

Inclusive Education in Pilot Public Schools

Monitoring Report



2019

The report was prepared within the framework of an independent monitoring mechanism of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Introduction

The present document is a report reflecting the results of the monitoring carried out within the framework of monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹, which identifies the obstacles to proper implementation of inclusive education in pilot public schools².

Realization of the right to education of persons with disabilities is directly related to the provision of quality and continuous inclusive education.

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)³ concerns the realization of the right to education and stipulates that States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities can realize this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. At the same time, States Parties are responsible both for introducing inclusive education and ensuring lifelong access to it.

Georgia recognizes UNESCO's Salamanca Declaration on Inclusive Education⁴ as well. According to this document, all children, including those with temporary or permanent educational needs, have the right to study at school. All children have the right to study in an inclusive environment and take part in an educational process oriented to them, in order to satisfy their individual needs.

Article 2 of the Law on General Education⁵ defines inclusive education as follows: "Equally accessible educational process, which enables all students to get education, by considering their individual educational needs and skills." According to Article 33⁶ of the same law, it is the

¹ Article 33 of the Convention provides for the state's obligation to name one or more independent mechanisms for promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention. On 27 October 2014, the Public Defender of Georgia was named as the above-mentioned mechanism according to the decision made at the 6th meeting of the Prime Minister's Coordination Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Information about the mechanism's activity is available on the website: <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/en/specializirebuli-centrebi/shshm-pirebis-uflebata-dacvis-departamenti>

² Pilot public schools of inclusive education implied.

³ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention was adopted on 13 December 2006. It took effect in Georgia on 12 April 2014. The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2334289?publication=0>>.

⁴ The declaration was adopted at the UNESCO World Conference (special educational needs, accessibility and quality) in Spain. The document was initially published in 1994, while the final report was issued in 1995.

⁵ Law of Georgia on General Education, paragraph 15 of article 2. The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/29248?publication=76>> last accessed: [14.03.2019].

⁶ Ibid, subparagraph 7 of paragraph 1 of article 33.

obligation of general education institution to provide conditions for the implementation of inclusive education.

As noted above, the Public Defender's Office carried out monitoring together with specialists⁷ in 15 pilot public schools⁸ in November and December 2018. Monitoring revealed challenges, such as the lack of uniform vision of introduction of inclusive education, as well as the lack of multidisciplinary and individual approaches, introduction of effective mechanisms for protecting children (including children with disabilities) from violence and provision of schools with adequate infrastructure and human resources. Monitoring also showed that it is necessary to raise awareness of parents and school staff both in the direction of inclusive education and the needs of children with special educational needs (disabilities).

Monitoring methodology

The methodology and measures developed by the Department of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2018 under Article 18 of the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia were used during the preparation of this report.

International documents and national legislation were analyzed for the objectives of this study. In addition, information was requested from state agencies and public schools. 15 visits were made to pilot public schools of inclusive education for studying the situation on the ground.

On 22 January 2019, a focus group meeting was held at the Public Defender's Office with parents of children with disabilities and other stakeholders for the purpose of verifying the findings of monitoring/specifying certain issues.

As for the monitoring methodology, the mentioned document was developed on the basis of: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁹, Decree of the Government of Georgia of 18 October 2004 on the Approval of National Goals of General Education¹⁰, Law of Georgia on

⁷ Special teacher and psychologist.

⁸ Monitoring was conducted in the following public schools: Khashuri public school No 2, Akhaltsikhe public school No 5, Telavi public school No 7, Rustavi public school No 28, Zestaponi public school No 4, Oni public school No 1, Chokhatauri school, Kobuleti public school No 3, Zugdidi public school No 5, Mtskheta public school No 1, Tbilisi public school No 60, Tbilisi public school No 180, Tbilisi public school No 10, Tbilisi public school No 181, Tbilisi public school No 160.

⁹ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2334289?publication=0>>.

¹⁰ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/11098>> last accessed: [14.03.2019].

General Education¹¹, National Curriculum for 2018-2024¹², Inclusive Education Guide¹³, order of the Minister of Education and Science of 11 February 2018 on the Approval of Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive education, as well as Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs,¹⁴ Decree No 437 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of Child Protection Referral Procedure¹⁵, Decree of the Government of Georgia of 14 September 2015 on the Determination of Financial Normative per Child for Funding General Education and Its Standard Voucher¹⁶, Order No126/n of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia on the Determination of Terms and Minimal Amount of Remuneration of Public School Teachers¹⁷, the Form of Student's Personal File and the Rules of Managing Students' Personal Files in General Education Institutions¹⁸ and other documents¹⁹.

Infrastructure and educational resources of public schools

One of the most important prerequisites for proper introduction of inclusive education in public schools is adequate infrastructure of schools, physical environment and access to resources. To this end, LEPL Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency is functioning under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, which is responsible for the development of educational and scientific infrastructure in the education system of Georgia.²⁰ The Agency carries out rehabilitation and construction of public schools in accordance with the Annual Infrastructure Development Plan. In addition, at the beginning of 2018 and 2019, on the basis of the agreement signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the

¹¹ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/29248>> last accessed: [14.03.2019].

¹² The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3285991?publication=7>> .

¹³ The document is available on the website: <<http://inclusion.ge/res/docs/2015042416391383051.pdf>>.

¹⁴ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539>> last accessed: [15.03.2019].

¹⁵The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3394478>> last accessed: [15.03.2019].

¹⁶ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2982289>>

¹⁷ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2995627?publication=7>> last accessed: [15.03.2019].

¹⁸ The document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1995349?publication=0>> last accessed: [18.03.2019].

¹⁹ Monitoring reports of NGOs and the Audit Office.

²⁰ Order №225/n of the Minister of Education and Science of 20 December 2011 on reorganization of the legal entity of public law – Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency and approval of its provisions, the document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1548252?publication=7>> [last accessed: 06.07.2019].

Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency and the municipalities of Georgia (except for the municipalities within the administrative boundaries of Adjara's autonomous republic and Tbilisi), certain powers in the field of general education are delegated by the state to municipalities, which should ensure implementation of small rehabilitation and transportation projects for public schools.

In spite of the above-mentioned, the old and damaged infrastructure of schools remains one of the most important issues at the level of general education, which mostly cannot meet the accessibility standard for persons with disabilities. According to the Ministry,²¹ only 120 out of 2084 public school buildings are fully adapted and 690 are only partially adapted.²²

The situation of water and sanitary norms is also a major challenge in public schools. Access to water, proper toilets and water facilities remains problematic. In 2018, the Public Defender's Office monitored the situation of water and sanitation in schools. The monitoring results showed that the physical arrangement and sanitation of public schools are less oriented to the needs of students or school staff. Laboratory examination of water safety was not regularly carried out in 71.3% of 108 public schools where monitoring was carried out. Hand soap could be found only in 44.4% of schools, hand paper was found in 26.9% of schools, while water flush system could be found only in 25.9% of schools.²³

The general situation described above corresponds to the results of visits made to the pilot schools of inclusive education in 2018 as well. Monitoring proved that the infrastructure of inspected schools was mostly out of order and could not meet the accessibility standards. Ramps are installed at the entrance of every school, but some of them need to be renovated and improved. In some cases, it was possible to reach ramp at the entrance of school only through a staircase,²⁴ which created difficulties for children using wheelchairs, or it was dangerous to reach the building with a wheelchair because of the poor infrastructure of the school yard.²⁵

Accessibility of internal infrastructure in schools is particularly problematic. None of the schools, except for Tbilisi public school No 10, has an elevator, which makes it impossible for children with mobility impairment to move independently. Consequently, classrooms for wheelchair users are located on the ground floor, while other rooms, including a library, cannot be accessed

²¹ The correspondence MES 0 19 00252480 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, March 1, 2019.

²² The data does not include schools of the autonomous republic of Adjara or Abkhazia. In addition, expert's assessment is needed to establish whether the named schools are fully or partially adapted.

²³ Public Defender's Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2018, page 254. Available on the website: <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019042620571319466.pdf>> [last accessed: 06.05.2019].

²⁴ Mtskheta public school No 1.

²⁵ Zugdidi public school No 5.

by these students. In addition, the thresholds in the classroom entrances create additional barriers for independent movement of wheelchair users.

Most of schools' toilets cannot meet the accessibility and sanitary-hygienic norms. In some schools, none of the toilets are adapted for children with disabilities.²⁶ Supply of hot water and hygiene products to school toilets is also problematic.²⁷

In many cases, the school administration claimed that they could get enough support neither from the Ministry nor local self-government to solve the infrastructure problems.

The use of adapted educational materials, assistive resources and textbooks in the education process remains a problem, as well as the library's rehabilitation/equipment with accessible textbooks and assistive materials (Braille books, audio books, adapted materials for students with intellectual disabilities, etc.). It is problematic to equip schools with touch screen computers²⁸ as well.

Monitoring also showed that textbooks about teaching methods for children with special educational needs were not practical. Another difficulty for schools is to obtain development materials adequate to school textbooks.

Resource-room

1.1 Arrangement of resource-rooms

According to the order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia²⁹, a resource room is "a space at school accessible for teachers, inclusive education specialists and students with special educational needs, which is equipped with material-technical resources necessary for students with special educational needs determined by the school and/or the Ministry's multidisciplinary team of inclusive education".

²⁶ For example, Rustavi public school No 28, Mtskheta public school No1, Chokhatauri public school No1.

²⁷ Paper, napkin, soap.

²⁸ Computers provided with programmes intended for blind children (sound synthesizer).

²⁹ Order No 16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the approval of the rules of introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education, as well as mechanism of identification of children with special educational needs, subparagraph 10 of paragraph 2 of article 2 of chapter 1. Information is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>> last accessed: [11.03.2019].

Monitoring showed that resource rooms were properly functioning in all public schools, except for Zestafoni public school No 4 and Rustavi public school No 28. In particular, the resource-room of Zestafoni public school No 4 was used as a classroom³⁰, while the resource-room of Rustavi public school No 28 was occupied by the district election commission despite the recommendation issued by the Public Defender in 2017.³¹ In some schools, resource rooms were located on the second floor and the schools had no elevator, which made it problematic for students using wheelchairs to use the room.³²

It should be noted that the school's authorized personnel found it difficult to refer to specific recommendations which they used for arranging the resource-rooms. In most cases, resource-rooms were divided into several zones: learning space, resting zone and developmental resource corner. Most of them were equipped with adapted furniture (table, armchair, chair) and computers. However, problems were observed in terms of provision of other technical and assistive technological education materials. In particular, most of the resource rooms did not have printers, voice recorders or the following materials: audio books, adapted pen, book holder. As for the education materials and development resources, the inspected schools mainly had exercise books provided by the Teacher's House (for teachers and students), puzzles, cubes, blackboards, illustrated books, lotto, mosaic board, numbers and alphabet letters.

It should be evaluated negatively that despite the identified need, the majority of resource rooms did not have enough color papers, pencils, markers, watercolor, gouache, plasticine, kinetic sand and sound toys.

1.2 Working in the resource-room

Pursuant to paragraph 1 of article 23 of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive

³⁰ The above-mentioned was conditioned by the fact that public school No 4 was temporarily united with the public school No 6, due to the repairs of the latter, which created the shortage of classrooms.

³¹ Recommendation of the Public Defender of Georgia on the elimination of the practice of use of public schools' resource-rooms for election purposes. The document is available on the website: <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/ge/recommendations-Proposal/rekomendaciebi/rekomendacia-sadjaro-skolebis-resurs-otaxebis-sarchevno-miznebisvis-gamoyenebis-praqtikis-agmofxvris-sheaxebe.page>>.

³² The resource-room in Khashuri public school No 2 was located only on the second floor. The resource-room of Tbilisi public school No 181 was also located on the second floor, but the school did not have any child using a wheelchair. Tbilisi public school No 180 had two resource-rooms – on the first and second floors. Children using wheelchairs were mainly using the room located on the first floor. The situation was the same in Rustavi public school No 28, but students registered in the mentioned school were studying at home.

Education, as well as Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs,³³ if necessary, a special teacher shall work with a child with special educational needs individually, under a pre-defined schedule, including in the resource-room, and shall create educational resources.

The Professional Standard for Special Teachers³⁴ regulates the issues relating to skills, functions and obligations of a special teacher, including in terms of promoting the provision of a proper learning environment. In addition, the mentioned standard³⁵ obliges special teachers to attend lessons, if required, and explain teacher's instructions to children with special educational needs and help them to do exercises.

Despite the requirement specified in the order, most schools did not have a schedule of working with children with special educational needs in resource-rooms.³⁶ Consequently, they worked with students with special educational needs mainly without preliminary planning, which hindered the learning process. Monitoring revealed that inclusive education specialists of only three schools³⁷ had prepared an intervention plan for students with special educational needs.³⁸ In addition, it was revealed that specialists involved in inclusive education spent more time working with students in the resource-room and rarely attended lessons. The need for attending lessons and providing adequate support was particularly evident in relation to students with autism spectrum disorder. In some cases, parents had to perform these functions. Monitoring of

³³ Order №16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on approval of the rules of introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education, as well as mechanism of identification of children with special educational needs, available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>>, last accessed: [11.03.2019].

³⁴ Professional Standard for Special Teachers, information is available on the website: <http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf>.

³⁵ Special Teacher Professional Standard, paragraph 5 of part 5 (cooperation) of article 55.

³⁶ This obligation is stipulated by Order №16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on approval of the rules of introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education, as well as mechanism of identification of children with special educational needs, chapter 5, article 23, paragraph 1, information is available on the website: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>. Last accessed: 11.03.2019.

³⁷ Tbilisi public school No 10, Tbilisi public school No 160; Khashuri public school No 2. However, it should be noted that the goals set out in the plans of the mentioned schools reflected only academic skills and not cognitive or functional skills. Interviews and exercises revealed that the specialists worked on the development of cognitive skills as well, although this was not reflected in the plan.

³⁸ The plan of working with students with special educational needs in a resource-room. The above is based on part 4 of article 55 of the Professional Standard for Special Teachers, information is available on the website:

<http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf>.

lessons made it clear that the role of special teachers, who individually assisted students, was mostly passive and limited to giving instructions and tasks instead of subject teachers.

Monitoring also revealed that students with special educational needs spend most of their time at school in a resource-room, which prevents their involvement in the educational process together with other children. Students of Chokhatauri public school No1 were attending classes under a schedule defined by specialists of inclusive education: three or four times a week.³⁹ Only one of these students had an individual attendance schedule defined by the multidisciplinary team.⁴⁰

As for the frequency of working on the development of skills of children with special educational needs in a resource-room, in most cases, decisions were made on the basis of environmental factors and not the needs of these students. Students with special educational needs were mostly using a resource-room two times a week.⁴¹ According to inclusive education specialists of one of the schools, they were working in the resource-room with students with special educational needs only under the 7th grade. The high number of students and the lack of specialists were named as the reason for the above-mentioned.

Despite the requirements of the Professional Standard for Special Teachers,⁴² special teachers hardly ever adapted materials for students with sensory impairments. In addition, they did not use special cards with students with speech disorders that would have helped them in expressing their wishes. Inclusive education specialists in most cases have no information about assistive and alternative technologies of communication.

Identification/assessment of special educational needs

Pursuant to article 6 of chapter 3 of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive

³⁹ Specialists explain that their schools have students with autistic spectrum who need individual assistance and that this function is performed by special teachers. According to them, they cannot daily satisfy this need (three specialists of inclusive education were working in this school) and therefore, they made the above decision.

⁴⁰ This obligation is envisaged in Order №16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive Education, as well as the Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs, chapter 3, article 10, information is available on the website: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>.

⁴¹ Tbilisi public school No 60.

⁴² Professional Standard for Special Teachers, article 55, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of part 1, <http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf>.

Education, as well as the Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs, if subject teacher/form master considers that a student has difficulties in the learning process compared with other students and he/she needs modification of the national curriculum and/or adaptation to the learning environment and/or development and implementation of an individual curriculum, the subject teacher/form master is obliged to immediately inform the specialist involved in inclusive education and the school administration of it (the subject teacher should also inform the form master of it).

If there are relevant preconditions envisaged in the order, the specialist involved in inclusive education, together with the subject teacher/form master, within 10 working days after receiving a request, shall assess the student's motor, cognitive, emotional, academic, communication, social, behavioral and functional skills and develop recommendations for the teacher/teachers, form master, school administration and students' legal representatives in order to ensure primary management of students' difficulties in the learning process.

If the student has difficulties in the learning process and cannot meet the minimum requirements of the national curriculum within a period of 1-2 months despite the steps taken by the school for the primary management of the difficulties, the form master/teacher/specialists involved in inclusive education are authorized to address the school principal with a request to assess the student's special educational needs. In this case, the school provides the parent with necessary information⁴³ and gets a written consent from her/him to assess the child's special educational needs.

Monitoring revealed a systemic problem that hinders the protection of the true interests of students with special educational needs. As noted above, in accordance with the applicable law, the consent of the child's legal representative is necessary to assess the educational needs of the student. When the school cannot get a written consent from the parent, the latter confirms in a statement that he/she takes responsibility for the outcome of the learning process. Nevertheless, when the need for child's assessment emerges after a certain period of time and the parent again refuses that his/her child be assessed, the school is left without a lever to address the multidisciplinary team of the Ministry. During monitoring, there were several cases when the parent's refusal or late consent became an obstacle to the child's development. The mentioned issue was named as one of the problems at the focus group meeting with parents of children with disabilities.

⁴³ The legal representative of the student shall be provided with the following information: Description and justification of student's difficulties in the learning process; description of the measures taken by the school for managing the difficulties, which turned out to be insufficient.

It should be noted that in the target schools, the specialists involved in inclusive education did not take appropriate measures for primary management and the school addressed the multidisciplinary team for the assessment.

During the visits, it was revealed that the cognitive and academic skills of students with special educational needs were mainly assessed in schools by a special teacher/psychologist.⁴⁴ Inclusive education specialists said during interviews that they monitored lessons and interviewed parents/educators when assessing the children, but they could not present documentation proving the above. As it turned out, skill assessment psychological tests were mostly not available for inclusive education specialists. Several schools use assessment criteria that they received within the training organized by the Teachers' House,⁴⁵ as well as materials to assess various kinds of skills. As a result of interviewing the personnel and studying the documentation, it has been revealed that inclusive education specialists were more competent in assessing academic skills than cognitive skills.

Monitoring showed that assessment of children was overall,⁴⁶ descriptive and accurate in several schools. In most schools, assessment of children was not in-depth or specific in each area. This will likely hinder the selection of goals adjusted to children's skills at later stages. The visits showed the lack of new assessments in some schools; instead, they used assessments of previous years. Specialists of one of the schools⁴⁷ noted that they used the assessment of the multidisciplinary team, which was made 3-4 years ago.

It should be negatively evaluated that some teachers do not consider the standard of national curriculum when assessing children.⁴⁸ They made a comparison with other students' achievements and scores and not with the achievements of children with special educational needs in relation to their individual curricula. Signs of stigma were observed in the attitude of some teachers, as they consider that children with special educational needs cannot be granted high scores.

⁴⁴ Professional Standard for Special Teachers, part 2 (Assessment), available at: <http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf>.

⁴⁵ National Center for Teacher Professional Development, training - Introductory Course for Professional Development of Special Teachers.

⁴⁶ Students were assessed according to each sphere of development.

⁴⁷ Tbilisi public school No 10.

⁴⁸ National curriculum, chapter 8, article 43.

Individual curriculum

1.1 Management of personal files of children with special educational needs

According to the Form of Student's Personal File and the Rules of Managing Students' Personal Files in General Education Institutions,⁴⁹ the personal file of a child with special educational needs shall be attached by: a report of a multidisciplinary team, individual curriculum, the minutes of each meeting of the individual curriculum group and the documentation issued by the medical facility. According to the same rule,⁵⁰ a case manager or a person authorized by the school principal is responsible for the maintenance of students' personal files in school.

Certain shortcomings were observed in schools in terms of maintaining personal files. In particular, several schools did not have documents about the health condition of all students with special educational needs.⁵¹ In addition, personal files did not fully include information about the student's assessment, activity and performance in the learning process, which made it impossible to assess the dynamics. In most cases, personal files did not include individual plans. Instead, they were kept in a resource-room or a principal's room.⁵² In spite of the fact that the individual curriculum, the minutes of meetings of the individual curriculum group and the subject assessments have boxes of signatures, they mostly did not include signatures or were only electronically filled in.⁵³ According to the principals and inclusive education specialists, they do not have detailed information about the documents that should be attached to the student's individual curriculum, due to which, they cannot monitor the process.

1.2 Individual curriculum group

According to the national curriculum, on the basis of school administration's order, an individual curriculum group shall be set up for developing and promoting the implementation of an individual curriculum for each student with special educational needs.⁵⁴ The individual curriculum group is composed of the following members: a) Form master of the student with special educational needs; B) Student's subject teachers; C) Specialist/specialists involved in inclusive education; D) Parent/legal representative of the student with special educational needs; E) Another visiting specialist, if necessary.⁵⁵ The group shall have a coordinator who shall lead

⁴⁹ Order N 133/n of 22 August 2013 of the Minister of Education and Science, Annex 1, article 3, the document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1995349?publication=0>> last accessed: [18.03.2019].

⁵⁰ Ibid, article 4.

⁵¹ The form of a health condition document (medical documentation form №IV-100/a).

⁵² The volume of plans was named as the reason for the above.

⁵³ Schools received recommendations regarding the above-mentioned from the multi-disciplinary team.

⁵⁴ National curriculum – chapter 8, paragraph 1 of article 42¹.

⁵⁵ Ibid, paragraph 2.

the group members and group activities.⁵⁶ The group shall be headed by a form master. The group shall gather at least 4 times during an academic year.⁵⁷

Monitoring showed that in some schools, some parents and teachers of students with special educational needs did not have any information about the functions or duties of the individual curriculum group. It should be noted that in the course of monitoring, only one school had not set up an individual curriculum group on the basis of an order.⁵⁸ In addition, in schools with individual curriculum groups, not all teachers were members of the group. In addition, none of the schools had a visiting specialist. In most of the schools, the form master of the student with special educational needs was indicated as a coordinator of the group, though the interviews showed that most of form masters did not have information about it. During monitoring, only two schools⁵⁹ did not have the minutes of the first session of the group. Some schools had the minutes relating to only several students with special educational needs.

As a result of obtaining information from various sources, it became clear that individual curriculum group meetings were held intensively only in several schools. The national curriculum obliges each member of the individual curriculum group to evaluate the compliance of student's achievements in various subjects (knowledge and skills) with the learning outcome determined by the individual curriculum group at the end of the year and to submit a report to the school principal, teachers' council and parents.⁶⁰ However, monitoring revealed that in the majority of schools, parents get only verbal information from inclusive education specialists and form masters and they do not have access to the reports on their children's achievements.

1.3 Subject assessment

After assessing students' general skills, assessments⁶¹ should be made in each subject and the need for developing an individual curriculum by each teacher should be determined on the basis of assessment reports.

Monitoring revealed that the majority of schools made subject assessments not in relation to the standard of national curriculum, but in relation to an individual curriculum, or only the goals of previous year's individual curricula were considered. It should be evaluated negatively that some

⁵⁶ Ibid, paragraph 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid, paragraph 4.

⁵⁸ Oni public school.

⁵⁹ According to the administration, they did not have information about the need for orders.

⁶⁰ Chokhatauri public school No 1 and Zestafoni public school No 4.

⁶¹ Ibid, paragraph 6.

schools did not make subject assessments at all, while others made assessments only in subjects which required development of individual curricula, and they were filled in incorrectly.⁶²

1.4 Individual curriculum: Short-term and long-term goals, activities

After the subject assessment is made, if it is revealed that the student cannot meet the minimum competence requirements according to the national curriculum in a particular subject, the subject teacher should develop an individual curriculum,⁶³ which should include long-term goals, short-term goals, relevant activities and resources necessary for the activities. Even though there is a relevant form that includes the mentioned components, there is no separate document to determine how and by whom it should be developed and what components should be considered. Teacher's Guidebook serves as a guideline in this direction.⁶⁴

Monitoring showed that individual curricula contain complex violations and the practice of each school is different. Sharp difference was observed even in one and the same school in relation to students with special educational needs. In one of the cases,⁶⁵ all individual curricula were drawn up only by the inclusive education coordinator and were later provided to teachers, which contradicts the applicable regulations.⁶⁶ In one of the schools,⁶⁷ old forms of individual curricula were used, as they did not have information about new forms. In addition, in spite of the fact that the need for individual schedules was indicated in the curricula, no individual attendance schedules were filled in for all students. In some cases, it was not clear whether the student with special educational needs was in need of the accommodation of the environment.⁶⁸

⁶² Student's individual Curriculum – Student's assessment at the beginning of the academic year. According to paragraph 2 of article 7 of Teacher's Professional Standard, the teacher knows how to use the information obtained as a result of the assessment, and can draw up short-term and long-term curriculums.

⁶³ Namely, the third box of individual curriculums, which should have indicated that "**The following indicator/ indicators proved the failure to achieve the results**", were completely empty, though the students' needs were evident, which refers to the incorrect principle of drawing up the curricula.

⁶⁴ Student's Individual Curriculum, section "Individual Curriculum." According to Teacher's Professional Standard, the teacher can draw up an individual curriculum and teach students according to this plan. Paragraph 5 of article 7. The document is available on the website:

<http://www.tpsc.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/maswavleblis%20profesiuli%20standarti.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Inclusive education – Guidebook for Teachers – according to the national curriculum for 2011-2016: <http://ncp.ge/files/inclusion%20education/wignebi/inklusiuri_ganatileba.pdf, individual curriculum, pages 28-39.

⁶⁶ Chokhatauri public school No 1.

⁶⁷ Tbilisi public school No 160.

⁶⁸ Despite the fact that students with special educational needs had various difficulties and needs based on the assessments.

In most of the schools, individual curricula did not reflect all the components of all subjects.⁶⁹ The groups, which included sports teachers, had not made subject assessments or developed individual curricula in the area of sports.⁷⁰ Analysis of curricula showed that in the majority of schools, the main characteristics⁷¹ of individual curricula were faulty, as they were not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant or time-specified.⁷² In some individual curricula, students' assessments were general, not detailed or scarce.

The goals of some individual curricula were determined without considering the students' skills and needs, due to which, they were not relevant or achievable. The above-mentioned was proved by the assessments of the students as well, which in spite of referring to the students' low academic or cognitive skills, included goals of developing high intellectual skills.⁷³ Some individual curricula had only one short-term goal in relation to the long-term goal, which violates the relation between the long-term and short-term goals. Individual curricula may need adaptation, qualitative and quantitative changes or addition of alternative/parallel learning objectives. There were cases when individual curricula included only one direction as a goal in relation to a number of students in various subjects, whereas the students could work in other directions as well.

Monitoring showed that activities for achieving short-term goals were shortly formulated instead of being described in detail in most of the schools, or goals/teaching methods were indicated instead of activities. Sometimes, only one activity was given for one short-term goal. In some cases, activities were not related to the short-term goals.

If students cannot achieve the results determined in the individual curriculum, the specialists employed in schools should simplify the goals themselves. Consequently, schools do not have a practice of submitting a report on the measures taken by them for the purpose of implementing an individual curriculum and addressing the multidisciplinary team.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ The reason named was that the teachers did not provide the relevant subject plan to the inclusive education specialists or that they were still working on it, which violated the terms of drawing up an individual curriculum.

⁷⁰ Neither subject evaluation was made.

⁷¹ Inclusive Education – Guidebook for Teachers - according to the national curriculum for 2011-2016. Individual Curriculum, pages 34-35.

⁷² The current form of the individual curriculum does not have a box of the time frame; therefore, the individual curriculum does not indicate the time frame for the achievement of goals.

⁷³ For example: discussion, analysis, conclusion.

⁷⁴ The obligation to address the team is envisaged in paragraph 1 of article 32 of order №16/n of the Ministry of Education and Science of 11 February 2018 on the approval of the rules of introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education and mechanism of identification of children with special educational needs.

1.5 Adapted lesson plan

To successfully accomplish the individual curriculum, it is necessary to integrate the goals in the course of lessons. When planning the educational process, the teacher should take into consideration the individual curriculum for the development of students with special educational needs,⁷⁵ which requires development of an adapted lesson plan in a particular subject.

Monitoring showed that some subject teachers or inclusive education specialists were not aware of the meaning of an adapted lesson plan. They were not aware of the principles of drawing up the plan either.

The responsible persons in the majority of schools could not present old or new adapted lesson plans.⁷⁶ The analysis of adapted lesson plans of several schools⁷⁷ showed that only few teachers knew the structure of devising the plans, while in most cases, the plans were faulty. Namely: the selected goals did not correspond to the student's needs; no long-term or short-term goals of the individual curriculum were indicated and only the objective of a lesson was indicated; no activities of all stages were indicated for students with special educational needs; homework was not adapted for students with special educational needs; the assessment was general - the assessment section of students with special educational needs was seldom attached; the group task did not indicate the duties of students with special educational needs in the group; the time required for the implementation of a specific activity was not specified; in addition, the classroom activities were not related to the activity of students with special educational needs, which complicated the integration of students with special educational needs in the class.

1.6 Monitoring of individual curriculum

According to the national curriculum, the individual curriculum group is obliged to take part in the internal monitoring of the individual curriculum group and to submit materials to the school principal.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ According to paragraphs b and c of article 7 of Teacher's Professional Standard, the teacher knows how to plan the learning process in accordance with the requirements of national and school curricula. To this end, the teacher knows how to use the information obtained through the assessment and can make long-term and short-term curriculum plans. In addition, the teacher knows how to establish relationship between the subjects concerning the results and programmes envisaged in the national curriculum.

⁷⁶ LEPL Tbilisi public school No181, Tbilisi public school No 160, Tbilisi public school No 180, LEPL Telavi public school No 7, Zestaponi public school No 5, Rustavi Rustavi public school No 28, Chokhatauri public school No 1, LEPL Khashuri public school No 2, Oni public school.

⁷⁷ Mtskheta public school No 1, Kobuleti Teimuraz Jorbenadze public school No 3, LEPL Tbilisi public school No 60, LEPL Tbilisi public school No 10, Akhaltsikhe public school No 5, Zugdidi public school No 4.

⁷⁸ National curriculum, chapter 8, paragraph 1 of article 42¹.

According to the data obtained during monitoring,⁷⁹ most principals had issued orders to set up a working group for monitoring the implementation of each student's individual curriculum. In some cases, the school administration was involved in the monitoring of individual curricula.⁸⁰

Some schools did not monitor the activities of individual curriculum groups and consequently, they could not present monitoring reports during the visit.⁸¹ Only one school⁸² had the data reflecting the monitoring of previous months, however, they did not include information about all students with special educational needs in all subjects. As for the previous academic year, the visits showed that monitoring was not carried out in all subjects; in addition, they were not complex or full. Specifically, in some cases, the results were indicated only with + and - signs and did not include comments, while in other cases, the student's success in achieving specific goals was assessed only by the scoring system. In other cases, comments were mostly very short; they included just 2-3 sentences, directly replicated the formulation of a short-term goal and were not detailed.⁸³

Engagement of inclusive education specialists

According to the Law of Georgia on General Education, students with special educational needs should be provided with appropriate human resources and programmes/services, if necessary.⁸⁴ The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport shall ensure proper remuneration of public school teachers, members of the administration and technical personnel with increased amount of vouchers and additional funding, if necessary.⁸⁵

It should be noted that adequate funding mechanism is necessary for introducing quality and continuous inclusive education in schools. Decree No 476 of the Government of Georgia of 14 September 2015 on the Determination of Financial Normative per Child for Funding General Education and its Standard Voucher defines in detail the rules of calculating the financial normative per child and the relevant standard voucher, by considering the number of students, hours, administrative and other costs.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ The term was not over during the monitoring of schools and accordingly, the monitoring team of the Public Defender's Office got acquainted with the monitoring results of the previous academic year.

⁸⁰ For example, LEPL Rustavi public school No 28, LEPL Tbilisi public school No 160.

⁸¹ For example, LEPL Zestafoni public school No 4.

⁸² LEPL Tbilisi public school No 60.

⁸³ The student's skills or difficulties within the specific goal were not specified.

⁸⁴ Law of Georgia on General Education, article 9. Information is available on the website:

⁸⁵ Law of Georgia on General Education, article 7. Information is available on the website:

⁸⁶ Decree No476 of the Government of Georgia of 14 September 2015 on the determination of financial normative per child for funding general education and its standard voucher, article 1, information is

The legislation also provides a list of specialists involved in inclusive education, job descriptions of each of them⁸⁷ and qualification requirements of a special teacher.⁸⁸

According to the amendments made to the Law on General Education on 29 June 2018, the status of a special teacher and the status of a school teacher were equalized⁸⁹ and the special teacher is now able to get involved in the teacher's professional development/career advancement scheme and enjoy the fair payment mechanism. The above-mentioned will positively impact the motivation and qualifications of special teachers and therefore the quality of introduction of inclusive education in schools.

Monitoring showed that the quality of inclusive education varies according to schools⁹⁰ and largely depends on the existence of qualified teachers, involvement of inclusive education specialists in the educational process and their qualifications.

Monitoring also showed that the funding allocated for inclusive education is not enough to satisfy the complex needs of students with special educational needs or to hire inclusive education specialists. This is especially conspicuous in relation to students with sensory impairments, as they need various specialists for full realization of their right to education, including: occupational therapist, language and speech specialist, sign language translator, sign language specialist, assistant to a person with special educational needs, mobility and orientation specialist. A speech therapist and an assistant to a person with special educational needs were employed only in one out of the 15 public schools monitored by the Public Defender's Office,⁹¹ despite the fact that other schools also needed the same. It should be noted that the school's authorized representatives named the lack of qualified specialists, apart from low funding, as the reason for the above-mentioned. The above was particularly obvious in the regions.

The issue of providing psychologists and assistants to students with special educational needs was also identified as a special challenge. The lack of psychologists and assistants to students with special educational needs is primarily conditioned by the decreasing number of psychologists in

available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2982289?publication=4>> [last accessed: 08.05.2019].

⁸⁷ Order No16/n of the Ministry of Education and Science of 11 February 2018 on the approval of the rules of introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education and mechanism of identification of children with special educational needs, article 2. Information is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>> [last accessed: 07.05.2019].

⁸⁸ Law of Georgia on General Education, article 21³.

⁸⁹ Law of Georgia on General Education, article 2. Information is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/29248?publication=78>> [last accessed: 07.05.2019].

⁹⁰ The situation in Zugdidi public school No 5 and Tbilisi public school No 10 should be assessed positively in terms of consideration of the needs of students with disabilities, maintenance and systematization of relevant documents.

⁹¹ Zugdidi public school No5.

schools and the working conditions of assistants to students with special educational needs. In particular, the recommended remuneration of psychologists⁹² is not enough and puts them in unequal conditions in relation to special teachers, taking into consideration the specificity of the work performed by psychologists. Consequently, their motivation is low. Monitoring showed that the number of psychologists involved in inclusive education was significantly lower than the number of special teachers in the target schools, despite the existence of need.⁹³ As for the remuneration of assistants, it is lower than the remuneration of other specialists of inclusive education, which significantly complicates the employment of the relevant personnel.⁹⁴

Monitoring showed that parents often had to perform the function of an assistant to students with special educational needs themselves, which is not permitted according to the recommendation of the Ministry.⁹⁵

In most of the inspected schools, most of the specialists involved in inclusive education met the qualification requirements. Only 8 out of 33 special special teachers of 15 target schools⁹⁶ had not completed the special teacher professional development course.⁹⁷ However, it should be noted that the situation was not favorable in terms of retraining of teachers. In particular, only 363 out of 860 teachers employed in 15 target schools had been retrained in inclusive education at different times.

⁹²Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia concerning a number of issues relating to the agreement on the staff of public schools and the positions and number of people employed under the labour agreement within state financing.

⁹³According to the information provided to the Public Defender's Office, 33 special teachers and 7 psychologists are employed in the 15 schools (a speech therapist and a individual assistant are employed in Zugdidi public school No 5); psychologists: Tbilisi public school No 60; Tbilisi public school No 160; Tbilisi public school No 181; Rustavi public school No 28; Khashuri public school No 2, Mtskheta public school No 1.

⁹⁴ According to the recommendation of the Ministry: a) remuneration of a psychologist, a mobility and orientation specialist, an occupational therapist and a language and speech specialist shall be 10 GEL per hour and maximum working hours per week shall be 10 hours.

B) Remuneration of a sign language translator and sign language specialist shall be GEL 4 per hour and maximum working hours per week shall be 25 hours.

C) Remuneration of an assistant to persons with special educational needs shall be GEL 3 per hour and maximum working hours per week shall be 30 hours.

⁹⁵ Recommendation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia concerning a number of issues relating to the agreement on the staff of public schools and the positions and number of people employed under the labour agreement within state financing.

⁹⁶Information was requested from 15 schools, correspondence: MES 1 19 00380524; MES 9 19 00408468; MES 0 19 00405327; MES 0 19 00428467; MES 5 19 00384515; MES 0 19 00386284; MES 6 19 00363979; MES 3 19 00356433; MES 8 19 00404821; MES 1 19 00376123; MES 4 19 00355336; MES 2 19 00388725; MES 8 19 00383717; MES 7 19 00358273; MES 5 19 00613051.

⁹⁷

It should be noted that teachers were mainly retrained in 2010 within the project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia – “Development of Inclusive Education in Public Schools of 9 Regions of Georgia” and/or the “Introduction of Inclusive Education in 10 Schools of Tbilisi”. The period between the trainings organized after the mentioned period was quite long. In addition, the number of form masters/teachers involved in trainings is low. Interviews with school personnel made it clear that the number of retrained teachers and the quality of retraining⁹⁸ cannot ensure the full participation of students with special educational needs in the inclusive educational process.

Monitoring made it clear that the quality of involvement of special teachers in the educational process varied according to schools. In a number of cases, special teachers issue relevant recommendations in accordance with their functions and carry out monitoring, although, more common practice is that students with special educational needs are considered to be an exclusive competence of a special teacher.

Cooperation between members of the school community

Cooperation is one of the main aspects of inclusive education. The national goals of general education⁹⁹ underline that the adolescent's skills should be developed with full engagement of the school environment and participation of students, teachers, parents, administrators and other stakeholders.

The Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive Education, as well as the Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs,¹⁰⁰ sets out the rights and responsibilities of the school administration, inclusive education specialists, parents, form masters and teachers in accordance with the needs of children with special educational needs at different stages, which includes the cooperation component as well.¹⁰¹ According to article 18 of the national curriculum,¹⁰² the school should facilitate creation of a creative and cooperative environment for members of the

⁹⁸It should be noted that in most cases, retraining programmes are not oriented to practice.

⁹⁹ Decree №84 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of national goals of general education, 18 October 2004, information is available on the website: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/11098?publication=0> >last accessed: [15.03.2019].

¹⁰⁰Information is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539>> last accessed: [15.03.2019].

¹⁰¹ Ibid. paragraph 3 of article 7; subparagraphs 6, 11 and 12 of paragraph 1 of article 23, paragraphs 4 and 8 of article 24.

¹⁰² Document is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3285991?publication=7>>.

school community.

The monitoring carried out in the pilot schools of inclusive education showed various practices of cooperation in schools. Specifically, in some cases,¹⁰³ there was close cooperation between the school administration, teachers and inclusive education specialists. The school principal attended individual curriculum group meetings, while the inclusive education specialists had addressed the administration regarding the resources needed for various activities or measures. In a number of schools, cooperation in this direction was not satisfactory.

Basically, monitoring showed a tendency when subject teachers and form masters had less communication with the school administration regarding the special educational needs of students. In addition, there were cases when teachers did not have a tolerant attitude towards inclusive education specialists. In particular, despite the obvious necessity,¹⁰⁴ they did not consider it necessary a special teacher or a psychologist to attend lessons or did not cooperate with them properly. The only exceptions were cases of difficult behaviour. The practice of cooperation between teachers and inclusive education specialists in the field of documentation and involvement in the activities of the individual curriculum group should be named as an important challenge. Monitoring showed that teachers mostly found it difficult to make individual curricula independently in their own subjects or effectively participate in the group activities; this responsibility was mainly shifted to inclusive education specialists.

Visits, monitoring and interviews made it clear that parents of children with special educational needs were less involved in the educational process. They frequently miss the individual curriculum group meetings and do not consider the recommendations of the form master/subject teacher/inclusive education specialists.¹⁰⁵ It should also be noted that they are hardly represented in the board of trustees or parents' committees.¹⁰⁶ Parents of children with special educational needs have more frequent communication with inclusive education specialists than with administration or subject teachers. Specialists mainly provide them with verbal recommendations regarding the themes of homework, but less about the methods and strategies that should be used independently while working at home.

¹⁰³ LEPL Mtskheta public school No 1, Kobuleti Teimuraz Jorbenadze public school No 3.

¹⁰⁴ They cannot properly distribute attention among students or involve students with special educational needs at all stages.

¹⁰⁵ According to the representatives of schools, students with disabilities are mainly from vulnerable families (hard social-economic conditions) and this is one of the reasons of the low involvement of their legal representatives in the school life.

¹⁰⁶ The only exception was Chokhatauri Niko Mari public school No 1, where the parent of the student with disabilities is a member of the committee.

Creation of a safe environment in general education institutions and elimination of violence are essential issues, without which it is impossible to provide quality education. Article 20 of the Law of Georgia on General Education¹⁰⁷ concerns the inadmissibility of violence, safety and public order. According to the first paragraph of the mentioned article, violence against students or any other person is inadmissible. In case of physical and/or verbal abuse, the school is obliged to immediately and appropriately respond to the case in accordance with the legislation.

The Government of Georgia approved the Child Protection Referral Procedures¹⁰⁸ on 12 September 2016. Article 5 of the Government's relevant decree determines the persons involved in the referral procedures and their powers. According to this article, together with other persons,¹⁰⁹ the following are regarded as referral subjects - LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions, as well as educational, arts and/or sports educational institutions. In accordance with paragraph 10 of the same article, the above subjects are entitled to analyze a case on the ground within the referral procedures in case there is suspicion of child abuse and to inform LEPL Social Service Agency¹¹⁰ and police in case of grounded suspicion. They should also supervise the condition of a victim within their competence and in cooperation with the Agency. The document indicates that the referral subjects act within their own competences and in accordance with the relevant **internal instructions**. The failure of a referral subject¹¹¹ to fulfill his/her obligation to provide information on child abuse to the relevant state agencies is subject to liability under the Code of Administrative Offenses of Georgia.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Law of Georgia on General Education. Information is available on the website: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/29248?publication=76> [last accessed: 10.01.2018].

¹⁰⁸ Decree №437 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of Child Protection Referral Procedures, Information is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3394478?publication=0>> last accessed: [09.01.2019].

¹⁰⁹ The referral subjects are: relevant institutions of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia and the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and legal entities of public law operating under the subordination/governance of these ministries; Prosecutor's Office; LEPL Crime Prevention Center; kindergartens; LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions (hereinafter - Office of Resource Officers); educational, arts and/or sports educational institutions; specialized institutions and shelters for children; medical service providers (including rural doctors); municipality council/city hall (municipality district administration in the Tbilisi municipality)/its authorized institution (non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity), under paragraphs 3 and 4 of article 16 of the Organic Law of Georgia on the Local Self-Government Code.

¹¹⁰ The agency is informed through the child protection note and/or the Ministry's hotline.

¹¹¹ The institution and/or its authorized employee.

¹¹² Article 20 of the decree.

The monitoring carried out in schools revealed that institutions in most cases have no internal instructions to protect children from violence.¹¹³ The cases of violence or the measures taken by schools in response to such cases are not recorded separately. It is mainly the responsibility of resource officers to protect children from violence in school. Accordingly, the cases of violence are registered only through protocols and information is not systematized. Consequently, school principals found it hard to recollect the cases of violence or provide statistical information.

It should be negatively evaluated that not every school was equipped with video cameras, while in some cases, the video surveillance system was not functioning. The entry of strangers was not controlled properly either. In contrast to other schools, strangers could enter Zestafoni public school No 4 only after getting special passes, which was controlled by a person responsible for the above-mentioned process. This should be assessed positively in terms of ensuring security.

Internal regulations of schools in most cases did not include specific norms for ensuring students' safety and protecting them from violence or discrimination; only disciplinary liabilities envisaged the actions¹¹⁴ which could serve as basis for the use of disciplinary sanctions. In some cases, the inclusive education component of the school curriculum included the measures to be implemented for ensuring that students with special educational needs could feel safe and protected in school. However, analysis of the mentioned measures showed that they were generally directed at the educational process and were not qualitatively oriented towards the protection of children from violence.

Despite the fact that informative meetings were held in almost all schools after the approval of the referral procedures in 2016, the referral rate of schools is still low. The responsible persons fill in the child protection cards only in extreme cases and do not actually use the hotline.¹¹⁵ Principals mostly try to solve problems through internal communication (interviews and provision of information). It should be noted that the Social Service Agency is only rarely informed when a student systematically misses school and no necessary steps are taken by legal representatives to identify the alleged neglect.¹¹⁶

¹¹³The only exceptions were LEPL Teimuraz Jorbenadze public school, LEPL Niko Mari public school, Chokhatauri public school No 1 and Kobuleti public school No 3. The latter, in addition to internal instructions relating to child abuse, had developed a child abuse registry (referral registry).

¹¹⁴ Verbal and physical abuse of the student, violation of confidentiality, discrimination.

¹¹⁵ Hotline of the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia - 15 05.

¹¹⁶ The practice of Mtskheta public school No 1 is exceptional. In particular, the principal actively cooperates with the Social Services Agency in connection with social and violence-related issues. Social workers periodically make visits to school. The school also supervises the situation of child victims of abuse and sends written reports to social workers.

Monitoring showed that the psychological service at the Office of Resource Officers uses the referral procedure mainly in relation to students with behavioral problems, but according to the principal, it is difficult to achieve results, since parents do not consider it necessary that their children be provided with the mentioned service.

Engagement of students with special educational needs in school activities

A team approach is needed to ensure that students with special educational needs are involved in school activities. In addition, specialists of inclusive education have to play an important role in this process.

In accordance with the Professional Standard for Special Teachers,¹¹⁷ the special teacher shall be able to facilitate the establishment of positive relations between students with special educational needs and their classmates so that the students with special educational needs could feel that they belong to the class.

During monitoring it was revealed that inclusive education specialists and form masters organize various activities within and outside the school (excursions, visits to theaters and museums), which facilitates the integration of students with special educational needs into school life and with other students. However, there were cases when involvement of students with certain disabilities¹¹⁸ in internal school activities was only of formal nature and the students just attended and not participated in the activities. As for the activities planned outside the school (e.g. excursions), involvement of students with difficult behavior or those using wheelchairs is particularly problematic. The danger of escalation of situation between the classmates and the absence of adapted vehicles were named as the reason for the above-mentioned.¹¹⁹

Monitoring showed that the process of integration is hindered by the stigmatic attitude towards students with special educational needs both by other students' parents and school staff. During monitoring, representatives of several school administrations and subject teachers used unethical terms, such as "a defective student", "a good student and an inclusive student", etc.

¹¹⁷ Professional Standard for Special Teachers, paragraph 2 of part 1 (Educational environment) of article 55. Information is available on the website: http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf.

¹¹⁸ E.g. speech impairment, intellectual development disability.

¹¹⁹ Some of the inspected schools were served by minibuses. However, it should be evaluated negatively that none of the vehicles serving the schools within the framework of the Student Transportation Programme (correspondence MES 0 19 00349267 of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, March 25, 2019) is adapted.

As for the involvement in the learning process, there were cases when students' special educational needs were emphasized during lessons.¹²⁰ During interviews, several students (including a student using a wheelchair) noted that, unlike their classmates, they hardly ever did exercises at the blackboard.

Monitoring of lessons showed that the objectives and activities of students with special educational needs were sometimes related to the objectives of the class and the student did simplified and customized exercises within the same theme. However, in some cases it was impossible to link the activities given to the classroom with the activities of students with special educational needs. During the group work, in some cases, the student with special educational needs was sitting separately and was performing individual tasks. As it turned out, students with special educational needs were often given the same homework as their classmates, which was not adjusted to their capabilities.

Monitoring also showed that the needs of students with special educational needs (disabilities) were not fully considered during examinations. According to the school administration, they mainly use individual development plans during external, annual or semester examinations, but it is problematic to introduce accessible examination formats. It is necessary to diversify the examination issues according to the levels of complexity, and, if necessary, to change the duration of examination considering the principle of reasonable accommodation. In some cases, examination issues are not tailored to the individual skills of students with special educational needs. At the same time, the format of exams are not accessible for students with various disabilities (especially students with sensory impairments). There were cases when a student with disabilities had failed the annual exam several times.¹²¹

Behavior management

According to the Standard for Special Teachers,¹²² the special teacher shall be aware of and use behavioral management strategies.

¹²⁰ For example, they were sitting separately from their classmates and had to use a separate blackboard. In addition, teachers often emphasized the difference of students with special educational needs by saying: "Maya" (figuratively) is doing her exercise, let's get back to our topic." "I gave 6 exercises to you, but i will give only 2 to "Ani"(figuratively), etc.

¹²¹ For example, one of the students with hearing impairment had failed the annual exams three times in Rustavi public school No 28.

¹²² Professional Standard for Special Teachers, article 55, part 3, paragraph 8. Information is available on the website: http://tpdc.gov.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/specialuri%20maswavleblis%20standarti.pdf.

Article 2 of Order No 16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive Education, as well as the Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs, sets out the functions of inclusive education specialists and assistants to persons with disabilities. According to the same order, the psychologist is obliged to counsel legal representatives of students with special educational needs, teachers and other specialists about the teaching strategies of students with special educational needs and behavior management.

According to the recommendation of the Ministry,¹²³ the assistant to a person with special educational needs should be added to the staff if the school has a student/students who need assistance in movement, have not developed self-service skills or have difficulty in managing their behavior.

Management of challenging behavior by inclusive education specialists and teachers has been identified as a problem in the monitoring process. In particular, in similar cases, students with special educational needs were mainly taken to a resource-room, as a result of which, they were detached from the learning process and segregated for a long time.¹²⁴ It should be noted that despite the identified problems, a special programme aimed at facilitating positive management of behavior was not implemented in any general education institution. In addition, schools had not employed assistants to students with special educational needs.¹²⁵ Another problem is that no strategy for the management of challenging behavior has been developed at the central level.

N.A.'s case¹²⁶

One of the students, N. A., has autism spectrum disorders. According to the school principal, it took 6 years to persuade N. A.'s parent to recognize the child's educational needs and let them assess the child. The institution finds it difficult to manage the child's behavior and for this reason, the child is often taken to the resource-room in order the child "not to disturb other children." The child does not attend the sports lessons and spends the hours intended for physical education in the resource-room. According to the administration, the reason for the above-mentioned is that the child's behavior requires constant attention. The child also needs assistance in self-service (to go to the toilet), but the school does not have an individual assistant.

¹²³ The internal document of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia – Explanations about a number of issues relating to the agreement on the staff of public schools and the positions and number of people employed under the labour agreement within state financing.

¹²⁴ According to the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis, the likelihood of revealing undesirable behavior increases in such cases; thus this practice hinders the student's learning and integration process.

¹²⁵ Except for Zugdidi public school No 5.

¹²⁶ The student goes to Rustavi public school No 28.

Accordingly, the N.A.'s family member or classmates have to take him to the toilet, which causes discomfort. A special teacher works with the child, although this is not enough given the child's specific needs. It should be noted that the multidisciplinary team made assessment in 2016¹²⁷ and therefore, the issue of appointing an individual assistant to the student was not considered.

Interviews made it clear that almost all schools had students with obvious behavioral difficulties. Subject teachers and parents noted that they had received advice regarding behavior management from specialists, but they could not recall specific recommendations. At the same time, it was found out that the recommendations were not documented.

Relatively positive practices of managing undesirable behavior were revealed in two schools,¹²⁸ where behavioral management plans were drawn up for each student. In both cases, specific undesirable behaviors and alternative behaviors were identified; strategies and recommendations were developed to manage the challenging behavior. Inclusive education specialists noted that they were observing behavior during lessons, but as it turned out, the above was not intensive, whereas effective behavior management requires intensive observation, at different times and in various situations. It should also be noted that no records were made about the observation of behavior in accordance with the behavioral observation standards.¹²⁹

Internal and external monitoring

Internal and external monitoring rules of inclusive education are regulated by Order No 16/n of 21 February 2018 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Rules of Introduction, Development and Monitoring of Inclusive Education, as well as the Mechanism of Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs.¹³⁰

According to the rules,¹³¹ inclusive education shall be subject to internal and internal monitoring. Specifically, the individual administrative-legal act of the school principal determines the rule of internal monitoring (at least once a year), which is developed on the basis of the recommendation of the Ministry and the multidisciplinary team. In addition, in order to conduct internal monitoring of inclusive education, the school principal sets up a group on the basis of the

¹²⁷ Date of assessment: 24.11.2016.

¹²⁸ Telavi public school No 7, Tbilisi public school No 10.

¹²⁹ Applied Behavior Analysis, Procedure Textbook, Tbilisi, 2004. The document is available on the website: <https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/faculty_psychology/qcev_gam_analiz.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1O_hwubVfK-u69OD6V7Ee2EXtTEQMHEnLVNGPKHDVaFzjfrndmQp9Mb6o>.

¹³⁰ Order №16/n of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of 21 February 2018 is available on the website: <<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4007539?publication=0>> last accessed: [26.03.2019].

¹³¹ Chapter 6, articles 33-35.

individual administrative-legal act and determines the group's powers. The group prepares a report on internal monitoring, which shall be submitted to the Ministry no later than 7 days after it is drawn up. As for the external control mechanism, it is carried out by the Ministry and/or the relevant body/organization determined by the Ministry with or without prior notification of the school.¹³²

The results of visits made to 15 public schools showed that no internal monitoring measures were carried out in most of them. In particular, despite the fact that school principals had issued administrative-legal acts on internal monitoring of inclusive education, questions asked during the monitoring made it clear that some principals had no information about the acts, grounds for developing the above-mentioned instrument, existence of a group authorized to conduct monitoring under these acts or its functions. At the same time, they were not aware of the precise periodicity of internal monitoring of inclusive education. Problems in the direction of implementation of internal monitoring of inclusive education was proved by the information¹³³ received by the Public Defender's Office from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia. In particular, according to the information, in the academic years of 2017-2018, internal monitoring was conducted in only 6 public schools.¹³⁴ In addition, the reports submitted by schools to the Ministry in most cases were general and did not include in-depth analysis of the inspection directions or identify specific deficiencies.

In spite of the information provided in the reports and the recommendations¹³⁵ of internal monitoring group, the internal monitoring process was mainly focused on formal examination of documentation and not all directions defined by the order. The educational resources intended for students with special educational needs were evaluated only in relation to the resource-room inventory. In addition, less attention was paid during the monitoring to the involvement of inclusive education specialists and parents of students with special educational needs.

The results of the monitoring carried out by the Public Defender's Office also showed that despite the submission of internal monitoring reports by public schools, there has not been any feedback from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia. This practice complicates

¹³² In case of detection of violation of the Georgian legislation and the failure of the school management to eliminate it, the relevant structural subdivision of the Ministry is entitled to apply to the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry.

¹³³ Correspondence MES 4 19 00166165, 14/02/2019.

¹³⁴ Akhaltsikhe public school No 5, Rustavi public school No 28, Zugdidi public school No 5, Tbilisi public school No 181, Tbilisi public school No 160, Tbilisi public school No 60.

¹³⁵ It was mainly focused on increasing the number of specialists involved in inclusive education, raising teachers' qualifications (in the direction of inclusive education), organization of informational meetings/trainings for raising teachers and parents' awareness, infrastructure problems and proper equipment of resource-rooms.

the improvement of internal monitoring mechanism and negatively impacts the quality of inclusive education in school.

As for the external monitoring, the information¹³⁶ received from the Ministry and the visits made to public schools showed that the majority of schools had not conducted external monitoring of inclusive education. Namely, the multidisciplinary team of the Ministry carried out monitoring only in 5 of the 15 inspected public schools in 2017-2018, based on the random sampling principle.

At the same time, the multidisciplinary team of the Ministry mainly examined the issues related to the individual curriculum and documentation, and it did not assess the activities of inclusive education specialists or the quality of consideration of the needs of students with special educational needs in the course of lessons. The monitoring carried out by the Public Defender's Office made it clear that apart from the multidisciplinary team, external monitoring was carried out in general educational institutions by the resource centers as well and they also mainly checked the issues related to documentation.

Conclusion

Based on the monitoring results, we can say that certain issues need to be regulated both at the systemic and school administration levels, which is important for adequate introduction of inclusive education.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goal, it is important to adequately realize the impeding factors and timely react to them. Among them, it is important to: change the funding mechanism for the satisfaction of complex needs of students with special educational needs, develop an action plan for the implementation of inclusive education in schools, introduce appropriate mechanisms for the protection of children from violence and management of challenging behavior, ensure access to external and internal infrastructure/learning resources, employ inclusive education specialists,¹³⁷ retrain school personnel so that they could satisfy the educational needs of students

¹³⁶ Correspondence MES 4 19 00166165-14/02/2019.

¹³⁷ Akhaltsikhe public school No 5, Chokhatauri public school No 1, Mtskheta public school No 1, Khashuri public school No 2, Oni municipality public school. The problems identified as a result of monitoring and recommendations were mainly related to issues such as, raising the qualifications of subject teachers, problems in the direction of inclusive education, including possession of complex behavior strategy, consideration of student's strengths and weaknesses when drawing up an individual plan, development of a plan by special teachers and subject teachers through joint efforts, engagement of parents of students with special educational needs. At the same time, attention was paid to the school team approach.

with special educational needs, properly maintain individual curricula, establish effective system of external and internal monitoring, etc.

The Public Defender has developed specific recommendations for the responsible agencies to ensure that the problems identified during the monitoring are timely and effectively solved.

Recommendations

To the Government of Georgia

- Change the funding mechanism so that to satisfy the complex needs of children with special educational needs, including by considering the issues related to access to infrastructure/educational materials and employment of all necessary inclusive education specialists. In addition, take measures to increase the recommended remuneration of inclusive education specialists.

To the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

- In cooperation with the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, develop a mechanism for referring to the multidisciplinary team for the assessment of a child if the child's special educational needs are ignored by a parent/legal representatives (if a parent/legal representative is against the assessment of the child despite the measures taken by the school within reasonable time for getting a repeated consent)
- Ensure that public schools are served by adapted transport within the framework of the Student Transportation Programme
- Ensure retraining of school teachers and inclusive education specialists with regard to the educational needs of students, using the practice-oriented training modules/programmes, including in relation to: preparation of individual curriculum, management of challenging behavior, methods of teaching students with severe and multiple disabilities, use of alternative communication technologies, assessment of students
- Control the quality of school staff retraining
- Supervise the proper fulfilment of duties by general education institutions within the referral procedures
- Develop strategy for managing challenging behavior and ensure that all schools have access to it
- Develop programmes/services facilitating positive management of behavior and their implementation in schools

- Approve a standard for the arrangement of resource-rooms on the basis of relevant basic principles and requirements
- Develop procedures and programmes for electronically attaching documents to personal files of students with special educational needs, in order to provide documents with signatures
- Proactively provide detailed information to schools about the changes in the field of inclusive education
- Ensure that the report of the multidisciplinary team clearly specifies the type of change to be made to the national curriculum in relation to students with special educational needs and the subject that needs the development of an individual curriculum, as well as whether the services of inclusive education specialists or an individual attendance schedule are needed
- Approve a form of individual curriculum and specify the procedure for filling in the form. A box should be added to the individual curriculum, where teachers will be able to indicate the time required for achieving the goals
- Specify in more detail the documents to be attached to the personal files of students with special educational needs by Order No113/n of 22 August 2013 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Approval of the Form of Student's Personal File and the Rules of Managing Students' Personal Files in General Education Institutions
- Ensure that the above-mentioned order also specifies the documents to be attached to an individual curriculum, including an adapted lesson plan
- Multidisciplinary team of inclusive education should consult with inclusive education specialists and subject teachers about the assessment of academic, cognitive and functional skills of students, as well as about how to draw up subject assessments
- Multidisciplinary team should control the school efforts aimed at primary management of student's difficulties in the learning process
- Ensure feedback on internal monitoring of inclusive education by schools (including on the reports submitted by schools)
- Carry out more frequent external monitoring (at least once in a semester). In addition, ensure analysis of documentation and in-depth study of needs of inclusive education in the process of monitoring and develop specific recommendations on the identified drawbacks
- Monitor the implementation of recommendations issued as a result of external monitoring.

To general educational institutions

- Devise a plan for the implementation of inclusive education
- Increase the participation of parents of students with special educational needs in school life, including through involvement in the board of trustees and parents' committees
- Ensure the use of accessible formats of internal school examinations tailored to the complex needs of students with special educational needs, as well as diversify examination issues according to

the level of complexity and change the duration of examinations depending on the principle of reasonable accommodation

- Ensure timely fulfillment of obligations under referral procedures
- Ensure efficient and coordinated cooperation with LEPL Social Service Agency, Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions and law enforcement agencies within the referral procedures
- For security purposes, equip the school's external and internal perimeter with surveillance devices (cameras) (within reasonable scope)
- Develop a mechanism for controlling the entry of strangers in school. Develop relevant procedures and determine a responsible person/persons
- Ensure that cases of violence and measures taken in response to such cases are recorded in school
- Ensure the maintenance of differentiated statistical information about violence, by considering students' special education needs, types of violence, sex and age
- Develop internal instructions to protect students from violence
- Ensure that internal regulations include detailed information about safety of students, protection from violence and discrimination
- Conduct information meetings with parents about the rights of children with disabilities, protection from violence and discrimination, including the types of violence, its consequences, importance of psychological intervention and forms of responsibility
- Ensure employment of inclusive education specialists (psychologist, occupational therapist, mobility and orientation specialist, sign language specialist, sign language translator, language and speech therapist), in case of necessity
- Ensure employment of individual assistant/assistants if school has students with disabilities who need to be assisted in movement, have not developed self-service skills or have difficulties in behavior management
- Ensure accessibility of schools' external and internal infrastructure, as well as educational materials, in accordance with students' needs
- Ensure equipment of resource-rooms with assistive technologies, diverse learning materials and developmental resources
- In case of necessity, ensure adaptation of educational materials for students
- Proactively inform teachers and inclusive education specialists about changes in the field of inclusive education
- Inclusive education specialists should clearly explain the rules of students' assessment to teachers
- Subject teachers should maintain individual curriculum standards in compliance with the standards set out in the Georgian legislation
- Properly maintain students' personal files, which should include: assessment of the multidisciplinary team, pedagogical assessments, subject assessments, individual curricula, minutes of individual curriculum group meetings, working plan of the inclusive education

specialist, information provided by the medical institution, behavior management plan; individual curriculum monitoring results according to subjects, in case of necessity

- Each teacher should maintain students' portfolios in his/her subject, which should include: the student's subject assessment, individual curriculum, individual curriculum monitoring results, adapted curriculum, student's works, results of the monitoring of educational process carried out by a teacher in his/her subject
- Based on the report of the multidisciplinary team, subject assessments and individual curriculum should be prepared in accordance with the needs of specific students
- Ensure proper assessment of students' subject or general skills at the beginning of each academic year
- Ensure that teachers maintain adequate curricula
- Ensure that individual curricula are drawn up within the established timeframe
- Ensure that inclusive education specialists prepare and monitor intervention plans for students with special educational needs (for working in the resource-room)
- Facilitate the involvement of students with special educational needs (disabilities) in the activities within or outside the school
- Ensure the creation of an inclusive education internal monitoring group so that the conflict of interests is eliminated and involvement of students' parents is ensured, as well as in-depth monitoring at least once in an academic year
- Ensure proper identification of deficiencies in the field of inclusive education in the process of internal monitoring and plan/implement relevant measures.

To the LEPL Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency

Ensure close cooperation with public school administrations in order to ensure security of school infrastructure (external and internal) and accessibility for students with special educational needs

LEPL Social Service Agency

Ensure coordinated and close cooperation with general education institutions within the framework of child protection referral procedures, as well as with regard to other issues within its competence that are related to socioeconomic needs of students with special educational needs and their family members.

To the local self-governments¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Except for Tbilisi municipality and the municipalities within the administrative boundaries of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

Ensure proper fulfilment of obligations (small-scale rehabilitation of schools and transportation of students) under the agreement signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, LEPL Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency and the municipalities of Georgia.