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Exploring alternative preschool education methods in Georgia: Enhancing accessibility

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Abstract. This study is relevant as it examines public-private partnerships in early childhood education in Georgia, seeking solutions to the significant educational challenges common to post-Soviet regions. It assesses the suitability of alternative educational models in a society that is still struggling with the infrastructural legacy of the Soviet past, providing valuable recommendations for policy reforms needed to expand access to and improve the quality of preschool education. The purpose of the study was to assess the readiness of Georgian society to implement alternative educational practices. Drawing upon the experiences of post-Soviet nations, alongside international insights and local perspectives, the study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the feasibility and effectiveness of alternative models in Georgia. Employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing qualitative interviews, surveys, and data analysis, the research examines the strengths, challenges, and implementation prospects of various alternative models within the unique socio-economic and cultural context of post-Soviet Georgia. Early childhood education in post-Soviet and similar countries confronts common challenges in access and quality, despite varied policies, with efforts such as legislation and public-private partnerships aimed at addressing financial and geographical barriers. Persistent disparities in preschool systems across the region, as illustrated by reform initiatives and staffing issues in Georgia, highlight the need for continuous reforms. These factors underscore the importance of sustained policy efforts to support comprehensive and effective early learning environments. The results underscore a compelling need for alternative education avenues in Georgia, particularly in regions facing infrastructural and geographical barriers similar to those experienced in other post-Soviet nations. While highlighting the potential benefits of public-private partnerships models, the study also identifies key challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their successful implementation within the post-Soviet context. The practical value of this study extends to policymakers, educators, and communities across post-Soviet countries with similar educational challenges. By advocating for legislative reforms to incorporate alternative approaches, this research contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen preschool education and promote inclusivity in post-Soviet Georgia and beyond.

Keywords: early childhood education; expanding preschool opportunities; advancing preschool development; original preschool strategies; broadening preschool access

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INTRODUCTION

In rapidly evolving socioeconomic landscape, the focus on advancing society's status has underscored the critical role of education, particularly in early childhood development. Scholars contend that a well-educated populace forms the



bedrock of a thriving economy and societal progress. The correlation between early education and socioeconomic status is well-documented, emphasising the imperative for societies to prioritise educational initiatives, ensuring access for all children.

A synthesis of recent literature underscores the pivotal role of preschool education in fostering school readiness, cognitive development, and socialisation skills (Radsky & Mikayilova, 2023). Traditional preschool models, predominantly centred on formal institutions, face inherent limitations such as limited capacity, high costs, and geographic barriers, hindering access for marginalised communities (Civitas Georgika, 2012). Alternative approaches, including family-based and society-based programmes, have emerged as promising avenues to extend the reach of preschool education, catering to diverse needs and enhancing accessibility (Sankar, 2021).

Despite legislative efforts in Georgia aimed at governing preschool education processes, persistent challenges persist. Reports from UNICEF highlight infrastructural deficiencies, geographical barriers, and inadequate provisions for children with disabilities, signalling the urgent need for reforms (Preschool education..., 2018). Legislative initiatives spanning from 2022 to 2030 aim to systematise kindergartens and enhance standards, yet disparities persist, particularly in regions lacking infrastructure and resources (The process of authorisation..., 2021). Building upon global precedents in countries like Estonia, Serbia, and Uzbekistan, where alternative education models have proven effective in addressing similar challenges, this study focuses on Georgia's context (Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Giunipero, 2021; Sankar, 2021). Rooted in the recognition of public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives as catalysts for change, this research seeks to explore alternative models and assess their feasibility within Georgia's preschool education landscape (Ali *et al.*, 2024).

The study aimed to explore readiness of assessing alternative preschool models through public-private partnerships to improve access and integration into the preschool education system. The study had several objectives. 1. Explore alternative education models inspired by global practices to address challenges within Georgia's preschool education system. 2. Evaluate the potential of cost-effective approaches, such as family-based and society-based programmes, to enhance accessibility and inclusivity. 3. Assess regional readiness and perspectives regarding the incorporation of alternative forms of preschool education. 4. Advocate for the integration of alternative methods into the accreditation process for preschool institutions. The originality of this research lies in its exploration of the potential of alternative forms of education, particularly through public-private partnership (PPP) models, to address challenges in ensuring universal access to preschool facilities in Georgia, despite recent legislative reforms aimed at enhancing preschool education standards

underscore the nation's commitment to providing quality early childhood education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was planned in two stages. In the first stage, the experience of countries with more or less similar socio-economic conditions was analysed. A thorough desk research was undertaken to investigate the historical evolution of preschool education in Soviet Union countries, particularly focusing on the transition period following the collapse of the USSR. This analysis focused on examining changes in access, organisation, finances, and management of preschool education systems across post-Soviet countries. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying challenges encountered during the transition from the Soviet-era centralised system to the new governance structures.

In the second stage, a qualitative study included expert survey and was conducted to examine the current situation in Georgia. The expert survey delving into the intricacies of Georgia's preschool education system took place between January and February 2024. Spearheaded by a research team from Tbilisi in collaboration with Georgian National University SEU, the survey aimed to pinpoint critical issues within the sector. A total of 76 respondents contributed their insights, including 74 females and 2 males. These participants hailed from diverse backgrounds, representing both educational professionals and concerned parents. Of the participants, 45 were affiliated with the association of municipal kindergartens or worked directly within kindergarten settings, while 31 were parents of preschool-aged children.

The survey used a questionnaire to investigate Georgia's preschool education system, covering topics like perceived problems, reasons for non-enrolment, awareness of PPP initiatives, and willingness to contribute. Participants shared ideas and contact information, ensuring thorough analysis and follow-up. These questions were carefully crafted to elicit insights from participants regarding their perceptions, experiences, and potential contributions to addressing challenges within Georgia's preschool education system. To ensure inclusivity, the research team adopted an online approach due to geographical constraints and adverse weather conditions, leveraging Google Forms as the survey platform. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the survey process, aligning with the principles delineated in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). Participants were assured anonymity, fostering candid responses crucial for the study's integrity. Additionally, the research adhered to ethical standards, emphasising transparency, voluntary participation, and informed consent.

Sampling techniques combined elements of purposive sampling with snowball sampling, allowing for a nuanced representation of perspectives. Initial selection criteria were guided by Georgian statistical reports on preschool education availability (Children and adolescents, 2023). However, discrepancies between official data and actual accessibility prompted a recalibration of the sampling

strategy, necessitating the inclusion of a re-target group. The research encompassed a blend of focus groups and individual interviews, totalling 58 interviews alongside 2 focus group sessions. This multifaceted approach facilitated

a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within Georgia's preschool education landscape. The sample of survey participants was compiled by region, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by gender and method of data collection across regions

Region	Ninotsminda	Ozurgeti	Khashuri	Tsageri	Sagarejo	Kharagauli
Respondents	22	23	7	2	21	1
Female	22	22	6	2	21	1
Male	-	1	1	-	-	-
Interview	22	23	7	2	3	1
Focus-group	-	-	-	-	2	-

Note: numbers represent count of persons involved from each region

Source: compiled by the author

Furthermore, the narratives obtained from the research underwent thematic analysis, leading to the identification of several key themes, including: perceived problems and the necessity of preschool education; reasons for non-enrolment in preschool; identification of problems and responsibility; awareness of public-private partnerships (PPP); belief in personal contribution; willingness to engage; expression of ideas and contact information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Desk Research. In the initial stage, the research examined the accessibility of preschool education, its unique characteristics, experiences with public-private partnerships (PPP), challenges within the education system, and both successful and unsuccessful strategies employed in countries with relevant experience comparable to Georgia's context. Across all post-Soviet countries under study, a largely similar trajectory was observed, although some nations managed to navigate post-union challenges more effectively and expediently than others. In the Soviet Union countries, there was secured and broad access to preschool education. However, after the collapse of the USSR, the situation changed, leading to problems with organisation, finances, and management. This also had a negative effect on children's opportunities to access education. Accessibility was the main element in Soviet preschool education, which was free for everyone. After the collapse, the situation changed, and over the decades, countries have been trying to cope with the challenges that emerged (Chou *et al.*, 2015). Below are examples of some post-Soviet countries and how their education systems have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union:

In Ukraine, early childhood education significantly impacts a child's development. Therefore, access to educational services at this age is critically important, with educators' qualifications and pedagogical approach playing a special role. Kindergartens in Ukraine offer various services for children aged 0-6 years, including educational, medical, financial, and legal provisions. To cope with identified challenges in preschool education, changes have been made in legislation due to teachers lacking qualifications, requiring

them to have a mandatory university degree. Additionally, mechanisms of support for teachers and measures to improve their qualifications, such as seminars and conferences, are provided for in the legislation (Putcha *et al.*, 2018).

In Uzbekistan, preschool enrolment rates in 2017 lagged significantly behind those of Kazakhstan, Finland, Moldova, and Russia. Recognising this disparity, a study was conducted in 2017/2018 to assess the needs of the preschool education system and understand the underlying causes of its shortcomings. Subsequently, the Educational Sector Plan (ESP) for 2019-2023 outlined action targets aimed at ensuring access, safety, and quality of preschool education, as well as improving management and leadership. By 2021, the implementation of these initiatives led to a 16% increase in children's participation in preschool education. With support from the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), family kindergartens tailored to regional challenges and community needs were established. PPP were also encouraged, incentive's citizens to provide land or buildings for preschools and subsidising community costs. Additionally, a Mobile Buses model was introduced to ensure access for children unable to attend preschool regularly (These school buses..., 2022). However, challenges persist, particularly regarding equality for disabled children, addressed through the creation of manuals and adherence to principles like the child's right to education and family involvement in curriculum development (Sankar, 2021). UNICEF's 2022 report highlighted the benefits of PPP implementation, emphasising collaboration, involvement, and continuous training of parents, communities, and local authorities (Towards achieving..., 2022)

In Kyrgyzstan, in 2014, S. Builasheva (2014) researched the preschool education system. According to the researcher, in Post Soviet Union countries, educational systems are similar to the Soviet Union, are holistic, serve to form school readiness, and have not undergone major changes in recent decades. The reason for this is the ideology of pedagogy: in the development of which Montessori, Ushinsky and others took part. In Kyrgyzstan, this system is considered successful, because it has been consolidated for decades and

residents do not see the need for change. Kyrgyzstan, like most post-Soviet countries, suffers from the difficulties of access to preschool education and the inadequacy of the education of kindergarten workers. Since the 2000s, legislative changes have been introduced, principles of inclusive education have been introduced, and funding has increased, but the issue of accessibility still remains unsolved. Accordingly, there was a need to create new, innovative and highly effective models. Models that would adapt to the existing behaviour of the country and change the existing situation with an experimental approach, and as a result ensure efficiency and equal access to education (McCormack, 2018). In 2021, PPP implementation initiatives, which failed so far in 2009, were launched, and by 2026, with the cooperation of the government and the private sector, many barriers to public welfare will be implemented. With it, Kyrgyzstan, according to the World Bank will become the first Asian country that was able to create a PPP centre that implemented the mentioned model (Kyrgyzstan promotes..., 2022).

In Azerbaijan, access to public nurseries is very limited, with no private alternatives available. Participation rates in existing public nursery schools are also low, attributed partly to the recent Karabakh war and subsequent internal migration, which could potentially change with stabilisation. Despite legislative changes, privatisation of kindergartens, implementation of standards, construction of new facilities, and promotion of temporary employment, the persistent issue of staff shortage remains. Additionally, the allocated budget is insufficient, and crucially, there is a lack of unified vision regarding privatised kindergartens and preschool education (Radsky & Mikayilova, 2023).

In Georgia, interest in early childhood education/development has grown steadily. Numerous studies aim to enhance preschool education, reflecting both legislative and practical efforts. In the 2023 report on child well-being, provision of basic needs was a key indicator, with improvements noted in state support. However, challenges persist, with 37% of children facing multiple deficits, particularly prevalent in rural areas. Notably, 6% experience functional difficulties hindering education access, compounded by parental unwillingness (21%) and various barriers (6%). Non-formal education is primarily accessible at the school stage, with preschool options mainly fee-based. Inequities persist, including harsh parenting practices and disparities based on gender, settlement type, and financial status, often stemming from social deficits beyond societal control. Emphasis on preschool education underscores its pivotal role in shaping future educational outcomes and mitigating disparities (Child wellbeing in Georgia, 2023). As per Georgia's legislation, children attend public kindergartens from ages 2 to 6, with education being tuition-free. A school readiness programme commences at age 5. The legislation outlines specific obligations for kindergartens to fulfil during the authorisation process, ensuring alignment with International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) requirements. According to the UNESCO (2011),

these standards are designed to meet international educational benchmarks and ensure quality education delivery. The National Bureau of Statistics periodically releases demographic data reports, indicating that post-COVID, 70% of children in Georgia attend kindergarten, with a notable portion enrolled in private institutions. Furthermore, a significant number of children do not attend preschool due to parental choice. The study also explores the Georgian experience, revealing the existence of a PPP agency since 2019. However, the agency's mission aligns with the development strategy of the Government of Georgia, focusing solely on projects contributing to Georgia's role as a regional hub in innovative and digital economy, transport, energy, and industry sectors. Education-related projects are not within their scope (PPP agency in Georgia, 2019). There was a need for a project that would fit with a public-private partnership (PPP). That is where the first forest kindergarten "Bunbare" in Georgia comes in (Bunbare, n.d.). "Bunbare" plans to bring a similar PPP idea to Georgia through its outdoor education hub called "Gare-Gare". Right now, the team is talking to possible guardians and their parents to understand what the kids need. They are using their own resources to meet these needs and figuring out how to measure if it is working. The founder says the project will pay for itself. This means parents and the team will share what they have, like food, time, knowledge, and skills. In return, they will get to use the outdoor area for free and get help and supervision from the founder, who is an expert in teaching outdoors. Additionally, there is the "Future Club", formed from Tsromi (Kharagauli Region) kindergarten, aimed at boosting parent-school collaboration. It is a unique initiative in the region aimed at strengthening family, community, and kindergarten bonds, as stated by the head of the Khashuri Kindergartens Association (Bitvelashvili, 2024).

Serbia, despite not being a post-Soviet country, has encountered similar challenges such as geographical limitations and insufficient space coverage. Efforts have been made to diversify preschool education programmes, as highlighted in the UNICEF (2012), Belgrade, titled "Investing in early childhood education in Serbia". Instead of building new kindergartens, the focus has shifted to developing tailored programmes for children, families, and local governments where formal provision is lacking. In 2013, Serbia, with support from the European Union, initiated the IMPRES project to diversify preschool education programmes and services. The project aimed to emphasise the importance of preschool education, the needs of preschool-aged children, and the multifaceted nature of preschool education. It also focused on enhancing the qualifications of preschool education workers and engaging the community and parents in the process. The project emphasised the importance of considering local government resources and involving all stakeholders, recognising that even small contributions are valuable. Through research and analysis of regional challenges and resources, services were developed to address the lack of access to formal

education. While alternative services have positive aspects, such as promoting early education and development where formal education is difficult to obtain, there are also drawbacks. These include the stigmatisation of the target group, the exclusion of those who prefer formal services, and potential resistance from parents opposed to kindergarten (Vandekerckhove *et al.*, 2013; Kekelia & Kitoshvili, 2023).

While the Estonia, which is not a post-Soviet country, shared common challenges. But for today, preschool education and care in Estonia span from 0 to 6 years. Separate programmes are provided for ages 0-3 and 3-6, both aimed at supporting parental employment and facilitating maternity and parental leave. The legislation undergoes continuous improvements based on monitoring and evaluating indicators of the preschool educational process. Although preschool education is not mandatory in Estonia, it is accessible to all, with a participation rate reaching up to 100% (Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

In Poland, attending preschool is not compulsory, but children are required to complete a one-year preschool “zero class”. Consequently, some children may stay at home with a guardian or participate in alternative services. Non-conventional preschool programmes in Poland include church, music, sports, and combined kindergartens. Alternative forms of preschool education, such as Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and the Scandinavian Forest Kindergarten model, are also available. But they are rather costly (Okrasa, 2010). These programmes aim to support parents, protect children’s rights, ensure proper educational standards, prioritise children’s safety, and respect their development. All kindergartens in Poland must align their curriculum with regulations introduced by the Ministry of Poland in 2017, with autonomy in choosing specific methods to achieve the educational goals (Bertrain & Pascal, 2016; Preschools in Poland, 2023). In Poland, the government is under pressure to provide citizens with a wide range of public services, all while struggling with financial deficits and public debts. Public-private partnerships offer a valuable opportunity for governments to make efficient investments that benefit the public as a whole (Jachowicz, 2016).

In summary, the desk research provides a comprehensive overview of the status and challenges of early childhood education (ECE) and preschool education in both post-Soviet Union and other similar countries. Despite variations in policies and approaches, common themes emerge, including the importance of access to preschool education, efforts to address barriers such as financial constraints and geographical limitations, and the role of legislation in promoting quality and equity in ECE. Post-Soviet Union countries have faced significant challenges in transitioning their preschool education systems following the collapse of the USSR. While efforts have been made to improve access and quality through initiatives like the Educational Sector Plan (ESP) in Uzbekistan and PPP in Kyrgyzstan, disparities persist, highlighting the need for ongoing reforms. Similarly, countries like Azerbaijan and Georgia are struggling with issues related to access,

funding, and staff shortages in their preschool education systems. Efforts to address these challenges include legislative reforms, public-private partnerships, and initiatives to enhance parental involvement and community engagement. In contrast, countries like the Estonia, and Poland have made strides in providing comprehensive preschool education programmes, although disparities still exist in access and quality. These countries have implemented various policies and initiatives to promote child development, support parental employment, and ensure equitable access to preschool education for all children. Overall, the literature underscores the importance of preschool education in laying the foundation for lifelong learning and development. While progress has been made in expanding access and improving quality, ongoing efforts are needed to address persistent challenges and ensure that all children have access to high-quality preschool education regardless of their background or circumstances.

Qualitative study. In the second stage, research delved into the multifaceted landscape of preschool education in Georgia, exploring various dimensions ranging from the perceived importance of early childhood education to the challenges encountered in specific regions. One of the central focuses was to understand the factors contributing to non-enrolment in preschool programmes, shedding light on the complexities surrounding access and participation. Moreover, the study scrutinised the distribution of responsibility for addressing these challenges, probing into stakeholders’ awareness of PPP as potential avenues for improvement. It also examined individuals’ beliefs in their personal capacity to effect change and their willingness to actively engage in initiatives aimed at enhancing preschool education accessibility and quality. Through thematic analysis, the research unearthed rich narratives that encompassed participants’ expressions of ideas and suggestions for advancing preschool education. These insights, coupled with the relevant international research findings, paved the way for further exploration and collaboration, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and fostering avenues for constructive action.

The reports from the National Statistics Office of Georgia are not always accurate, but regional municipalities in Georgia are cooperative and open to collaboration. All interviewed representatives of the Kindergarten Union hold higher education qualifications. Additionally, all respondents believe that preschool education is important, with one educator stating, “Because the kindergarten is the foundation of education”, and a parent expressing, “Because the child’s skills develop better in kindergartens”. Regarding the accuracy of reports from the National Statistics Office of Georgia, findings indicate occasional discrepancies, can be explained and potentially influenced by factors such as migration patterns (Migration profile of Georgia, 2019). This underscores the importance of cross-referencing data and conducting localised studies to complement national statistics. Positive findings emerged concerning the cooperation of regional municipalities in Georgia,

which were found to be receptive to collaboration. This suggests a favourable environment for implementing initiatives aimed at enhancing preschool education, as local authority cooperation is crucial for their success.

Issues such as inadequate support for children with special needs and a shortage of qualified teachers exacerbate the situation. Additionally, the lack of kindergarten facilities meeting quality standards, coupled with concerns about teacher qualifications, underscores systemic challenges. Participants express frustration with the state's perceived failure to address these issues adequately, citing unfavourable conditions in kindergarten facilities and concerns about disease transmission. The prevailing belief among participants is that the state holds the primary responsibility for addressing preschool education challenges. Many suggest that the state can address these issues by constructing new facilities and increasing funding. For example, two of them stated, "The Ministry should take responsibility for the educational process, with both local and central governments responsible for infrastructure. It is also crucial to raise the salary of parents who send their children to kindergarten". However, only a few participants, three to be exact, emphasised the importance of civil society involvement, specifically mentioning "Peoples' activity" – parents of children who do not attend kindergarten. Representatives of kindergarten associations and employees commonly attribute challenges to a lack of funds. Some express optimism that the situation will improve over time, citing factors such as "The time factor". Others believe that issues stem from a lack of children attending kindergartens or insufficient attention to village development. Additionally, some parents suggest that kindergartens should be built according to modern standards and coping with these preschool educational challenges, by their opinion is only state responsibility.

This finding indicates that the majority of participants hold the view that it is primarily the responsibility of the state to tackle the challenges present in preschool education. They believe that the state should take the lead in funding initiatives such as building new facilities and providing greater financial support to improve the preschool education system. In other words, participants expect the government to play a central role in addressing the issues and providing the necessary resources for enhancing preschool education. According to the United Nations (2020) and J. Alessio's (2011) explanation for this may be, the fact, that in societies that are less developed or in the process of transitioning, people often look to the government more for essential services and tackling societal problems. This reliance stems from factors such as scarce resources, inadequate infrastructure, and limited institutional capabilities within society.

Awareness of PPP: while 89.4% of participants are aware of alternative forms of education delivery, very few have knowledge of existing public-private cooperation practices aimed at enhancing the quality of education. Belief in personal contribution: all participants express

confidence in their potential to contribute to enhancing preschool education. They believe that collective involvement is crucial for achieving the goal. A representative of the association of municipal kindergartens emphasises the importance of everyone's participation, while parents highlight the impact of individual engagement in addressing specific concerns. The majority believe in the significance of their role in overcoming preschool education challenges within their community. A staggering 97.3% express their willingness to actively participate in addressing these challenges in their community or village, but without clarification, exactly what they can do or what they should prioritise remain unclear.

The limited awareness about public-private cooperation practices can be explained by factors such as lack of direct exposure, absence of political emphasis, and perceived relevance (Lam & Yang, 2020). It is important to address these factors to raise awareness and implement effective public-private collaboration practices in society, which would be known (Devidze, 2020). Despite uncertainties about effective engagement methods, participants demonstrated a strong willingness to contribute to preschool education improvement. This suggests opportunities for capacity-building initiatives and community-driven interventions utilising local resources and expertise (Ramanadhan *et al.*, 2021).

Willingness to engage: participants' readiness to participate in improving preschool education, considering factors like transportation, time availability, and financial constraints. While expressing a desire to contribute, some participants feel unsure about how they can effectively engage. Despite this uncertainty, all participants express their willingness to get involved. For instance, one parent stated, "I do not remember now, but I will definitely be able to pitch in as needed". Another parent, residing in Khashuri and unable to enrol their child in kindergarten, expressed a willingness to provide material resources and financial support to facilitate educational activities. Additionally, a parent mentioned being available to alternate with others weekly to contribute to the education of preschool-aged children. A parent of a preschool-aged child residing in Khashuri, whose child is unable to attend kindergarten, expressed interest in sourcing material resources and funding to establish or support a venue for educational activities. Having own visions and motivations can help parents feel necessary and regain a sense of control over their children's lives. Additionally, it highlights the importance of this approach as a positive step towards initiating collaboration with community representatives. This collaboration can further support families and enhance the well-being of children by leveraging the insights and expertise of community members. Overall, it emphasises the significance of involving parents and communities in decisions that impact children's lives (An alternative education..., 2023).

Expression of ideas and contact information: only a small number of participants provided contact information, particularly in regions where there is existing cooperation experience with community and non-governmental

tal organisations, and those who have heard about PPP. Limited provision of contact information indicated varying engagement and awareness levels among participants, with regions familiar with PPP initiatives exhibiting higher contact provision rates. While participants express willingness to contribute and engage in improving preschool education, there is uncertainty or hesitation about the most effective ways to organise or facilitate this involvement. They may lack clarity on how to channel their readiness into concrete actions or initiatives effectively. This underlines the importance of targeted outreach and information dissemination strategies (Mukherji & Deborah, 2009; An alternative education..., 2023).

Cost-effective alternative preschool education through PPP model be understood in different ways (Naudeau *et al.*, 2011). This includes: cooperation, privatisation, deregulation, and more broader frameworks, where: cooperation means – partner contracts and includes responsibilities of two or three sides; decentralisation means – privatisation by concrete sides and there is necessary be taken in to account finances and management opportunities of these sides and various community-based services – where funding is covered by state, or independent party; social service providing may be managed by society, finances covered by others and supervised by state. These services may be funded by some companies or private persons.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that despite widespread recognition of preschool education's importance, challenges exist in some regions, including limited kindergarten access and concerns about teacher qualifications. Participants mainly see the state as responsible for addressing these challenges, suggesting solutions such as constructing new facilities and increasing funding. However, there is less focus on civil society involvement, highlighting the importance of community participation. While there is limited awareness of

public-private cooperation practices and alternative education models, participants are willing to contribute to improving preschool education. However, there is uncertainty regarding effective engagement methods. Overall, the study underscores the necessity of collaborative efforts to address Georgia's preschool education challenges, by implementing and supporting PPP practice. In conclusion, the study assumes that respondents have readiness to involve, but do not know how to organise this. This underscores the importance of providing guidance, resources, and support to help individuals translate their willingness into meaningful engagement and participation in preschool education initiatives.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations emerge: enhance collaboration, increase awareness, prioritise civil society involvement: encourage greater involvement of civil society in preschool education initiatives, recognising their potential to complement state efforts and provide innovative solutions, facilitate engagement, establish precedents and support initiatives like the "Gare-Gare" outdoor education hub and "Future Club" to create precedents for inclusive and cost-effective approaches to preschool education. This indicates a call for further research on the effectiveness of implemented strategies, understanding barriers to engagement, exploration of civil society models, assessment of long-term sustainability, and evaluation of innovative approaches in preschool education. By implementing these recommendations, Georgia can take significant strides towards improving its preschool education system and ensuring every child has access to quality early childhood education.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Вивчення альтернативних методів дошкільної освіти в Грузії: покращення доступності

Анотація. Це дослідження є актуальним, оскільки розглядає державно-приватне партнерство у сфері дошкільної освіти в Грузії, шукаючи шляхи вирішення значних освітніх проблем, спільних для пострадянських регіонів. Воно оцінює придатність альтернативних освітніх моделей у суспільстві, яке все ще бореться з інфраструктурною спадщиною радянського минулого, надаючи цінні рекомендації щодо політичних реформ, необхідних для розширення доступу до дошкільної освіти та підвищення її якості. Метою дослідження було оцінити готовність грузинського суспільства до впровадження альтернативних освітніх практик. Спираючись на досвід пострадянських країн, а також на міжнародний досвід і місцеві перспективи, дослідження має на меті надати всебічне розуміння доцільності та ефективності альтернативних моделей у Грузії. Використовуючи змішаний підхід, що включає якісні інтерв'ю, опитування та аналіз даних, дослідження вивчає сильні сторони, виклики та перспективи впровадження різних альтернативних моделей в унікальному соціально-економічному та культурному контексті пострадянської Грузії. Дошкільна освіта у пострадянських та схожих країнах стикається зі спільними проблемами доступу та якості, незважаючи на різні політики, що включають законодавчі заходи та державно-приватне партнерство, спрямовані на подолання фінансових та географічних бар'єрів. Постійні розбіжності в системах дошкільної освіти в регіоні, про що свідчать реформаторські ініціативи та кадрові проблеми в Грузії, підкреслюють необхідність безперервних реформ. Ці фактори підкреслюють важливість постійних політичних зусиль, спрямованих на підтримку комплексних та ефективних середовищ раннього навчання. Результати дослідження підкреслюють нагальну потребу в альтернативних шляхах освіти в Грузії, особливо в регіонах, які стикаються з інфраструктурними та географічними бар'єрами, подібними до тих, що існують в інших пострадянських країнах. Висвітлюючи потенційні переваги моделей публічно-приватного партнерства, дослідження також визначає ключові проблеми, які необхідно вирішити для забезпечення їх успішної реалізації в пострадянському контексті. Практична цінність цієї роботи поширюється на політиків, освітян і громади в пострадянських країнах, які стикаються зі схожими освітніми проблемами. Пропагуючи законодавчі реформи, спрямовані на впровадження альтернативних підходів, це дослідження робить внесок у постійні зусилля, спрямовані на зміцнення дошкільної освіти та просування інклюзивності в пострадянській Грузії та за її межами

Ключові слова: дошкільна освіта; розширення можливостей дошкільної освіти; просування дошкільного розвитку; нові стратегії дошкільної освіти; розширення доступу до дошкільної освіти