

UNESCO'S SERAT METHODOLOGY

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN GEORGIA SUMMARY



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Cover photo: UNFPA Georgia/Dina Oganova



Sexuality education status

The transformation of the Georgian education system started back in 2005, when the Law of Georgia on General Education, the National Goals of General Education and the first competency-based National Curriculum were introduced. The reform aimed to change the education paradigm to take a more student-centred approach and to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their lifelong education and professional development. Therefore, new generations of the National Curriculum placed more emphasis on skills and competencies, including critical thinking, cooperation, safety and other life skills as cross-curricular competencies to be developed in all subjects and levels of general education. In 2018–2019, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MES) realized the need to strengthen the formal education system in terms of introducing topics from comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in response to the international and national commitments assumed by the country. Thus, the 2018 revision of the National Curriculum made the first attempts to integrate selected CSE topics into two school subject standards – biology and civic education. The Ministry of Education and Science recognizes that the changes introduced in the National Curriculum and school subject standards in 2018 are not sufficient and is therefore committed to gradually expanding the coverage of topics in the formal education system and strengthening the process through informal education. To support this initiative and to assess the current quality of school-based sexuality education in the country, an analysis was conducted using the UNESCO Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT).¹

Legal and policy context

The legal and policy context in relation to many CSE components is quite well developed in Georgia (a score of 75 per cent). CSE topics are reflected in various documents related to educational policies and strategies. The MES's institutional system supports a non-discriminatory and violence-free educational system in the country. National laws have created a solid foundation for the prevention of violence and discrimination as well as the protection of human rights. Even though there is no separate ministerial structure supporting CSE, the MES's Preschool and General Education Development Department supports all content-related issues, including those subjects and programmes into which CSE topics are integrated. Despite this positive trend, the SERAT review also identified that the links between the education system and school-based services or youth-friendly centres are poor or non-existent. There is no school-based health service across the country. Only some schools have school doctors; therefore, they do not offer any information on CSE and are not linked to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.

Objectives and principles

The National Curriculum of Georgia specifies the level-based learning outcomes per subject, the assessment approaches, the methodology, and other important components of the teaching and learning process. Thus, the learning outcomes unite knowledge, skills and attitudes that each student should possess. Having

1. The SERAT tool and reporting template are available at <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/sexuality-education-review-and-assessment-tool-serat> (accessed on 13 June 2023).

analysed the objectives and principles of the National Curriculum, the SERAT assessment concludes that most of the CSE topics covered in SERAT are not formulated in the language of the goals and objectives of the National Curriculum. However, the National Curriculum specifies cross-cutting skills and attitudes as goals of the teaching and learning process, which can serve as a good foundation for CSE. The curriculum development process is very participatory, with the involvement of teachers, parents, students and experts. However, the stakeholders do not include experts on human sexuality or behaviour change. Furthermore, most of the skills related to CSE are absent in the objectives and principles of the National Curriculum.

Sexuality education content (ages 5–18+)

Sexuality education is not a stand-alone subject but is integrated into other courses, including biology, citizenship, and Me and Society. The analysis of the content of the selected subjects showcased the uneven distribution of CSE topics for different age groups.

For the 5–8 age group, the analysis revealed that the key concepts of “values, rights, culture” and “relationships” are better represented in the curriculum than others. Topics related to a healthy lifestyle, violence and SRH (in relation to distinguishing between being healthy and sick) are partly covered by the document. On the other hand, anything related to the human body and development, sexuality and sexual behaviour, gender and gender-related norms are completely absent.

CSE content is least represented for the 9–12 age group. Topics related to relationships are represented somewhat by three of its nine content items. Similarly, information on the topics related to values, rights, cultures and diversity are extremely limited and confined to referencing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Key concepts, such as understanding gender, violence and staying safe, sexuality and sexual behaviour, and SRH are missing from the curriculum entirely. Likewise, knowledge of gender norms, the human body and development is poorly developed for the aforementioned age group.

The curriculum for the 12–15 age group covers more CSE topics. The compulsory theme of the “reproductive system and health” is integrated into biology classes, covering a number of topics such as the reproductive systems of men and women, risk factors for the spread of communicable diseases (including sexually transmitted infections), risks associated with early sexual intercourse, premature/early marriage and pregnancy, and their causes and prevention. It should be noted, however, that the concepts of relationships, violence, and skills related to health and well-being are covered superficially in the content, and the topic of gender remains underrepresented.

While the general curriculum focuses on equity and equal rights for all, gender-specific topics, especially on sexuality, are not covered for students.

As for the 15–18+ age group, most of the key CSE concepts are absent in the high school curriculum. Additionally, the new biology curriculum for upper secondary school does not cover any of the given CSE topics for this age group.

Thus, it can be concluded that, overall, CSE content is insufficiently represented in the National Curriculum of Georgia (the average score for all age groups is 16 per cent). The major topics fall in the areas of human

rights, non-discrimination, non-violence, tolerance, respect, communication skills, conflict resolution and some aspects of reproductive health. The content related to human rights is the strongest part of the curriculum, while the content related to sexuality and sexual behaviour is the weakest.

Teaching methods and teacher training

The Law on General Education, teachers' professional standards, the document "Subject benchmarks of higher education for teacher education" and the pre-service training programmes of two universities were explored to analyse the coverage of CSE through teacher education. In addition, an interview with a specialist from the MES's Teacher Professional Development Centre was conducted to screen in-service teacher training to find out whether and how they incorporate CSE topics. Words and phrases such as "sexual", "sexuality" and "sexuality education" are not mentioned in education system documents, including the teacher pre- and in-service training programmes. Teacher training curricula in both pre- and in-service training programmes lack content on CSE topics. Despite this, learner-centred learning techniques and different teaching strategies for sexuality education, including participatory methods, are well integrated (a score of 65.5 per cent)

Monitoring and evaluation

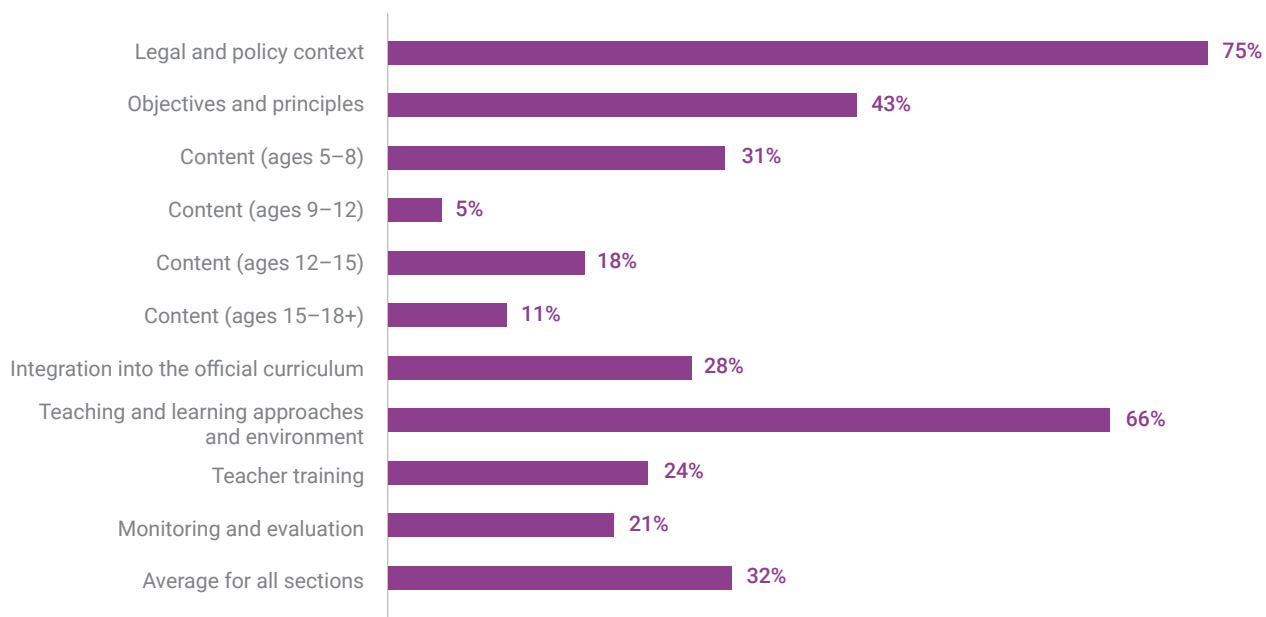
CSE monitoring and evaluation is quite weak. As CSE is not an independent programme or stand-alone subject and is weakly represented in the country's education system, the MES and its Education Management Information System have no statistical information on it. There are also no national-level data or information on the cost, fidelity of implementation or student perceptions of their learning experience.



Photo: UNFPA Georgia/Dina Oganova

Summary of SERAT findings

The figure below summarizes the scores* for each SERAT section, in percentages, and demonstrates the sexuality education programme's strengths and areas for improvement.



Source: Data collected through the SERAT tool.

* The formula for determining the weighted score ("present" x 1 [100%] + "present to some extent" x 0.5 [50%]) is outlined in a 2021 global status report on comprehensive sexuality education produced by several UN agencies, including UNFPA.² The percentages for "present" and "present to some extent" are derived from the graphs automatically generated by SERAT.



Photo: UNFPA Georgia/Gela Bedianashvili

2. UNESCO and others, *The Journey towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Global Status Report* (Paris, UNESCO, 2021).

Recommendations and the way forward

As seen from the summary results, all CSE components, including the curriculum, teacher training and monitoring and evaluation, need further development and enhancement. The biggest CSE-related challenge is that there is a stigma in society around sexuality-related issues, especially in the case of children and education in schools. One of the first steps to supporting CSE is to have an open dialogue on the topic led by health professionals, including child psychologists, and other experts via different channels, including social media, in-person meetings and webinars. These discussions would not only share knowledge but would also make education policy on CSE, including curriculum and teacher training programme development, more comprehensive and holistic. Below are some recommendations, with more details provided in the country report:

- Support the assessment of the CSE needs of children and young people in order to develop a strategy for their involvement in the curriculum development process.
- Introduce appropriate CSE content at all levels of education by developing age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate content in accordance with international standards.
- Strengthen and expand the Doctor's Hour school doctor programme, with training for doctors on how to deliver and develop students' knowledge, skills and attitudes on SRH.
- Develop digital resources for students, teachers, parents and medical personnel who are working in schools to give them a better understanding of CSE.
- Reflect CSE topics in teacher pre-service programmes and revise existing programmes.
- Create professional development programmes for academic staff and teachers, and conduct seminars (and training) to include CSE topics.
- Strengthen curriculum implementation monitoring and assessment, and incorporate classroom observation components for CSE topics.

