

Georgia introduction

The development of the education sector is an interesting issue in the light of shifting social and economic tendencies in Georgia, and lifelong learning is considered to play a crucial role in how the country is going to progress. Adult education has a part to play in overcoming social problems there. Currently, adult education policies aim to reinforce the professional growth of individuals, along with building incentives for companies to offer more, or improved educational opportunities. An increase in funding would undoubtedly improve the development of non-formal and informal adult education.

Recent developments in Georgia

Development of a system of adult education as an integral part of lifelong learning has been identified as one of the key priorities of Georgias education policy. Continuous education for adults has been discussed in the context of social and economic issues including unemployment, economic challenges, ageing population, etc. Adult education is mostly associated with vocational education and professional training. Since 2018/2019 Georgia has been focusing its efforts on three main issues:

- 1)The establishment of a legal framework for formal professional training and retraining system for adults. Introduced authorization standards and procedures aiming to extend participation from formal/non-formal education providers and the private sector in continuing VET provision for adults (including short courses).

2)The establishment of Adult Education Division within the Vocational Education and Training Development Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS) in 2018.

3)Launching a financial mechanism for the provision of adult education programmes by the MESCS in 2019. Under the umbrella of the Professional training and retraining subprogram, the MESCS provides funds educational institutions and private sector organisations to implement formal professional training/retraining programmes for adults. New policies aim at reducing the skills deficit in the workplace, by investing in professional, technical and employable skills, and by initiating short-term upskilling programmes. It is regulated through mechanisms that analyse the needs of the private sector and by giving companies the opportunity to implement formal adult education programmes funded by the government. Finally, the learning outcomes are certified by a recognized diploma.

Links to EU and international policy in Georgia

The general line of education development in Georgia is in parallel with the goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The regulations are stated in Georgia 2020 strategy and Unified Strategy on Education and Science 2017-2021. The emphasis is on accessible, high quality education and training, meaning varied and updated approaches to current professional trends in vocational training for adults. The strategies state the importance of the involvement of a range of different stakeholders in the process of widening the scope of education, science, and innovation activities.

To continue work on developmental strategy, IDFI (The Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information), with the support of UNDP and the Government of Sweden, started a new project titled Facilitate the Landing of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the National Level. The projects objective is to strengthen data collection and coordination, and the capabilities of leading national SDG mechanisms, along with the capacity development of civil servants to effectively monitor SDG implementation and apply newly-acquired skills in the development of the first progress report on SDGs implementation in Georgia.

In addition, the work of local adult education providers is inspired by and aligned with the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Mostly, the organizations are focusing on training of their staff in order to support the quality of education and their institutional development. In that regard, EAEA member, Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN), is working on upskilling the staff of its member centres, systematizing experiences of adult education practitioners and making information sharing more sustainable, developing professional standards.

Challenges and recommendations in Georgia

The biggest challenges faced by the adult education sector in Georgia at the moment is the lack of awareness amongst the general public and administrative bodies on the importance of continuing formal and non-formal education as an adult.

The EAEA member in Georgia, GAEN, identifies the need to develop national regulations and strategies to make non-formal adult education a stronger and more present part of

the educational system as a whole. The organization is working on promoting adult education on national level (ministries and policy makers), regional (local and international organisations and donors) and local level (supporting information sharing, awareness raising of community members). At the same time, the private sector could also have a bigger role in adult education, in which case there would need to be a consistency between labour market demands and educational offers.

And last, but not least, a sophisticated assessment and evaluation system is needed in order to strengthen the positions of adult education. GAEN is tackling the issue at the moment by supporting the process of recognition of non-formal adult education courses offered by the associations members.
