Georgia: Marketization and Education post -1991

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Introduction

The debate around education marketisation has been extensive over the last few years. Much has been written around the marketisation of education systems in different parts of the world. Australia, UK, Canada, China, New Zealand, and the USA are the countries where education marketisation has been particularly striking. I define marketisation as the sequence of government policies aimed at the introduction of market models into the education system, thus avoiding the state responsibility of distributing taxpayers' money effectively, equitably and efficiently. The idea of education marketisation is integral to neoliberal ideology of free markets and a limited state. Although the research effort oriented to the investigation of various aspects of education marketisation has been documented, education system marketisation in post-Soviet states, and specifically in Georgia, has not been the subject of extensive scholarly discussion.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, independent states were confronted with new socio-economic and political realities. Post-Soviet states were weak and most of the governments who led these states in the first decade after the dissolution of the USSR were unsuccessful in tackling an array of challenges the countries faced. As described by Robinson (2004), there were two main limitations. The independent states did not have sufficient economic resources to support the establishment of market economies and the modernisation of public institutions to lead economic transformation. Neither did the governments enjoy political legitimacy to compensate for economic deficiencies. With weak traditions of statehood, commitment to a clan, family or geographic area

was sometimes stronger than to the state. Operating within these legacies of the USSR, successive governments created different varieties of weak post-Soviet states (Robinson 2004).

Under the conditions of scarce economic resources, political instability and weak traditions of statehood, it has been a difficult task to continue to provide publicly-funded education. Thinking and planning for systemic improvements was a task of even larger magnitude. Modernisation of educational practices at schools and post-secondary institutions required evidence-based policies as well as sufficient human and financial resources to implement them.

This chapter discusses neoliberal policies and discourses in Georgian general[1] and higher education since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It examines how an entirely public system opened up to private resources and providers, aiming at the establishment of a corruption-free, choice-based meritocratic system of safe schooling. As I pursue a chronological analysis of specific mechanisms that have facilitated the development of for-profit sector in the Georgian education system, I divide the period under discussion (1991 - 2012) into three sub-periods. 1991 - 2001 was the time of transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy, with Soviet-style corrupt practices and emerging private sector in education. In 2001 - 2009, corruption was largely eliminated and a number of education system liberalisation and decentralisation measures were put in place. Finally, in 2010 - 2012, the government implemented new measures of management through surveillance which may be considered a culmination of the neoliberal political agenda in the education sector.

The first signs of education system marketisation emerged in Georgia in the 1990s, when a centrally planned socialist economy began to transition into a market economy and the government was unable to continue full funding and provision of education. Private providers of education were established and secondary and tertiary fees were introduced at public schools and higher education institutions (HEIs). These trends, I argue, were the indicators of education policies in the tradition of the so-called Edlib.[2]

Edlib, neoliberal tradition in education policy, advances the features of economic liberalism "with greater stridency" and promotes the reduction of government involvement in the provision and financing of education (Colclough 1997b). For the purpose of increasing a market role in education, Edlib advocates have generally been promoting the following policy directions: user charges in tertiary and, sometimes, secondary education; student loans for all tertiary students; more private provision at all levels (Colclough, 1991). The literature demonstrates that governments in different parts of the world have been eager to embrace these options since they need to decrease spending and follow the directives of the international financial institutions (Colclough 1991; Colclough 1997a). Moreover, Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb's (2002) analysis of neoliberal policies in Chile, Mexico, Britain and France shows that, in the process of liberalisation, developing countries depend on external pressures more than developed ones.

There are three major neoliberal arguments for the increase of market role in education. First, the fiscal constraint argument - governments in developing countries do not have enough resources available from traditional revenue instruments (Colclough 1997a). Second, the equality argument - state misallocates resources; some people are altogether denied the access and others, mostly rich, benefit from it. Public sector cannot put things right as the people whom the governments depend upon are richer and therefore the resource allocation will always be inequitable (Colclough 1997a). Neoliberals maintain that marketisation allows families of low socio-economic status to select better schools outside their area of residence (Kwong 2000), and can ensure the provision of higher quality education for the poor (Tooley et al. 2009). This brings us to the third argument on efficiency and effectiveness - publicly financed education is of low quality without internal efficiency (absenteeism, no equipment, etc) (Colclough 1997a). Reinforcing a central "ideological imperative" of neoliberalism – privatisation (Zajda 2006), the proponents of education system privatisation argue that it increases efficiency gains, as public schools are competing with private schools and try to change their institutional structure. Chubb and Moe (1990), for example, believe that private schools

are more autonomous as they are controlled by the market and less political, therefore, their structure is less bureaucratic and student achievement is higher. The latter argument is often promoted together with the democratic notion of free choice. An attractive marriage of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy-related considerations may explain wider support for marketisation policies in Georgia and internationally; rarely would anyone oppose the idea of having effective education providers and free choice to select the most appropriate educational institutions.

Marketisation of the poor, corrupt system (1991-2001)

As mentioned earlier, the fiscal constraint argument is one of the main neoliberal arguments for the increase of a market role in the education sector. In order to support various levels or the entire sector of education, a state needs financial resources. The grave problem of the 1990s was the scarcity of resources available for public education. At the time of gaining independence, Georgia's public expenditure on education was 7 percent of GDP which fell to 1 percent in 1994.[3] Teacher salaries were not paid, there was no money to finance text-book publishing, schools could not afford learning materials, sufficient heating and maintenance. Therefore, the government promoted cost-sharing as the best way forward in maintaining the education sector.

In the 1990s, tenth and eleventh graders had to incur school fees, unless they were among the top 30 percent of the best performers in their class. This was an entirely meritocratic measure that did not consider family incomes. Parents used to also make informal payments for heating, school capital costs, and monthly top ups to teachers' salaries. Teachers were starting to lose interest in their profession, some leaving their jobs, as their salaries were very low and often times they went unpaid (Dudwick 1999).

Informal payments were often required for entry and completion of higher education (HE). Corruption in HE entrance examinations used to be one of the most severe problems in the region (Altbach 2006). In Georgia, informal payments were the major barrier to the equitable allocation of state-sponsored places at public universities. Parents of HE applicants paid direct bribes to the academics who were on the university selection committees. Alternatively, they paid to purchase private tutoring services from the same academics. It was believed that chances of gaining admission to an HEI increased dramatically if applicants had an opportunity of taking private lessons from the faculty members who would later examine them at entrance examinations. The informal price for a state sponsored public university place differed by HEI prestige and applicant qualifications and ranged between $100 and $20,000 per applicant.[4] Informal payments were not infrequent in Soviet times either. It has been believed, however, that the corrupt practices in HE sector spread more widely post-1991, as the salaries of academics dropped so dramatically that payments received through the above-described arrangements became their main source of income.

Although developing country governments often rely on less stable sources of financing education, like international aid and debt, the state determines the degree of education system marketisation by choosing to finance the system largely through taxes or through cost-sharing. A progressive tax structure can be the only sustainable source for education financing (Colclough, 1991), as financing of education from taxpayers' monies allows the government to "spread the costs of these services more widely among the community" (Colclough 1997a: 25).

Those in support of marketisation advocate for cost-sharing on the basis of the following assumptions: first, the costs of education provision decrease as a result of the new incentives for staff and parents; second, with more resources the state is able to improve allocative efficiency and invest more in the education areas of high social benefit; third, students study better as they face high costs (Colclough 1991; Colclough 1997a). These reasons are controversial, since the cheap, as Colclough suggests, does not mean of good quality. Therefore, parents may not choose those

schools where the costs are lower. As for the allocative efficiency and higher investment in socially more beneficial subsectors of education, intra- and inter-sectoral allocation is a complex phenomenon and the criteria are often unclear (Burgess 1997). And finally, we cannot say for sure that students learn better if they pay fees as there is no correlation between the ability to learn and the ability to pay (Colclough 1991). Overall, it is more likely that cost-sharing shifts the costs from the state budget (the tax monies) to recipients, instead of decreasing costs (Colclough 1991), thus affecting the education access for the low SES recipients, as they may need to incur higher costs. Since those who choose private schools pay twice - via taxes and a via private fees (Colclough, 1997), there may be less incentives to support public school system any longer[5] (Goldhaber 1999), thus creating further disadvantages for lower SES families.

Prioritisation of cost-sharing over progressive taxation is a good indicator of a marketised system where community approach is substituted with individualist approach under the assumption that "there is no such thing as society, only families and individuals" (Brown 1997: 402) who should, according to Edlib, be given a choice.

The 1990s' transition from socialist to capitalism allowed private enterprises to emerge in former state-controlled sectors, including general as well as HE. The first private schools in Georgia appeared in mid-1990s; the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2009c) data shows that in the academic year 1998/99 there were 45 private schools, making up only 1.4 percent of all schools. By 2001, the number of private schools almost tripled to 123.

High private rates of return and substantial costs of academic HE have been considered the major arguments for the supporters of the HE sector privatisation. Requirements for establishing HEIs and expanding the number of available places were loose in Georgia; there were few mechanisms for the government to interfere in the student selection process, capacity or quality control of HEIs. The government's decision to deregulate the HEI establishment process resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of tertiary institutions. The system expanded to respond to a high

demand for HE. Over the decade, the number of HEIs increased from 19 HEIs in 1991 to 179 in 2002 (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia 2009a), the absolute majority of the newly established tertiary institutions were private.

External privatisation was accompanied by internal privatisation as public HEIs introduced fee-based programmes. The government was in charge of establishing the number of HE places only at tuition-free, state funded sectors of public HEIs. Private HEIs as well as fee-paying sectors at public HEIs determined the number of places independently. Responsibility for student selection rested entirely with HEIs.

Private HEIs and the fee-paying sector at public HEIs were flexible to absorb the excess demand; that is to say, to accept those applicants who did not gain access to publicly funded seats at public HEIs. Private HEIs were considered to be "diploma mills" that had their doors open for students till the end of the first term. By 2002, 22 percent of HE students enrolled at private HEIs and up to 43 percent of students at the fee-paying sector of public HEIs (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia 2009a).

Elimination of corruption and full marketisation (2002-2009)

The World Bank's Adjustable Program Loan for the Education System Realignment and Strengthening Program "*Ilia Chavchavadze*" was decisive in shaping and implementing the education reform agenda of the Government of Georgia. The declared goal of the reform was preparing individuals to better meet the demands of a market economy and a democratic society (Shapiro et al. 2007).

In this period, I argue, the Georgian education reform passed on to the next, a more advanced level of marketisation. New policies, advocating freedom of choice and meritocracy, involved

promotion of general school choice via the introduction of student vouchers; facilitation of the establishment of private providers of education; optimisation / consolidation of the existing public education provider network; opportunity for families to pay the costs of private general and HE with public vouchers; last but not least, establishment of the new, test-score based system of HE admissions. [6] These policies, I argue, have been associated with inequalities in access to quality educational opportunities for selected groups of population, especially the rural poor.

Optimisation of the public school network resulted in the closing down of one-third of public schools in Georgia; from 3201 public schools in 2001 there were 2178 left in 2009 (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia 2009c). Edlib followers would maintain that this trend was a natural response to the decrease in the number of school pupils. In the period from 2001 to 2009, the number of school pupils did drop but only by 12 percent, not by 32 percent. The shrinkage of the public school network was taking place in the context of extremely low spending on education. Georgia was among the top ten countries in the world that spent the least on education as a percent of their GDP (World Bank 2009).

It is not, therefore, surprising that, according to the Household Budget Survey data, only half of the families in Georgia think that schools meet the educational needs of their children. The difference in perception between rural and urban households is striking – whereas 66 percent of urban families maintain that their children's school learning environment is acceptable, only 39 percent of rural households provide a similar response (Ivaschenko and Posarac, 2008). There have been differences in IT provision, teacher quality and supply, class size and teacher-pupil ratio, libraries and physical infrastructure, textbook availability, school management, and learning outcomes in rural and urban areas in Georgia.[7]

It has been shown that the declining quality and/or decreased government support for public schools creates a demand among recipients for alternatives, which are often private (Belfield & Levin 2002). The number of private schools, therefore, doubled over the same period, increasing

from 123 in 2001 to 270 in 2009 (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia 2009c). Considering these changes, the proportion of private schools in the school provider network climbed from 1.4 percent in 2001 to 11 percent in 2009.

The government of Georgia introduced per pupil voucher financing of schools in 2006. Vouchers in Georgia can be used to cover the costs of schooling at public as well as private providers. Voucher financing of education systems, which is considered as "the most prominent market reform in education" (Levin & Belfield 2003, p.185), follows the plan outlined by Milton Freedman: "governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on 'approved' educational services" (Friedman 1962). Milton Friedman's original idea is based entirely on the concept of choice that increases consumer satisfaction. According to Friedman (1962), markets can guarantee freedom which arises from the choice. In other words, a better education system for Friedman provides more choice, but not more equitable access (Friedman 1955).

Neoliberalism argues that choice and competition which privatisation brings about improve productive behaviour of education recipients as well as providers (Levin & Belfield 2003), thus promoting efficiency. In marketised systems education recipients have incentives to make providers considerate of their needs. Providers and recipients both know that in case the former does not consider the latter's needs, the latter will simply change the provider (Levin & Belfield 2003). Literature looks at parents' decision-making when utilising the freedom of choice and demonstrates that there are private benefits related to consumer choice (Levin 1991). The USA studies on the voucher effectiveness show that parents tend to be happier when they choose non-government voucher schools than public schools.[8]

Choice is associated with education recipients' higher satisfaction, more commitment and involvement.[9] Choice tends to increase parental involvement in the education decision-making which allows them to choose schools of better quality (Hoxby 1998). Parental involvement in its

turn is correlated with better academic achievement. The UK experience shows that higher level of parental involvement in primary and secondary schools is associated with higher level of academic achievement (Mortimore 1998). An international study comparing 13 Latin American countries also confirms the effectiveness of parental involvement (Willms & Somer 2001).

Can every member of society, however, enjoy the benefits arising from the freedom of choice? Market fundamentalists argue that open enrolment (Godwin & Kemerer 2002), parental choice (Domanico 1990) and private schooling (IFC 2001) improve opportunities for low SES students in various settings. Tooley (2009) presents an excellent example of this ideologically biased argument. As Tooley describes his "travel impressions" in different developing countries, he decides to altogether ignore affordability issue and maintains that entrepreneurs in China, India and Africa are providing better quality education to the poor than public schools do. Moreover, Tooley et al. (2009) write: "my research in Kenya has suggested that these poor families had always been able to afford private schools" (p. 125).

As indicated earlier, Georgian families can use vouchers to pay for private education. Although there is no empirical evidence on equity implication of voucherisation in Georgia,[10] it may be argued that the voucher financing might not have made private education more affordable for the poor as publicly-provided vouchers do not cover full tuition at private schools. Georgian families who choose private options need to make out-of-pocket payments.

Challengers of Edlib view the school choice phenomenon from socio-economic, racial/ethnic and class segregation perspectives. Their empirical research shows that the picture is not at all encouraging when we look at the school choice and parental involvement according to socio-economic status even in developed countries. The level of parental involvement tends to differ according to class. When making school choice decisions, working class parents in the UK discuss and negotiate less (Reay & Ball 1998). Research also shows that high-income parents are more active in choosing schools than low-income parents (Hoxby 1998). Thus, assuming that choice is

positively associated with parental involvement and family income, then pupils coming from working class/low-income families may be disadvantaged as their parents do not seem to be as active and involved in school choice decision-making as the middle-upper class/high income parents.

There exists evidence-based analysis of equity implications related to private choice which argues that private schools (which require additional fees on the top of a voucher) may not be affordable to low-income families. Internationally, richer and more educated families gain benefits from privatisation, whereas poor and less educated families see deterioration in education access.[11] Higher SES parents have all the necessary resources to fully use the choice option, whereas the lower SES parents do not have the resources (e.g. information, additional resources to meet the tuition costs, transportation).[12]

Evidence from different countries demonstrates that those families who decide to choose the school, pay attention to the SES of students and thus support segregation. Marketisation of the English education system has been accompanied by consistent increase in school segregation (Noden 2000). A study of British parents shows that middle-class parents use the opportunity of choice to reaffirm their class position (Ball et al. 2006). Goldhaber's (1999) analysis of the USA school choice research indicates that choice is highly correlated with education recipients' SES as well as racial/ethnic characteristics. Chilean experience also demonstrates that private school students come from families with higher income and education levels than public school students; and have higher academic achievement (McEwan & Carnoy 2000).

In the environment of competition and profit-orientation, it is not only the parents who choose but also the schools, thus denying the less-privileged of their right to exercise choice. Sharon Gewirtz, Ball, & Richard Bowe (1995) show that prestigious schools in England often conduct social selection; they decline the applications from students with special educational needs, students from working-class background, and boys. Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig (2002)

come to somewhat similar results in their study of Washington DC schools; they suggest that market-oriented charter schools are likely to refuse access to those students who may cost more to educate because of their special education needs.

Although there is little evidence on how families choose schools and how schools select pupils in the Georgian context, there is some data available on the availability and affordability of private schooling. Assuming that geographic disparities are "the most serious form of educational inequality" in developing country settings (Foster 1977, p. 218), I established that urban residence in Georgia is associated with significantly higher rates of private school attendance. The empirical analysis of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2009a) and National Examinations Center (2009) data on all applicants to HE in 2005-2009 shows that whereas 14.1% of applicants from the capital can afford/choose private school attendance, in mountainous villages only a very small proportion (0.5%) receive private education. As the residence area becomes more urban, more applicants tend to attend private schools.

Moreover, statistical analysis of the Georgian national examinations dataset shows that private school graduates, *ceteris paribus*, score, on average, significantly higher than public school graduates in the three core subjects of the Unified National Examinations (UNEs): GAT, Georgian, and foreign languages.[13]

Under the circumstances when private school graduates score higher than public school graduates, residence in districts where all schools are public seems to be particularly disadvantageous, as families do not have school choice even if they can afford private education. Almost one-third of municipalities in Georgia, all of them largely rural, did not have a single private school in 2005-2009. These municipalities were: Ambrolauri, Adigeni, Aspindza, Axalkalaki, Bagdati, Dedofliswyaro, Dmanisi, Dusheti, Tetritskaro, Tianeti, Lentexi, Mestia, Ninotsminada, Oni, Tyibuli, Keda, Shuaxevi, Chkhorotsku, Tsalka (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia 2009b). International research shows that there are fewer private schools in poor/rural locations

when compared to relatively well-off/urban locations, as disadvantaged areas do not create sufficiently profitable environments for private sector (OECD & World Bank 2009).

Although returns to education have diminished in Georgia because of lower quality of instruction and a depressed labour market, people continue investing in it (Rosati et al. 2006). In 2005-2008, the amount of Georgian households' private investment in education increased (GeoStat 2009), as the dissatisfaction with the publicly provided education grew (Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008). "Underfunding from public sources has been reflected in an increase in private expenditure on education [...], to the detriment of equity" (Shapiro et al. 2007, pp.2–3). Using the GeoStat data on household expenditure, Shapiro et al. (2007) show that richer families in Georgia tend to spend significantly more on education than poorer families: 43 percent of total private expenditure on education comes from the top 10 percent of the richest families, compared with the 0.2 percent share coming from the bottom 10 percent. Urban households invested, on average, three times more on education when compared to the spending of rural households (IMF 2003). This is in compliance with international research which shows that, even when controlling for household resources, rural families invest significantly less in education than urban or suburban families (Roscigno et al. 2006).

Private investment goes to private schooling as well as private tutoring. Countries as diverse as Cambodia and the UK, Romania and the USA, the Arab Republic of Egypt and Japan, Kenya and Singapore have substantial private tutoring systems.[14] The practice is immensely strong in East Asia (Mark Bray, 2013).

Private tutoring has been a very widely spread practice in Central and South Eastern Europe and the countries of former Soviet Union, as it has been perceived to be an effective way of supplementing the formal school quality (OSI 2006). 69 percent of the students participating in an OSI (2006) regional survey, covering eight transition countries, including Georgia, reported having such experience at upper secondary level. The OSI (2006) survey shows that the countries with

highest rates of private tutoring - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Mongolia, and Ukraine - have lowest rates of per capita gross national income. It could be the case that families seek private options when they are not happy with public schooling which, not surprisingly, is underfunded in these poor states.

The OSI (2006) survey indicated that 80 percent of the sample from Georgia used private tutoring as a supplement to formal schooling. Moreover, 50 percent of students in Georgia maintain that private tutoring is the only way of acquiring high quality education; HE applicants tend to be active users of private tutoring services as they prepare for the highly competitive Unified National Examinations (UNEs) and as their perception of formal schooling quality is low (OSI 2006). The data, however, does not make it clear whether students go to private tutors because of poor education quality overall or in response to poor preparation for university entry examinations, or both (Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008).

According to the HBS 2006 data, the incidence of private tutoring in Georgia is higher in urban areas (39 percent) than in rural areas (17 percent) and among children from higher SES quintiles – 50 percent of students from the richest quintile and only 17 percent from the poorest quintile go to private tutors (Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008). This is the case despite the fact that private tutoring costs, as reported by general school teachers, differ by geographic areas and tend to be higher in urban than in rural areas (Shapiro et al. 2007). Overall, those who come from urban areas and higher SES quintiles have a 4 – 25 percent higher probability of using private tutoring services than those who belong to poorer families and reside in rural areas (Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008). This finding from the Georgian context is in compliance with international trends. Dang & Rogers (2008) in their meta-analysis put together the results of private tutoring studies on Egypt, Korea, Japan, Turkey, and Vietnam. Relying on nationally representative data-sets, these studies demonstrate that higher household income, higher levels of parental education and urban location are associated with higher consumption of private tutoring services.

An empirical study of students from the Gori district of Georgia revealed that private tutoring is associated with higher achievement at the UNEs. Darakhvelidze (2008) used multivariate analysis to establish that private tutoring investment explains significant variation in student performance on the UNEs, including achievement on the General Aptitude Test, for the population in the selected district. The multivariate model controlled for the school location, gender, family income, parent employment status, school attendance. Through qualitative interviews with HEI entrants in Georgia, Gorgodze (2006) found that the following are the main reasons for applicants to decide on hiring a private tutor: through tutoring classes they can organise their thoughts better; they cannot think of passing the UNEs without private lessons as everybody else is taking such additional preparatory classes; they feel more at ease to ask questions to a private tutor rather than a school teacher; and have more time for discussions at private lessons.

Private tutoring has been popular in countries where the HE admission process is competitive and the places are limited, for example, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Greece (Dundar & Lewis, 1999; Bray, 2013). Georgia met the two criteria in 2005; introduced highly competitive HE admissions and drastically limited the number of university places. Two policies - the unified system of student selection and the institutional accreditation of HEIs - established a meritocratic, survival-of-the-fittest system. These two policies helped government avoid responsibility related to equitable provision of HE to its citizens. First, those young people who did not have appropriate prior education to accumulate competitive test scores at the nation-wide examinations are now solely blamed for their failure as they were unsuccessful in examinations. Second, those HEIs that did not meet the infrastructure-related criteria for survival were closed down because they were not competitive. As the number of HEIs decreased and there were fewer places for new students, the competition for those places via the unified examinations became more severe for marginal applicants.

Thus, the HE deregulation trend from the previous period reversed in 2004-2005, as the government of Georgia introduced new policies which fully centralised the system, in terms of taking charge of student selection, capacity and quality control.

An entirely test-score based admissions system, the UNEs, was introduced in Georgia in 2005 to tackle the main barrier to equal allocation of HE places – corrupt practices of informal payments. Standardised testing is often equated with the objective treatment of all applicants in the neoliberal discourse. This was especially so in the Georgian context where the new policy of admissions created conditions for formally equal competition for all applicants and, thus, successfully combated corruption.[15]

Although the system is providing equal treatment of all, it is far from being equitable, as demonstrated by the empirical analysis of the national examinations data of the entire population of HE applicants in 2005-2009 (Chankseliani 2013b; Chankseliani 2013c). Rural origin of applicants, language minority status, gender and secondary school ownership status are the main factors of disadvantage when it comes to equitable opportunities of gaining HE admission, obtaining competitive test-scores, applying and gaining access to prestigious HEIs, and obtaining public grant for tuition (Chankseliani 2013b; Chankseliani 2013c).

Literature has demonstrated that, internationally, test-score achievement is related with demographic, socio-economic, geographic and educational characteristics of applicants, their families and schools. Besides, there may be incidental factors which affect test performance: health condition, nutrition, anxiety level, psychological and social factors, skilful test-taking techniques acquired through coaching, among others (Helms 2008).

Opportunities of access to HE for applicants with marginal scores have been further delimited with the shrinking number of available HE seats in the country. The government-led institutional accreditation that resulted in the decreased number of HE places assessed university physical/institutional infrastructure and did not measure the quality of teaching or research

(Chankseliani 2013b). By introducing this supply-side measure, 60 percent of HE applicants were left without possibility of studying at a tertiary level in their home country (National Examinations Center 2011). Georgia created an unusual international precedent where the general trend at the start of the 21st century has been that of an increase in HE supply to respond to the growing demand.

This resulted in a striking decrease in the tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).[16] Whereas the GER increased from 36.7 percent in 1991 to 45.9 percent in 2005 at the expense of internal and external privatisation of HE, it dropped dramatically within four years and reached 25.5 percent in 2009. This was 11 percentage points lower than the GER at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and 20 percentage points lower than at the time when the UNEs where introduced (World Bank 2010). The decline seems to be associated with the introduction of HE institutional accreditation.

With the GER of 37 percent in 2007, Georgia is below the ECA average of 51 percent and positioned towards the bottom end of the distribution of GER ratios of Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries (UNESCO 2009). 37 percent is a low figure, considering economic and non-economic public returns to education.[17] Besides public benefits, there are economic and non-economic private benefits associated with higher levels of education, such as: higher salaries and benefits, increased employment, higher savings levels, improved working conditions, personal and professional mobility; improved health and life expectancy, improved quality of life for offspring, better consumer decision-making, increased personal status, more hobbies and leisure activities, individual productivity in knowledge production, attainment of desired family size, reduced desired family size (Stransky & Good 2009). With GER figure located towards the end of the regional distribution, the above-described public and private returns to HE may not be sufficiently high.

New management through surveillance - zenith of the neoliberal state (2010-2012)

In the last three years, three new developments brought the Georgian education system marketisation to its zenith: standardisation of school achievement, school branding and school policing. The government tried to use different aspects of highly centralised management of the school system, e.g. surveillance of teachers and students through CCTV cameras, introduction and empowerment of school police, competitive assessment systems for schools and students. This sort of centralised management is a technical means of control that is practiced through punishment and appraisal; it is a “machine [...] in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power as well as those who are subjected to it” (Foucault 1980, p.156).

One could argue that these policy instruments were introduced to increase the government control of schools and put the entire responsibility for inefficient and low quality provision on them, instead of looking at a wider picture of socio-economic disadvantages brought about and maintained via an array of neoliberal policies in public sector.

In this period, the Georgian government introduced the Secondary School Leaving Examinations that every student needs to take upon completing twelve years of schooling in order to obtain a school leaving certificate. Achievement on these exams has been used for the purpose of school comparison and resulted into centralised measures of school punishment and encouragement. Internationally, establishment of standardised measurement of academic achievement, such as PICA, has been associated with schools' efforts to teach to test. This entails less variation in teaching styles and content as well as permanent disadvantage of low-SES schools.

The second measure, school branding, was introduced as a compulsory measure for public institutions and voluntary - for private ones. It involved assessment of schools using a ten-star system. The latter included the following criteria: institutional data, teaching/learning, teacher

qualifications, participation in external projects, accreditation. Each school undertakes a self-assessment exercise; the results of the self-assessment are verified by the Ministry of Education commission that is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Education. As declared on the Ministry web-site, the main goal of the school branding is to create a competitive environment and encourage schools to improve the teaching/learning process.

The initiators of this reform have not considered the fact that competition may not generate classical economic response in terms of improving quality when participants are competing on an inherently unequal playing field. A school in Khulo District with limited school infrastructure, shortage of teachers and low-SES environment is competing with a school from Vake District of Tbilisi, which is located in a high SES area with high involvement of parents and better school infrastructure coupled with higher likelihood of having more qualified teachers.

Finally, the school policing reform was the most widely promoted one; it assured the public that school safety was a major problem in the country and the surveillance / policing measures were required to eliminate this problem. Prior to the implementation of the school policing reform, UNICEF (2008b) looked at 1300 children from 93 schools in Georgia to find out that 94.7 percent of school children always or usually feel safe at school. Despite this data, the MES started putting in place special measures for safe schooling which included the introduction of police-officers at schools, separation of different levels of schooling within school buildings, installation of CCTV/ surveillance cameras in schools, decrease of cash circulation within school buildings.

The duties of the school police include reporting on all disciplinary issues to the MES, including absenteeism, lateness, and even teacher behaviour. School police patrols school perimeter and adopts the strategy of zero tolerance. Schools have no choice on introducing school police; neither can they choose the police-people who will serve at their schools (Gorgodze & S. Janashia 2012). This policy is similar to 1980s zero-tolerance movement in the USA schools when the discipline moved from humane methods to "sixteenth-century draconian practices" (Adams 2000);

although first it focused on criminal behaviour, soon the regulations expanded to nonviolent behaviours like absenteeism, defiance of authority, and defacement of school property (Insley 2001).

The government of Georgia invested in popularising the new institution of school police, maintaining that the introduction of police turned schools into safer places. There is, however, no verifiable source of such information. The drawbacks of the school police institution is that school autonomy decreased, the functions of school administration diminished and the role of teachers declined (Gorgodze & S. Janashia 2012).

It has been argued that governments who focus on crime are trying to divert attention from human rights, deeper economic, social and educational problems. School safety and accountability reforms, in the contexts of governance through crime, have been consistently linked to the neoliberal political agenda.[18] Based on the international literature on the topic, it may be hypothesised that the introduction of police officers and surveillance cameras to schools and their unlimited power to control the behaviour of pupils, teachers and school administration might have been used to legitimise the political order and could have had adverse effects on elimination of behavioural problems.

Discussion and conclusion

Transition from a socialist economy to a market economy in Georgia was accompanied by education system marketisation which shifted the understanding of education from a public into a private good. Furthermore, access to the latter is competitive and takes place under the conditions of substantial government control but limited public funding. Contrary to the non-interventionist narrative of neoliberalism, the literature provides an array of very specific arguments in favour of

the state support for various levels of education. There exists an extensive discourse on education as a public good which points to substantial social benefits resulting from education as well as its non-excludable and non-rivalrous nature that justifies government provision and financing of education.[19] There are a few problems which usually arise when education is viewed as a private good and, thus, entirely reliant on markets instead of the state:

First, adequate information may not be available about education benefits and educational opportunities, especially to the disadvantaged. Considering that information affects consumer behaviour, it is not surprising that imperfect information about the benefits of education does not allow individuals to make right choices (Colclough 1997a). In market-driven systems education institutions provide their own information to education recipients. Such information, as demonstrated by Levin & Belfield (2003), may not be accurate and it will be particularly difficult for less educated parents to make sense of it.

Second, capital markets are imperfect. The poor may not have credit available for education as banks may not take the risk (Burgess & Stern cited in Colclough, 1997a), i.e. an imperfect market in a developing country may not provide solutions for those disadvantaged applicants who have been successful in gaining the admission to educational institution, maintains Colclough (1991) and underlines the threat of reinforcing existing inequalities by providing education access to more affluent groups. Shafaeddin (2004) uses the writings of Stigliz & Myint to suggest that capital markets are particularly imperfect in developing countries because of the low level of institutional and organisational development.

Third, the private sector tends to show signs of instability in its business interests. Governments that choose the marketisation path often use “what works rather than who does it” approach and ignore the primarily profit-oriented nature of private sector (Whitty 2000). Although at some point in time private firms may find education business attractive, as other areas of investment become more profitable the companies may shift to them. Therefore, Whitty (2000)

voices a legitimate concern about the possibility of private sector losing interest in the educational business over time. Levin & Clive R. Belfield (2003) support the same argument when they look at a firm's decision-making to start or end a business and an effect of equilibrium price in the process. Thus, when governments and media idealise private as the best, they must also be asking the question "if public sector capacity is undermined, what will happen in the longer term when the private sector moves on to seek easier profits elsewhere?" (Whitty 2000, p.6). Existing research does not provide any answers to this question. It can only be hypothesised that socio-economically disadvantaged population would suffer more in case of scarce supply of educational opportunities.

Defining marketisation as the sequence of government policies aimed at the introduction of market models into the education system, this chapter critically looked at the case of Georgia via the theoretical lenses of education system marketisation. The Georgian government has been implementing market-fundamentalist reform in the field of education by optimisation/consolidation of the existing public education provider network, supporting the establishment of private providers at all levels of education and training, creating wider possibilities of school choice, introducing across-the-board per student voucher financing of general and HE and allowing education recipients to pay the cost of private general and HE with public vouchers, full standardisation student achievement. In the last few years, however, the neoliberal state, that strives to have little responsibility and a lot of power, affirmed its omnipresence through school policing reforms described in the final part of this chapter.

When the system is oriented on keeping control of teachers and students instead of supporting teachers to educate learners, when the system is measuring all learning outcomes with standardised tests instead of looking at multiple indicators, when all public schools are ranked according to the same criteria and ranking is used for punishment instead of support for improvement, when all applicants have to compete for HE places based on their test scores only instead of considering a variety of measures, the education system may be delivering disastrous results. The responsibility

for these results, however, does not rest with the central power in charge of distributing taxpayers' monies; it rests with families, students, schools and teachers. Students are lazy, teachers are ill-prepared, schools are mismanaged, families are disinterested – this is the discourse of a marketised system.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of this paper, general school refers to a school providing education from grade 1 to grade 11/12. Although Georgian legislation differentiates between primary (grades I-VI), basic (grades VII-IX), and secondary (grades X-XII) levels, majority of education providers offer all schooling levels.
[2] The term coined by Christopher Colclough; for Colclough, Edlib thinkers are those who advocate for the diminished role of state in education provision and control, as well as increased functions of the price system in education service allocation (Colclough 1991).
[3] See, e.g., Perkins, 1998; Rosati, Özbil, & Marginean, 2006.
[4] See, e.g., Janashia 2004; Lorentzen 2000.
[5] This is the disincentive that the parents would face mostly in cases when the state does not contribute to financing private schools and/or the tax system gives them the necessary flexibility.
[6] For further details on these policies see, e.g. Godfrey 2007; Lomaia 2006; Shapiro et al. 2007; Chankseliani 2013c; Chankseliani 2013a; Chankseliani 2013b; Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008.
[7] See, e.g., ARC 2011; Ivaschenko & Posarac 2008; Shapiro et al. 2007; Teacher Professional Development Center 2008; Godfrey 2007; National Examinations Center 2007; National Curriculum and Assessment Centre 2009.
[8] See, e.g., Hanushek 2007; Goldhaber 1999.
[9] See, e.g., Carnoy 2000; Goldring & Shapira 1993.
[10] Literature points to the fact that voucher plans differ according to the amount, the possibility for the parent to add up to it and some other characteristics; this makes every voucher plan different. It is, therefore, important to study the effect of each given design on educational outcomes, rather than to have a discussion of voucher plans on abstract level (Levin 1998; Levin & Belfield 2003).
[11] See, e.g., Belfield & Levin 2002; Robertson & Dale 2002.
[12] See, e.g., Goldhaber 1999; Levin & Belfield 2003; McEwan & Carnoy 2000; Carnoy 2000.
[13] The multiple regression models used in the analysis controlled for age, gender, ethnicity, rurality of the area of applicant origin, general aptitude test score, year of applying to university, school graduation time.
[14] Following the definition provided by Dang & Rogers (2008), private tutoring is "fee-based tutoring that provides supplementary instruction to children in academic subjects they study in the mainstream education system" (p. 162).
[15] See, e.g., EPPM 2008; Temple 2006; World Bank 2012.
[16] Using the UNESCO (2010) definition, GER is the total enrolment in a given level of education regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of eligible age. High gross enrolment

ratio means that a system is relatively open; a low rate suggests that a system is relatively closed, with only a small proportion of population having access to HE.

[17] Economic benefits may include ncreased tax revenues, greater productivity, increased consumption, increased workforce flexibility, decreased reliance on government financial support. Non-economic benefits may include reduced crime rates, increased charitable giving, increased community service, increased quality of civic life, social cohesion and increased appreciation for diversity, increased voter participation, improved ability to adapt to and use technology (Stransky & Good 2009).

[18] See, e.g., Giroux 2003; Hirschfield & Celinska 2011; Kupchik & Monahan 2006; Lyons & Drew 2006.

[19] Debate about education as a public good can be further explored in the writings of Colclough 1997a; Tilak 2008; Levin 1987; Labaree 1997.

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