjne dla przyszłych nauczycieli i wprowadziła programy ich szkolenia, w systemie nadal pozostają pedagodzy, którzy nie spełniają minimalnych standardów kompetencji określonych przez państwo. Warto zatem przywrócić się, w jaki sposób nauczyciele są zatrudniani w szkołach, ponieważ – pomimo przepisów i wymagań kompetencyjnych – w systemie edukacji nadal zdarzają się przypadki, gdy nauczyciele nie dysponują podstawowymi umiejętnościami niezbędnymi do prowadzenia skutecznego, zorientowanego na wyniki procesu nauczania.

Mając to na uwadze, w niniejszym artykule przeanalizujemy skuteczność wymagań dotyczących wyboru i kwalifikacji nauczycieli w gruzińskich placówkach edukacji ogólnej, ich zgodność z przepisami krajowymi oraz standardami międzynarodowymi, a także wskażemy kluczowe reformy, które Gruzja powinna rozważyć w celu modernizacji swojego systemu edukacji. W tym procesie szczególnie istotna jest ocena skuteczności wymagań kwalifikacyjnych dotyczących rekrutacji nauczycieli, ponieważ stanowią one podstawę przyciągania i zatrzymywania wysoko wykwalifikowanych, profesjonalnych pedagogów. Ostatecznie ma to bezpośredni i wymierny wpływ na jakość edukacji i sukcesy uczniów w nauce.

Słowa kluczowe: dobór nauczycieli, wymagania kwalifikacyjne, placówki kształcenia ogólnego, konkursy, kompetencje nauczycieli, egzamin certyfikacyjny.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amashukeli M., Lezhava D., Gugushvili N., Educational Outcomes, Employment Market and Job Satisfaction in Georgia, Tbilisi 2017.

Andguladze N., Professional Capital and Teacher Appraisal in Georgia, Ilia State University, Tbilisi 2016.

Ballou D., Podgursky M., *Reforming Teacher Preparation and Licensing: What Is the Evidence?* [and:] *idem, Reforming Teacher Preparation and Licensing: Continuing the Debate*, 'Teachers College Record' 2000, 102, 1.

Center For Civil Integration And Inter-Ethnic Relations, Teacher Certification, Professional Development, and Career Advancement from 2005 to 2023.

Civic Development Institute, Inclusive Education Practice in Georgia.

Darling-Hammond L., *Futures of Teaching in American Education*, 'Journal of Educational Change' 2000, 1 (Dec.).

Darling-Hammond L., *Research and Rhetoric on Teacher Certification: A Response to Teacher Certification Reconsidered*, 'Education Policy Analysis Archives' 2002, 10.

Darling-Hammond L., Bransford J. (eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco 2007.

Eisenschmidt E., *Implementation of Induction Year for Novice Teachers in Estonia*, Tallinn University Publisher, Tallinn 2006.

Eurydice, *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2013*.

Eurydice, *Facts and Figures – 2015*.

Hargreaves A., *Changing Teachers, Changing Times*, Cassell, London 1994.

Hargreaves A., Fullan M., *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*, Teachers College Press, New York 2012.

Ingvarson L., Schwille J., Tatto M. T., Rowley G., Peck R., Senk S., *An Analysis of Teacher Education Context, Structure, and Quality-Assurance Arrangements in TEDS-M Countries*, Michigan, Amsterdam 2013.

Johnson S. M., *The Workplace Matters Teacher Quality, Retention, and Effectiveness*, National Education Association, Washington 2006.

Kolanowska E., *The System of Education in Poland 2020*, Foundation for the Development of the Education System, Warszawa 2021.

Kordziński J., Krakowiak K., *The Support System of Novice Teachers, Country Report, Poland, Cooperation Partnerships in School Education Project*, ZNP [Warszawa] 2022.

Lampert J., McPherson A., Burnett B., *Still Standing: An Ecological Perspective on Teachers Remaining in Hard-To-Staff Schools*, 'Teachers & Teaching' 2023, 30, 1.

Leijen Ä., Lepp L., Saks K., Pedaste M., Poom-Valickis K., *The Shortage of Teachers in Estonia: Causes and Suggestions for Additional Measures from the Perspective of Different Stakeholders*, 'European Journal of Teacher Education' 2024, 47, 5.

Li, R., Kitchen H., George B., Richardson M., Fordham E., OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris 2019.

Madalińska-Michalak J., *Teacher Education in Poland (1970–2024): Policy Development, Legislation, and Period-Specific Challenges*, 'Journal of Education for Teaching International Research and Pedagogy' 2024, 50, 5.

Marzano R. J., *A Theory-Based Meta-Analysis of Research on Instruction*, Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Aurora, CO 1998.

Marzano R. J., Pickering D. J., Pollock J. E., *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD 2001.

Murnane R., Phillips B. R., *What Do Effective Teachers of Inner-City Children Have in Common?*, 'Social Science Research' 1981, 10, 1.

National Center for Educational Research (NCER), *Assessment of Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme*, 2023.

OECD, *Teachers Matter – Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2005.

OECD, *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, Paris 2015.

OECD, *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris 2013.

OECD, *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, Paris 2013.

Santiago P., *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016*, Paris 2016.

Schleicher A., *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris 2012.

Schleicher A., *Schools for 21st Century Learners: Strong Leaders, Confident Teachers, Innovative Approaches*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris 2015.

See B. H., Morris R., Gorard S., El Soufi N., *What Works in Attracting and Retaining Teachers in Challenging Schools and Areas*, 'Oxford Review of Education' 2020, 46, 6.

Stronge J. H., Hindman J. L., *Hiring the Best Teachers*, 'Educational Leadership' 2003, 60, 8.

Tchanturia R., Apkhazava R., *Continuous Professional Development System for Teachers*, Education Coalition 2022.

Tummons J., *Professional Standards in Teacher Education: Tracing Discourses of Professionalism Through the Analysis of Textbooks*, 'Research in Post-Compulsory Education' 2014, 19, 4.

Handbooks

National Assessment and Examinations Center, Guide for Applicants 2024.

Academic Council of the State Teaching University of Physical Education and Sport of Georgia, Resolution No. 6, dated December 4, 2019 Approved Teacher Education Program (Physical Education and Sport).

Electronic Resources

Poland: Standardisation of Special Education Teacher Position <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/poland> [accessed: 15.12.2024].

Registration for teachers and aspiring teachers – 2024 <https://naec.ge/#/ge/post/3138> [accessed: 01.12.2024].

Teacher training educational program; <https://bte.iliauni.edu.ge/ganatilebis-skola> [accessed: 30.10.2024].