

CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE WAYS OF
SOLVING THEM IN THE SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION

SAMTSKHE-CAVAKHETİ BÖLGESİ'NDE ÇOK KÜLTÜRLÜ EGİTİMİN
ZORLUKLARI VE ÇÖZÜM ÖNERİLERİ

ВЫЗОВЫ МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И ПУТИ ИХ РЕШЕНИЯ
В РЕГИОНЕ САМЦХЕ-ДЖАВАХЕТИ

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ABSTRACT

Forming peaceful coexistence and positive relations between different nations and ethnic groups became a serious challenge in the modern world. Georgia is not an exception in this issue, though there are problems that should be solved on state and regional level.

The EU supports Georgia to implement reforms in the education system through different projects. Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (SJSU) together with universities of European and Eastern partnership countries is actively involved in the multicultural education projects and seeks student teachers to be equipped with skills and values that are very relevant to the background of 21st century challenges. Despite the fact that many governmental and non-governmental organizations have carried out a number of activities and events (in social, economic, cultural and political directions), problems connected with linguistics, religion and culture still exist.

The aim is to study the level of multicultural education in different target groups (student teachers of various ethnicity, religion and culture) at SJSU as a culturally diverse institution in the region, the problems and challenges, such as the awareness of multicultural education, social and economic marginalization, family values, stereotypes, the deficits of new approaches, educational strategies and tools etc.

Recommendations based on the results of the survey will promote bringing up educated, active and responsible teachers who will have high civic consciousness and competence to contribute to the upbringing future generation.

Key words: multicultural education, multicultural environment, multilingual, cultural diversity, religious diversity

ÖZ

Günümüz modern dünyasında, çeşitli milletler ile etnik gruplar arasında barış içinde ortak yaşam kültürü ve olumlu ilişkiler konusu ciddi bir sorun olarak kabul edilmiştir. Anılan mesele Gürcistan'ı da kapsamaktadır. Bazı meselelerin ülke ve bölge açısından çözülmesi gerekmektedir.

Avrupa Birliği Gürcistan'ın millî eğitim sisteminde uygulanan reformları çeşitli prejelerle desteklemektedir. Samtskhe-Cavakheti Devlet Üniversitesi Avrupa ve Doğu Ortaklık Sistemi ülkelerinin üniversiteleri ile birlikte çok kültürlü eğitim projelerinde aktif rol

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almaktadır ve 21. asrın sorunlarını çözme konusunda geleceğin eğitimcilerini gerekli beceri ile değerlere yönelik olarak eğitmek açısından önemli çaba sarf etmektedir. Devlet ve Sivil Toplum Örgütleri tarafından yapılan aktivite ve alınan tedbirlere (sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi) rağmen, dil, din, kültür ve diğer konulardan kaynaklı sorunlar günümüze kadar gelebilmiştir.

Çalışmamızda, kültür açısından çok çeşitlilik gösteren bölgemizde faaliyet yürüten Samtskhe-Cavakheti Devlet Üniversitesi'nde, eğitim gören ve farklı millete, din ile kültüre mensup olan öğretmen adaylarının multikültürel eğitim seviyelerinin, bilinç düzeylerinin, sosyal ve ekonomik marjinalleşme konularının, aile değerlerinin, basmakalıplarının durumu araştırılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, söz konusu kitlenin yeni eğitim stratejilerine olan yaklaşımları ve mevcut sorunlar ile zorluklar üzerine durulmuştur.

Araştırma sonuçlarına dayalı konu üzerine bilgiye sahip olan, aktif ve sorumluluk düzeyi yüksek olma idealine sahip eğitimci adaylarını yetiştirmek için gerekli öneriler ortaya konulmuştur. Buna göre, söz konusu eğitimci adaylarının yüksek seviyede bilinçli olarak ve yetkilerine dayanarak gelecek nesilleri yetiştirme konusunda gerekli katkı sağlamaları düşünülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çok kültürlü eğitim, çok kültürlü ortam, çok dilli ortam, kültürel çeşitlilik, din çeşitliliği.

АННОТАЦИЯ

На сегодняшний день, мирное сосуществование и позитивные взаимоотношения между разными нациями и этническими группами стало серьезным вызовом современного мира. С такими трудностями встречаемся и в Грузии. Надо отметить, что существуют проблемы, которые должны решаться на уровне государства и региона.

Евросоюз, с помощью разных проектов, поддерживает Грузию в осуществлении реформ в системе образования. Самцхе-Джавахетский государственный университет, совместно с европейскими университетами и партнёрами из восточно европейских государств, активно включён в проекты по поддержке мультипликационного образования. Цель указанных проектов, приучить будущих педагогов к новым навыкам, умениям и ценностям, которые на фоне вызовов 21-го века являются весьма актуальными.

Несмотря на то, что правительственные и неправительственные организации провели множество мероприятий и активностей (по социальным, экономическим, культурным и политическим направлениям), всё таки сложностями считаются языковые, религиозные, культурные отношения и возникшие на другой почве проблемы.

Цель исследования: изучить в Самцхе-Джавахетском государственном университете действующем разносторонне культурном регионе, среди нуждающихся в поддержке разных группах (будущие педагоги разных национальностей, религии культуры), уровень мультипликационного образования, культурную и социальную маргинализацию, семейные ценности, стереотипы, стоимости, новые стратегии и подходы в образовательной сфере, дефицит инструментов действия и другое.

На основании разработанных рекомендаций, будет поддержана подготовка информированных, активных и ответственных педагогов, у которых повысится высокая активная гражданская сознательность и компетенция, дабы внести свою лепту в воспитании будущего поколения.

Ключевые слова: мультикультурное образование, мультикультурная среда, мультилингвальный, культурное разнообразие, культурное разнообразие.

Introduction

The last decade researchers focus their attention on multicultural education. It is caused with injustices which include: unfair and inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities; discrimination, oppression, and marginalization in society; and barriers to basic human rights and attainment of full potential in society. These social injustices are also strongly tied to cultural group affiliation, based on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability,

age, socio-economic status and religion (Arthur, Collins, McMahon, & Marshall, 2009; Green, McCollum & Hays, 2008).

Multicultural education today is characteristic to most societies due to various local and global processes. Educators seek to substantially reform schools, give diverse students an equal chance in school, at university, in the job market and in contributing to building healthy communities.

The internationalization of education as a response to globalization is the most important task of 21st century not only to educational institutions but also to governmental agencies as well. The process of globalization, the market economy and competitive market conditions are major factors in the internationalization of education.

The social responsibility of the educational system and institutions is the creation of a learning process that prepares a person in a competitive international labour market. Consequently, the training process should provide for the establishment of a citizen that is willing to live in a multicultural and diverse world and to work in a multicultural and diverse work settings (www.eeu.edu.ge).

Background Information

Georgia is a country with multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious population. Cultural and religious diversity was an ordinary reality in the country during all periods of its history. The experience of intercultural and interreligious dialogue has a centuries-long tradition in Georgia. The dialogue which is a natural phenomenon in multicultural and multi-confessional country involved different forms and mechanisms; however, the process existed beyond the official policy, not being a result of policy-making. The process of globalization brought the new ethnic and religious minorities who are mostly concentrated in the cities. Their number increases and decreases from time to time. So, people living in Georgia have to live in a multicultural environment and get so called a modern education which faces a challenge - to take into account the characteristics of a multicultural society, to promote peaceful co-existence and positive interaction between different cultural groups and to integrate in the society.

Legal Protection in Georgia

According to Article 35(1) in Georgian Constitution all citizens of Georgia have the right to get education and choose the form of education (The Constitution of Georgia 1995). "Law of General Education" confirms the right of getting education (Article 9) and its equal accessibility for everybody" (Article 3.2. a) (Law of Georgia on General Education, 2005).

In one point of national goals of general education, we read: School education should provide future members of the society with general communication, organizational and team work skills for everybody and for them whose native language is not Georgian. In the same document we read that the goal of national education is to bring up the citizens who will obey the law and be tolerant.

In today's dynamic, ethnically and culturally diverse world school should develop skills of protecting human rights and respecting other people to preserve his and also other's identity in students. In Article 4 of the "Law of Georgia on General Education" we read that the language of instruction at secondary schools shall be the Georgian and in Abkhazia also the Abkhazian languages. In the same Article 4.3 we read: "The citizens of Georgia for whom Georgian is not a native language, have the right to receive a general education on their native language according to the national curriculum and in accordance with legislation" (Law of Georgia on General Education, 2005).

"Law of Georgia on Higher Education" states that one of the main goals of higher education is the "Promotion of the development of Georgian and global cultural values, orientation towards the ideals of democracy and humanism essential for the existence and development of a civil society" ("Law of Georgia on Higher Education" Article 3.1.a).

To achieve the goals set forth in Paragraph 1 of this Article the State shall ensure: "Prohibition of all forms of discrimination in the field of higher education, amongst them on academic, religious and ethnic grounds, and/or views, gender, social origin or any other grounds (Article 3.2. h).

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In Article 4 of the same document we read that the language of instruction at a higher education institution shall be the Georgian and in Abkhazia also the Abkhazian languages (Instruction in other languages, except for individual study courses shall be allowed whenever so provided by an international agreement or agreed with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia).

The National Examinations Centre gives a chance to school leavers to pass entrance exams in General Skills on their native language (Armenian, Azeri, Abkhazian and Ossetian languages).

After passing the exam in General skills, non Georgian school leavers take a special program -Preparation Course in the Georgian language (they learn Georgian language, Georgian culture, history and traditions, and also history and culture of ethnical minorities). The program is financed by the government of Georgia and it is free. After finishing the course they choose the BA program they are interested in. BA program is also financed by the government (Resolution #501, 18.08.2014 Article 3, P.G and D). So, non Georgians for whom Georgian is not a native language, have a chance first to learn the Georgian language then to get a higher education free of charge. Besides the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia gives a chance to Georgian citizens and non citizens too living abroad (who finished school there) go on studying at any state university of Georgia without passing National Entrance Exams (Order #224/N; 29.12.2011).

Above mentioned documents show that Georgia is presented with its diverse teaching environment and multicultural education aspects which are reflected in all important state and educational documents.

Research Aim

The aim is to study the level of multicultural education in different target groups (student teachers of various ethnicity, religion and culture) at Samtskhe-Javakheti State University as a culturally diverse institution in the region, the problems and challenges, such as the awareness of multicultural education, social and economic marginalization, family values, stereotypes, the deficits of new approaches, educational strategies and tools etc.

Research Methodology

Research is based on fundamental works of scientists and legal documents, quality and quantitative research methods in this field: of questionnaire of different target groups (open and semi-open questions); interview, analysis and synthesis.

Research Results. General Analysis

The Council of Europe and various international organizations among them Georgia as a member state adopt decisions in the regard of intercultural education. In recent years, the European Council adopted four fundamental documents. One of the most important documents is The final Declaration of the 21st Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (Athens, 10-12 November, 2003) devoted particularly to the intercultural education. According to Athen's Declaration it is important that EC began to relaunch conceptual research on intercultural education.

Multicultural environment in most regions of Georgia and reforms going on in the education enable us to think that, it is necessary to research multicultural education more deeply and highlight the challenges which we come across in the process of teaching and learning.

It should be mentioned that more than 15% of the population in Georgia is ethnically non Georgian. But the diversity is increasing from day to day. The existed situation shows that the McE is not only the need for the future, but the necessity for the present. In 2009 a non government organization - The Center for Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations (CCIER) the aim of which is to ensure the citizens of Georgia with equal opportunities through education, to support civil integration and raise civic consciousness, made a research and interviewed teachers to understand their vision what McE is, what trainings and practical courses they took in the direction of McE.

Based on the results of the research and interviews the organization developed recommendations that are directed to improve reforms in education (Tabatadze, 2013).

According to the researchers the problem in McE lies in its definition. In the report we read... interviews clearly showed that teachers either do not have any idea about multicultural education and its purpose or are very restrictive aware of it.. "

Introducing to the research material we come to the conclusion that teachers in Georgia understand multicultural education differently. The main reason is the lack of knowledge and skills in this regard. They suppose that multicultural education is either the integration of ethnic or religious minorities or the knowledge about ethnic, racial or religious groups and their culture.

e.g. "I think that it (McE) is an integration of people of different cultures."

"It is a relationship between people of different nationalities and aims to research what kind of relationship is between these people and accordingly how Georgian people should collaborate with them."

A very little part of teachers think that the aim of McE is to support relationship between people and help students of different origin in coexistence. e.g. "It is the collaboration of people of different culture, how they will live together, what the culture gives them and so on". It is very important to mention that teachers working in the compactly populated ethnic minority regions relate McE with the teaching process of the state language. e.g. "I am sure that the students should learn Georgian that means to learn and use the language because they live in Georgia. I agree with it."

The second problem is the knowledge about McE gained at universities or during the practice. In the report we read that a great number of teachers in Georgia neither studied or went through the trainings in McE or participated in teachers' professional development programs. Only very few teachers went through trainings in the direction of tolerance and they assess it positively.

The third problem is multicultural strategies used by teachers in the process of teaching. According to the research, teachers name general strategies but in many cases the strategies aren't connected with McE.

Teachers understand the importance and necessity of developing McE at school but see a way out of this problem only in talking about McE during class hours. Moreover, in the interviews teachers say that as they are not class teachers they can't use aspects of McE in the teaching process and prove that they don't have time to develop tolerance and high intercultural sensitivity in students at the lessons. Though some teachers could name activities that develop McE.

As a result of above mentioned research researchers conclude that to implement McE in practice it's necessary to reflect intercultural aspect as an competence in the national curriculum, to reflect multicultural aspects in the standards of definite subjects like: Civic Education, Art, Native Language. Also to improve the content of textbooks, to add criteria of assessing multiculturalism, to improve multicultural sensitivity and use McE strategies in the class effectively, to take a course in McE at university as a mandatory subject.

Exploratory Survey. Preparation of Student Teacher

Samtskhe-Javakheti region is situated in south-east of Georgia. It borders with Turkey in the south-west and with Armenia in the east. Historically the famous Big Silk Road went through Samtskhe-Javakheti. The region is multicultural, non Georgian population is up to 36-43% but in two districts (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda) the figure reaches to 93-95%. Majority of them are Armenians by origin. Though, there are a lot of other ethnic minorities. Such as: Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews, Polish, Russians, Turks and others (7%).

Samtskhe-Javakheti State University is one of the higher educational institutions in the region. One of the missions of the university is to increase educational equality for students from diverse ethnic and cultural groups, to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to survive and function effectively in a diverse global world. Lot of projects are being implemented on multicultural issues both in the region and at university but they are short-term and less stable. Tempus project **-DOIT** (Development of an International Model for Curricular Reform in Multicultural Education and Cultural Diversity Training) was an exception. It lasted three years and contained experience of many countries in the field of McE. It was an international project financed by the European Union and has been implemented by Gordon Pedagogical College, (Israel) together with several Georgian and different higher educational institutions of the EU. Our university was selected in the project having envisaged the cultural diversity and multicultural environment of the region. The challenges existed in McE were solved with trainings student teachers, preparing them to work at schools and in any multicultural environment using the knowledge gained at university.

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In order to meet the challenges of diversity among students in schools, student teachers needed to be educated for diversity, to become culturally aware and responsive educators; namely, they needed to be trained for multicultural education (McE). The main goals of McE, according to James Banks (1999) are to increase “educational equality” for all children, to enable student teachers to become knowledgeable, caring and active citizens and develop the competences and attitudes they will need to live and function effectively in a multicultural milieu (<http://tempus-doit.sapir.ac.il/login/index.php>).

Future teachers should be leaders who are able to work in multicultural educational environment, to be effective and culturally responsive educators. Hence, student teachers should be nurtured and trained to develop intercultural awareness and competencies required to function in multicultural educational settings and promote values of multiculturalism in their classrooms, to enrich their repertoire of pedagogical approaches and tools that promote student teachers’ understanding of the issue of diversity, the challenges it creates and the teaching-learning principles necessary for McE all along, the acquaintance with various educational approaches and methods (Lectures, discussion and debate; Collaborative work in classroom and through a forum; Case studies; Activity based learning, Heuristic approach) based on experiential, reflective and constructivist ways of learning (Banks, 1999; Grant & Sleeter, (1997); Irvine, 2003; etc.).

To prove the necessity of preparing student teachers in McE my colleague and I conducted, a survey which was aimed at identifying the need for multicultural education, its availability and readiness of teachers in pedagogical issues.

The target group was selected from student teachers at the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences at SJSU. We used the questionnaire and surveyed 100 student teachers, out of which 50 were representatives of ethnic minorities and 50 were ethnic Georgians.

The study was conducted using a structured interview method. The questionnaire was adapted to the characteristics of the research objectives and the research community.

(See. Appendix 1) A questionnaire consists of a semi-open and open-ended questions and is structured in a way to avoid the inconvenience caused by the delicacy of the topic.

Survey Results

Questions 1-5 in the questionnaire include information about gender, religion and ethnic minorities of respondents. Out of 92 students 11 were males and 81 females. 38 were Orthodox Christians, 7-Catholics, 23-Armenian Catholics, 24--Gregorian Armenians.

The responses to the questions were interesting. According to Q 6.A the majority of students (40%) think that the university doesn’t prepare them to live in a culturally diverse environment. It shows us that to solve this problem the university should prepare and deliver special courses to the students. Moreover, students require from teachers to change the teaching process and teaching material and be aware of and able to state their own cultural biases about different cultural groups (43%). Students (44%) consider that teachers should be knowledgeable of global events or cultural conflicts in order to better facilitate multicultural discussions in the classroom. They (52%) also believe that all cultures deserve equal respect as every society has the right and duty to preserve its culture.

The survey shows that the majority of future students (average-68-82%) support the opinion that people must be prepared living in the multicultural community. They think that ethnic stereotypes can be justified because they are based on real observations. Students believe that the country should enforce laws against illegal immigrants. They (35%) think that they should be taught about injustices that different minority groups experience in the society. Moreover, they are sure that it is necessary to prepare students live in an increasingly multicultural society (41%). Most students agree that teachers should create an atmosphere of mutual respect from the very beginning, students must feel that they are taken care of.

Conclusion

Based on the results of above mentioned survey, we can conclude that the survey revealed that the main problem is the availability of multicultural education that the readiness of teachers about multicultural education is low. Teachers and classmates should try to support and encourage their every attempt. It is important for students to feel that their abilities are trusted. It will have a positive impact on civic education, promoting democratic principles and the full integration of ethnic minorities in the society. The teachers need to create

an atmosphere of mutual respect. Every student should feel that he is not marginalized, teachers and classmates should support and encourage them regardless of their ethnicity, social status and religion. Only under such circumstances, teacher's interactive environment is particularly effective because it is based on the principles of cooperation, sense of unity, social and communication skills. When students, regardless of gender, ethnicity, academic performance, different culture and religion work together, it forms friendship and understanding, respect and mutual coexistence.

Discussion

Rapid changes in the life of people in Georgia after collapsing the Soviet Union caused great changes in various spheres of life especially in education. Modern education in many countries faces a challenge -to take into account the characteristics of a multicultural society and to promote peaceful co-existence and positive interaction between different cultural groups. Georgia is not an exception.

We believe that if pedagogical universities and the Faculties of Education in universities in Georgia prepare future teachers with a special program in multicultural education, it will develop teachers competences and skills in using various methods and strategies in the process of teaching effectively. The result will be positive if McE course becomes a mandatory subject at schools and at higher institutions on every level.

The conditions in the regional universities are much poorer and require immediate response from the state or other universities. An attempt to partially solve the problem is the implementation special courses in McE which aims to grow civic empowerment and speed up democratic reforms in higher educational institutions by sharing the experience of different European universities and experts.

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 SJSU Research Report (2014), frame of TEMPUS-DOIT Project.

Appendix 1

Student Questionnaire: 1) Please indicate your:

- a) Gender 11 m., 81 f.m
- b) Age _18-23 year
- c) Ethnic background _Georgian, Armenian;
Religious affiliation- Orthodox, Catholics, Gregorian
- d) Birth country Georgia
- e)Nationality Georgian, Armenian

Please circle the appropriate answer for the following questions:

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2) What level of education are you currently enrolled in?

Bachelor's degree -79

Master's degree -12

3) I currently study in a college/university whose population is:

Not diverse-

Slightly diverse- 63 students

Diverse-29 students

Very diverse –

4) I would prefer to study in a college/university whose population is:

Not diverse-4%

Slightly diverse-5%

Diverse-29%

Very diverse-5%

I don't think about the diversity of the students when choosing a place to study-57%

5) Have you ever lived in a country other than the one you were born in?

Yes, for 3% _____ months/years. (Please indicate the number of months /years).

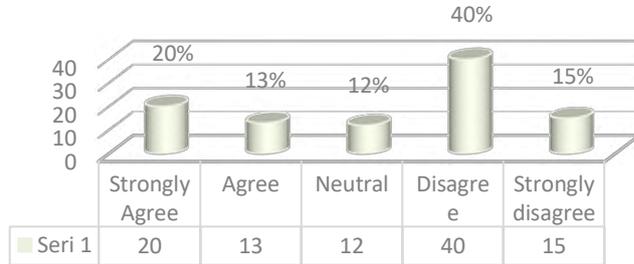
No.-95%

Yes. More than once. Please specify how many times and for how long? 2%

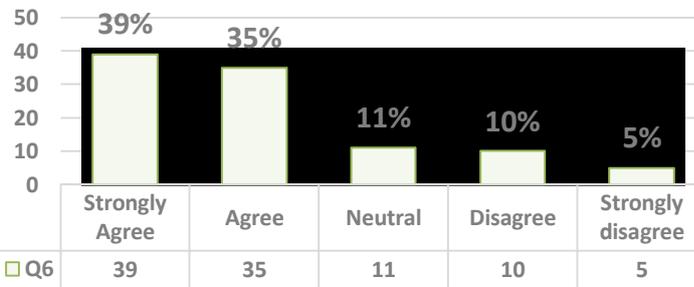
6) Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking the appropriate box

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The institution in which I study prepares students to live in a culturally diverse environment	15	40	12	3	0
Multicultural education only occurs in the classroom	12	17	15	5	1
Teachers should be able to evaluate teaching materials for bias and make changes in their teaching	5	10	11	5	9
Teachers should be aware of and able to state their own cultural biases about different cultural groups	4	6	5	2	3
Teachers should be knowledgeable of global events/cultural conflicts in order to better facilitate multicultural discussions in the classroom	6	4	9	7	4
When I was in high school my education fostered positive images of minority groups	13	29	18	1	9
All cultures deserve equal respect	2	8	8	2	0
Every society has the right and duty to preserve its culture	7	6	12	6	9
The cultures of all groups are important in our society	4	2	11	2	1
Students should be concerned about the rights of all people	6	8	11	1	4
Ethnic stereotypes can be justified because they are based on real observations	4	7	9	4	6
This country should enforce laws against illegal immigrants	8	7	16	2	
Students should be taught about the injustices that different minority groups experience in our society	9	14	9	3	5
Students should be prepared to live in an increasingly multicultural society	6	12	14	1	7
Students should be taught about the world from the minority-groups' perspective	19	12	6	2	1
Students should be taught about the need for redistribution of power among diverse groups	12	9	13	8	8
There is no difference between the way that individuals from majority and minority groups in our society are treated	5	16	11	4	3
Immigrants to this country should adopt its customs	4	7	8	2	9
+People should marry within their own culture/religion etc.	16	22	13	5	6

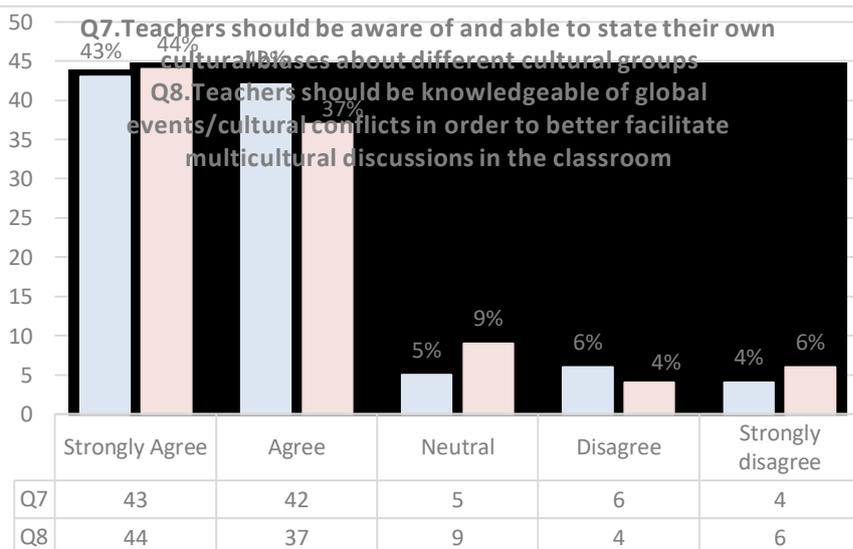
Q3. THE INSTITUTION IN WHICH I STUDY PREPARES STUDENTS TO LIVE IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT



Q6. Teachers should be able to evaluate teaching materials for bias and make changes in their teaching



Q7. Teachers should be aware of and able to state their own cultural biases about different cultural groups
Q8. Teachers should be knowledgeable of global events/cultural conflicts in order to better facilitate multicultural discussions in the classroom



CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE WAYS OF SOLVING THEM IN THE SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION

