

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE BLACK SEA CORRESPONDENCES PRINTED IN THE GEORGIAN PRESS OF THE BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY

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Abstract: Issues related to education were actively discussed in the Georgian press since the second half of the 19th century, and they did not lose their relevance even at the beginning of the 20th century. If we follow the publications published in the Georgian press during this period, we will see how the public's interest in the processes taking place in the world in the field of education was growing. From this point of view, the subject of our interest are the publications that are sent from abroad and analyze the current situation in the field of education, and share their experience with the Georgian readers. In this regard, the subject of our interest are those publications that analyze the education policies and educational models existing in the Black Sea countries and, by sharing their experiences, convince Georgian society of the lack of alternative to creating a national school model, which was to become the cornerstone of the struggle for freedom.

Our goal is to understand, with the help of discourse analysis, to what extent these journalistic narratives resonated with the concept of *Ilia* and what impact the sharing of international experience could have on raising Georgian public awareness. We think that our research will attract the attention of people who are interested in both educational issues and documentary prose and journalism.

Key words: Georgian press, problems of education, discourse.

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Introduction: „There is nothing new under the sun... This too was in the century before ours.“ – It is impossible not to remember this wisdom read in *Ecclesiastes*, when you read the publications printed in the Georgian press of the beginning of the last century, through which you get acquainted with the current situation in the field of education in Georgia; Many of the problems, which were hotly debated a century ago, have not lost their relevance to this day, and discussions about them continue today. The Georgian education system, which has been in a process of constant reform and reorganization since the 1990s, is still searching for a formula that will complete the establishment of the national school model once and for all.

“The content, goals and objectives of education and upbringing in every era derive from the goals of public life, socio-economic, political and cultural situation and change in accordance with the state ideology.“ (Basiladze, I. Tavgiradze, L.2024) – The beginning of the 20th century was a stage of such changes. After the Russian government began talking about the need to implement reforms in the education system, of which the Georgian educational space was a part at the time, thinking, reasoning, and discussion about such an important issue for society became active in the press, which often turned into heated polemics. It was the process of searching for a truly national way to educate the next generation. The progressive-minded society was initially optimistic about the announced reform, expecting real change. „We see that now is a very opportune time to make the desired changes in education, and it is certainly necessary for us to take advantage of this time.“ The government itself is interested in ensuring that education is „established on a normal basis,“ so we must take care of this matter „, and let us show what the school needs in us.“ – we read in one of the publications printed in the „Information Sheet“ in 1901 (№1545).

The Georgian public's interest in the ongoing processes in the field of education was growing. This is evidenced by the extensive correspondence received from various countries around the world, whose authors were familiar with the current situation on the spot, analyzed it, and shared their impressions and views with Georgian readers. The object of this study is those publications that discuss the problems existing in the field of education in the Black Sea countries. Our goal is to understand what trend is observed when discussing the mentioned issues and drawing conclusions. What influence did it have on the formation of the new school concept by Georgian society? What role did the sharing of international experience play in raising public awareness in general?

Research methods: The research will use the comparative method and discourse analysis.

Discussion: „The state interest requires caring for the education of the people, since education is the greatest force that generates the well-being and domestic strength of the people and grants external victory in the cultural struggle waged among peoples.“ In this battle, the uneducated cannot compete with the educated...this alphabetic truth must be grasped by all nations, if they do not want to be eradicated from the back of Mother Earth forever.“ – This excerpt is from the letter of the official body of the Minister of Finance of Russia, quoted in the newspaper „Tsnobis Purtseli“(“Notice Sheet“) by A. In Khrameli's extensive article – „Bread or School“ (1902 №1818).

This is the position of the Ministry of the country which, according to all available statistical data, was considered the most backward in terms of education throughout Europe at that time; of the country, where only 16% of the population knew elementary reading and writing; Only 3% of school-aged children attended school; the situation was worse in the provinces. In the four southern provinces, only 0.7–0.8 per 1,000 people attended school (A. Kumistaveli, 1905); 8,000,000 out of 1,430,000 children of the appropriate age could not study due to lack of schools or poverty; In a country where the circular sent by the Minister of Secular Education, Delyanov, to the guardians of educational districts in 1887 was still in force, according to which the children of representatives of the lower social strata of the population did not have the right to enter school; The state, whose spending on education, according to 1894 data, amounted to only 0.4% of the budget, or 5 rubles per student per year.

As the publicist K. Andronikashvili writes in „Tsnobis Purtseli“ (‘‘Notice Sheet‘‘) in 1902. (№1999) in the published article – „A few words about public education“ – „In Russia, too, the government has made sure that knowledge and education in the hands of the working people are the tools by which the state is economically empowered, the nation itself flourishes“. It seems that the publicist still believed in the Russian government's good sense and sincerity and, like a part of Georgian society, was optimistic about the announced reform. This optimism can be read in other publications, the number of which has increased significantly since 1901, which indicates a sensitive attitude of the public towards the topic. The materials printed in the newspapers „Iveria“, „Tsnomis Purtselsa“ and „Sakhalkho Gazeti“, which are the main targets of our research, give us the basis for saying this.

The newspaper „Tshobis Purtseli“ in 1901 (№1493) published an article titled „The Actions of the Secondary School Reform Commission“ that announced to the public that the assembled reform commission had already completed its work and had already presented the first action plan to be implemented in 1901-1905 on June 9.

The reform plan, so urgently developed, meant the following changes: From the 1901-1902 school year, Latin was to be eliminated from the first and second grades and Greek from the third and fourth. In the remaining classes, studies were to continue as usual this year. Instead of the excluded subjects, natural science and geography should be taught in the first two grades. In real schools, history teaching should be introduced in the first and second grades and mathematics courses should be expanded in the first grade and geography and natural sciences in the second. In the 1902-1903 academic year, the first five grades of gymnasiums were to be replaced, and in 1903-1904, the remaining three. Finally, in 1905, the eighth grade was to be abolished, and the change would end there.

These changes, which yielded almost nothing, certainly caused dissatisfaction among Georgian society, which was waiting for real changes. Naturally, it would not have been possible to reform the Russian education system, which has the status of the most backward country in terms of education, with a single wave of the hand, and the government was not interested in the needs of the national school. However, the press did not spare any effort in „this cause.“ This is evidenced by the numerous materials published in „Iveria“ and „Rznosi Purtsil“ in 1901-1905, that is, during the reform period, on the principles of school organization; on different models of reform or reorganization of the existing education system. In particular, they focused on the unsuitability and backwardness of the Russian education model. They cited statistical data from materials printed in Russian newspapers themselves. We are unable to verify how real this data was and whether the verified sources are authentic due to lack of access to these archival materials, although these figures add credibility to the narratives of Georgian publicists.

In the article „A Few Words on Public Education“, which was published in the newspaper „Tsnomis Purtselts“ in 1902 (№2003), in order to make Russia's position in the international educational space clearer to the public in terms of education, K. Andronikashvili examines statistical data from a letter by Acad. Yanzhuli (from the book: „Экономическая оцѣнка народного образованія“, – 1899г.), In which it is clearly seen how insignificant the „care“ shown by the Russian government for the spread of knowledge actually looks in the background of the expenses spent on education by advanced countries, which was properly reflected in the result: „... In England, in 1894, 87 million rubles were set aside for schools; There were 181 pupils per thousand inhabitants, or 18 pupils per hundred; in France – 1895 – the expenditure was more than 70 million, there were 15 pupils per hundred inhabitants. In the United States – 1895 – 331 million. m. There were 20 pupils per hundred inhabitants; in Russia in 1896 the expenditure was 23 million. m. and there were 3 pupils per hundred inhabitants, much less than in Japan, where there were 8 pupils per hundred. While in England – 20 m., in France – 10 m., in the United States – 20 m., only 5 m. is spent in Russia. In the United States, a public school teacher is paid 1000 m a year, in Russia 200 m. The literacy rate in France is 85%, in England – 90%, in the United States – 92%, in Switzerland – 95%, in Germany – 98%, in Russia only 16%, that is, 84 people out of a hundred cannot read or write. Agree, these are impressive figures. In many other publications, such statistical data are collected from official documents or materials printed in the Russian press. Everything served one purpose – to show the public a real picture of our miserable existence, so that it would no longer have false expectations from the reforms planned by the government and implemented by the Russian bureaucracy, and would take care of its own future: „Among all the countries in Europe, Russia ranks last in terms of education... Today, such a stagnant policy will not serve us. Today, when all of humanity expects salvation and help from education, we also need to take care of the education of our children.“ – wrote A. Kumistaveli 1905. In the article printed in „Iveria“ (№1) newspaper – „I think it's time to take care of our children's normal learning and development!“

The Georgian press was not limited to sharing its own experiences or introducing publications published in the Russian press to Georgian readers; It was not content with analyzing the problems in the education system of various parts of Russia. As mentioned above, Georgian society knew very well that the Russian education system was the most backward compared to European countries and its school model was completely insufficient for „normal learning and development.“ It was important to share the experience of those countries that were advanced economically thanks to education. The authors of these articles tried to clearly demonstrate to the reader the cause-and-effect relationship that existed between the state's efforts to raise education to the appropriate level and the country's economic prosperity. They discussed the path taken by this or that country to the advanced position. He was interested in the education policy of European countries – Germany, France, England, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Prussia, Finland, etc., as well as the United States of America, Canada, Japan and China. They analyzed existing education models and tried to find a formula for creating their own model of a national school.

As expected, nothing has really changed with the reform planned by the Russian government. However, these publications played a role in raising public awareness. In the article „Secondary School in Russia“ published in the newspaper „Tshonis Purtseli“ in 1905 (№ 2801), we read: „The press clearly showed everyone the real reason for the unfitness of the modern school. And the ministry also took action: He publicly acknowledged the unfitness of the school, started looking for ways to improve it, and asked knowledgeable persons. The ministry collected inconclusive material, but... but... nothing came of it. The ministry knew very well how the school should be changed, but it did not want to change it, and it is not possible that it would want to.“ Of course, the fundamental change in the school, which was necessary, was not at all in the interests of Tsarist Russia.

1906 In the letter „Study-Education and Government“ printed in „Iveria“ (№22), the author is K. S. He declares the government, which does not think about people's education and keeps people in ignorance, as the enemy of the people. As a basis for this, he cites deplorable statistics, which show the backwardness of the Russian education system in all respects, even after the end of the reform, compared to other countries. Not if in the economically advanced countries of Europe, „even in the Ottoman Empire, according to the number of people, more children will go to school than in Russia“ – The author of the article notes (although none of the statistics presented by him show Ottoman data. Nor was any article published directly about the Ottoman education system in the Georgian press of the time).

In the later period – the ongoing political processes in Russia: the Russo-Japanese war, the revolution of 1905-1907 and the years of reaction overshadowed the relevance of the topic of education reform in the Georgian press, which was also reflected in the number of articles printed in 1907-1908. Added to this was the closure of the newspaper „Iveria“. Since 1911, discussions on the problems and prospects in the field of education have become more active on the pages of the „People's Newspaper“.

Following the events in the Balkans, the Georgian public has focused particular attention on the education models of the Balkan countries, countries that, while fighting for independence and sovereignty, saw education as the path to the country's salvation. This path was so familiar and desirable to Georgian society. Several extensive articles testify to this interest, namely: I. Rachveli's „Letters from Burgasia“ („Iveria“, 1902, No. 96); P. Surguladze's article „Albania“ („Sakhalkho Gazeti“, 1912, No. 623, 624, 625), published under the pseudonym Nami; B. Bethaneli's „Schools in Bulgaria“ („Sakhalkho Gazeti“, 1912, No. 748) and „The State of Education in the Balkans“ („Sakhalkho Gazeti“, 1913, No. 788) and others.

The newspaper „Iveria“ published an article by the famous publicist Iase Rachveli, „Letters from Burgasia,“ in 1902 (N96), in which he describes the socio-political situation in Bulgaria at that time and provides interesting information about education there. If we believe the author, by 1902, 65% of Bulgarians were literate. How did a country that had not long ago thrown off the yoke of slavery and gained independence reach this result? Iase Rachveli draws attention to the steps taken by the state: After gaining independence, the Bulgarian government issued a decree according to which all citizens living in Bulgaria for fifteen years were obliged to learn to read and write Bulgarian. Otherwise, he would not be able to participate in the elections. In addition, „education was made compulsory among Bulgarians. „Every Bulgarian is obliged to send their children to school, or they will be fined. A thirteen-year-old child, whether a girl or a boy, studies at the expense of his parents, and then, those who can afford it, enter a higher education institution either at their own expense or at state expense,“ the author writes.

The Georgian press actively followed the events taking place in the Balkans in 1912-1913 with particular interest, regularly publishing detailed information related to them. „Bulgaria has completely escaped the Russian protectorate, and today it represents a powerful, independent policymaker, economically and culturally growing state every day.“ – P. Surguladze wrote under the pseudonym „Nami“ in the article „Albania“ published in the „Sakhalkho Gazeti“(„People's Newspaper“) (1912, No. 623). With these words, it is directly stated why Georgian society sympathized with the national liberation movement of the Balkans. It was admirable the spirit of the Balkan people, who so selflessly yearned for freedom and, despite the common desire of the great powers of Europe, their issue was resolved according to the national principle.

The author of the article agrees with the opinion of the French philosopher Alfred Fourier from his works – „Education from a National Perspective“: „It was only the German generals who were defeated, when they won with the weapons of the French... We lost against Kant and Fichte, Goethe and Schiller, Alexander Humboldt, Haus and Bismarck, Lamoltke“, that is, the German public teacher won in the Franco-German war – He considers this opinion to be true and adds: „Woe to the enslaved person who does not understand, woe to the slave who cannot or does not want to confront his master's culture with his culture.“ (Nami, №265)

Publicist b. Bethaneli, in his extensive article „Schools in Bulgaria“ (1912, №748), published in the „Public Gazette“, talks about the model of the Bulgarian education system, a country which, as the creator of the mighty victory of the Balkan Slavs, appeared in the current world and attracted the attention of all mankind with its spiritual strength and love for the homeland „to the highest point“. „Such strength is created by the work of education and upbringing, if it is placed on suitable soil and if the school is closely connected to life and sufficiently satisfies the spiritual needs of students and youth,“ the author writes.

What made the Bulgarian school unique, what causes the publicist's attitude? The author notes at the very beginning that when discussing the state of Bulgarian schools, he uses the information in the articles of Prof. Kareev and others published in the Russian newspaper „Школа и Жизнь“ that he has at his disposal as a source. He has not personally visited a Bulgarian school. However, the experienced teacher himself, based on the materials available to him, did not prevent him from seeing the significant difference between our school and the Bulgarian school model. He emphasizes the importance of the state's attitude in the success of the education system and believes that Bulgaria's advancement and taking a place of honor in terms of education is due solely to the correct policy of the state. He uses statistics to illustrate this: „Bulgaria is a democratic country. It has never spared any means to put education on a regular basis... For this, no expense is spared. In 1911, state expenditure amounted to 178,395,000 francs; of this amount, 23,598,000 francs were spent on public education, i.e. 13.4 percent of the entire budget; 5.4 francs per Bulgarian.“ (Bethanelli, 1912) „Bulgarian school is on the path of free development. It is firmly connected with the life of the people themselves“, – The author of the article writes. He describes in detail the educational model of the boys' and girls' gymnasium. The most important difference, which draws the attention of the author of the article, is in the curriculum, which includes such modern issues that were considered forbidden in Russian schools at that time. „During the lessons of legislation (Законовъдение), students are introduced to the importance of constitutionalism and the sovereignty of the people. In the textbook of political economy, the theory of Marx is also explained, among others.“ The natural science program also includes Darwin's theory. In one section of the United General History, which is entitled „The Struggle of the Ranks“, there is also such a paragraph: „The workers' question. The organization and aspirations of the proletariat“ (Bethanelli, 1912).

In the article, the author provides extensive information about the principles of organization and teaching of the newly founded Sofia University, which at first only had five faculties: Technical, Agromonic, Historical-Philological, Physical-Mathematical, Legal. As the author notes, it was also planned to open a medical faculty, although its implementation was hindered by the lack of academic staff. As for academic staff, the author notes that in the 1909-1910 academic year, Sofia University had a total of 52 professors and associate professors. Most of them were educated at Moscow University, and they draw attention to one important trend: „Recently, Bulgarian youth has been increasingly attending universities in other countries and coming to Russia less. This circumstance, of course, is explained by the proximity of foreign countries. In addition, in recent times, due to unrest in Russian higher schools, the study process has not been carried out properly.“ (Bethanelli, 1912) In the statistical data presented in the article, attention is also focused on one important detail: on the noticeable increase in the number of female students in the university: 1909 – 1910 semester. This year, the university had a total of 1232 students, of which 278, that is, 22-23% were women.

It seems that Balkan education was of great interest to Georgian society. This is evidenced by another long article of publicist Bagrat Bethaneli „Education in the Balkans“ published in the same „Sakha-

Ikho Gazeti“ (№788) in 1913. It contains a number of significant facts and statistical data, which are unmistakable evidence of the progress of the Balkan countries, including Bulgaria, in terms of education. According to these data, in 1906 there was one primary school for every 1,333 inhabitants, and the number of pupils in them was 7% of the total number of inhabitants; between 1906 and 1911 the budget for public education in Bulgaria increased from 10,680 thousand francs to 23,598 thousand francs. According to the author, the source of these statistical data is information published in the newspaper „Школа и Жизнь“. The same article, according to the same source, also provides scant information about education in Serbia, although even this scant data is telling: in 1863, there were 318 primary public schools in this country with 13,565 students. In 1910, there were 1,305 public schools with 135,574 students; This year, the Half of the budget of the Ministry of Education was spent on primary schools alone, each There was a school for every 2,090 people, and the number of students in such a school was 5% of the total population. In Serbia, 19 gymnasiums or „lyceums“ were established, after the completion of which the student was given the right to enter the university. The University of Belgrade is also mentioned, in which about a thousand students studied. The author regrets that he does not have detailed information about the university and lyceums in Serbia, although he expresses the hope that „in this country, too, high and secondary schools will be placed on the same desirable basis as in Bulgaria.“ (Bethanelli, 1913)

The publicist did not leave the merits of the public teachers of Bulgaria and Serbia unnoticed. The teacher himself was well aware of the contribution they made to the self-awareness of the people and the prosperity of the homeland. He draws important parallels between the teachers there and those in our country: the author speaks with admiration about the Bulgarian and Serbian youth who, after finishing their studies, rush to their native villages to pass on the knowledge they have acquired to their people; About the small nations of the Balkans, who duly appreciated the great importance of public education and in a coordinated and friendly manner were discussing their future. „After this, we can boldly say that in the Balkans the public education of the Slavs won,“ the author concludes. The article compares the situation of the Balkans in terms of education with the situation of the Ottoman Empire, which, unlike the Balkans, spent much more money on armaments than on education; He again uses statistical data presented in the form of a table as further evidence of the superiority of the Balkans, and based on this data, he draws the appropriate conclusion: „The main strength of every state is based on the national-cultural strength of its inhabitants, and not on cannons.“

Above, we have already mentioned in the „People’s newspaper“ 1912. (N 623,624,625) P. printed under the pseudonym of „Nami“. Surguladze’s long article „Albania“. Political processes in the Balkans are analyzed in it. The last part of the article (N 625) is almost entirely devoted to the Albanian education policy. As the author informs us, Austria „took special care“ of the education of Catholic Albanians living here. Jesuit and Franciscan monks established schools, shelters, and other facilities for them. However, these schools were limited to religious instruction, and were not very popular. Italy, which was no less actively „caring,“ had a different approach. In the secular schools founded by him, secular people also worked as teachers of the divine law, where along with writing, they also taught some crafts, which attracted not only Christians, but also Muslims. During the old regime, almost every Albanian city had Turkish primary and secondary schools, where the reading of the Quran was taught at the primary level and its interpretation in Arabic at the secondary level. As the author points out, in 1891 Only one national Albanian school, founded by Albanian patriots, functioned in the whole of Albania.

As the publicist notes, this was not enough for the Albanians, the danger of losing the Albanian language brought the entire nation to its feet: Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox unanimously decided to firmly defend their sacred right. Public meetings were held in various cities; Albanians of all three faiths stood side by side. They formulated common demands: „The official language in Albania should be Albanian, Albanian books should be distributed to the people, Albanian schools should be opened.“ The publicist cannot hide his admiration when talking about this glorious moment and emphasizes that this struggle has become a national cause for every Albanian, regardless of age or religious belief.

Many public schools were opened with private donations. A school for the training of teachers was founded. Here, the author is pleased to inform the public of the result of this unity: In 1911, based on the above-mentioned demands made during the negotiations, the Ottoman government was forced to make concessions and make a decision according to which: Lyceums were to be established in every city with a population of 30,000; money was to be allocated from the budget for theological schools; the opening of schools was to be facilitated; education in primary and secondary schools was to be conducted in the native language.

Although this decision was not implemented by the Ottoman authorities, the Albanians did not deviate from this path, because, in the words of the author of the article, this was the path of conscious national struggle. This is the way of creation, with one hand you weaken and defeat the master, and with the other hand you create your institutions, your organizations. (Nami, 1912, Sakh. Gaz. № 625) The publicist, impressed by the self-sacrifice of the freedom-loving Balkan people, formulated a formula for success, a kind of recommendation, for the admonition of his readers, the Georgian society, which the national school should use on its path of struggle.

Conclusions: It is clear from the aforementioned publications that at the beginning of the 20th century, the advanced Georgian society was well aware that there was no alternative to the country's salvation from poverty and prosperity through education. It knows exactly that the reason for Russia's backwardness was the wrong education policy. The economic advancement of European countries was due to the correct assessment of the importance of education. A real, fundamental change in the school system was necessary, which was not part of the plans of Tsarist Russia; it would ignore neither the real education of the people nor national interests; Sadzogadeba realized that he should no longer have false expectations from the reform planned by the Russian bureaucracy; the idea was already ripe to take care of its own future; They had to create their own model of a national school, which was to become an important part of the path of conscious national struggle. They looked to the experience of Balkan countries with similar fates as a model and example, where issues were resolved according to national principles and the teaching model was also based on a national perspective. This was the path that Georgian educators had been following since the previous century – a truly national path.

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