

**Nana Tsikhistavi**

*Doctor of History, Professor  
New Higher Education Institute – NEWUNI*

**Review on Nino Donadze Dissertation Topic:**

## **“ESTABLISHING VALUES THROUGH HISTORY TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES AND GEORGIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.”**

It is known that each society has its own values. Their formation is determined by the historical past and cultural heritage, as well as everyday life and the individuals who make up the society itself. It is also true that the values established in different societies, with rare exceptions, differ sharply from each other. For example, in American society, one of the main values is personal success, while in some African tribes, group success is given more importance.

A significant part of values changes over time (dynamically). For example, in industrial societies, values such as loyalty, friendship, generosity, love are on the way to disappearing. Today, purposefulness, hard work, etc. are more relevant.

What is the situation in Georgia in this aspect? On the one hand, we have the need to establish liberal values, specifically the part that determines progress, acceptable to us, and, on the other hand, conservative, traditional values must be taken into account. In this regard, the dissertation work of doctoral candidate Nino Donadze is interesting.

The work concerns the study of such important values for a democratic society as: the formation of patriotism, equality and tolerance through the teaching of history. The issue is especially relevant for Georgia, where this topic is almost unstudied.

The dissertation aims to demonstrate the role of history teaching in establishing values in the USA and Georgia and to assess the possibility of sharing the American experience. Historical-comparative and content-analysis methods are used. The work is based on a variety of sources, including national curricula, textbooks, interviews and other types of scientific literature.

Doctoral student Nino Donadze’s dissertation: \_ “Establishing Values in the United States and Georgia through History Teaching. A Comparative Analysis” consists of an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography.

In the introduction, the dissertation examines the research problem and its relevance. Here, the dissertation examines the following approach to the problem she discusses: “The study of history is at the heart of liberal education and is the foundation of education in a democratic society” [American Historical Association, 2016]. In a modern democratic society, education is no longer considered only as a process of transferring knowledge, but rather as a tool through which values are formed. It is in this context that the teaching of history acquires special importance as a mechanism for understanding the experience of the past and establishing civic values [American Historical Association, 2025].”(n.d., dissertation, p.1).

We partially agree with this formulation, but we should also note one thing. It is ideal when people have common values, but life shows the opposite. It is precisely different values that cause conflict in society. The reason for this is that values are largely based on views. If values are a building, views are the building material used to build this building. Views are the fastest-changing things. Views come primarily from past experiences. Views are influenced by many factors: the environment in which we grew up, the circle in which we move, what we hear, what we see, what we read, etc. From this, our views are formed and we are convinced that these views are the unmistakable truth. Most of the time, we do not even

realize that sometimes these views are wrong. We change the environment, we change the circle, and our views also change. We ourselves are convinced that what we previously thought was true was false. It happens that sometimes we do not even realize it, we remain captive to erroneous views. Education should help us form a system of values that does not oppose us, but unites us, but here there is one danger: education should not become like and turn into indoctrination.

No matter how valid and time-tested a number of values may be, we cannot rule out that a change in views tomorrow will not shake some values that are accepted as true today. That is why the education system should try to introduce an approach where we do not simply teach values, but rather try to make students think about them through reasoning and argumentation. In short, we should not instill values in students in the form of a directive, but we should try to create an environment in which they will draw appropriate conclusions themselves through reasoning and appropriate arguments. In this way, they will gradually form correct views and, based on these views, will deeply understand and continue the traditional or newly introduced value system. Based on the above, the philosophy of modern education, in parallel with the accumulation of knowledge, is focused on the development of skills such as reasoning, correct and valid argumentation, etc.

The dissertation focuses on three main concepts of value orientation used in the teaching of history. These are: patriotism, equality, and tolerance. He cites the following political event from the recent past of the United States as an example: "Its relevance is determined by the events that have occurred in the United States in recent years. For example, the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, was an attack on democratic institutions, which had never happened before in the history of the United States. The then-President Donald Trump referred to the citizens who stormed the Capitol as "great patriots" [Moore, 2021]. The storming of the Capitol damaged democracy and divided the American people [Biden, 2021]. Therefore, the Biden-Harris administration aimed to strengthen the quality of democracy" (n.d. ed. work, pp. 1-2). If we, according to modern approaches, are talking about the development of skills in teaching history, we do not consider it correct to connect or equate this political adventure with universal values. Here we will also note that in a democratic state, be it the USA or the Republic of Georgia, the school is free (at least it should be free) from political conjuncture.

In general, our area of interest is how values are embedded in history teaching, and not what kind of events take place in the United States or Georgia. For example, in the introduction we find the following information:

"The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 is a manifestation of racism and racial inequality"; "The issue of discrimination against Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans in the United States is also relevant. It became especially relevant during Donald Trump's first presidential campaign, when his rhetoric was characterized as racist and xenophobic"; "Published studies show that the most cases of discrimination are against Muslims, which is due to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001." (N.D., paper, p. 2).

As we mentioned above, opinions are the most changeable things. Opinions come from past experiences, opinions are influenced by many factors, the environment in which we grew up, the circle in which we move, what we hear, what we see, what we read. This is how our opinions are formed and we are convinced that these opinions are infallible. But one fine day we realize that we need to change something in it. To correct this, history has an excellent tool: questions – "Why"? "Because of what"? or "From where?", the answer to which helps to solve all the difficulties.

It is interesting to note that the thesis states that there is an alternative curriculum in the United

States: “In August 2019, the New York Times published the “1619 Project,” which is dedicated to the enslaved Africans who were first brought to Virginia. This project aims to understand the history of the United States in a new way.” (n.d., paper, p.4). However, it should be noted that nothing similar has been created in Georgia since the education reform and, unfortunately, is not yet in place.

Nino Donadze’s following finding is also interesting: “We can also consider the problem of the research issue that multiculturalism is poorly presented in American history textbooks. American society was formed by people of all nationalities, such diversity should be more presented in school textbooks [Hutchins-Viroux, 2009:133]. Although the textbooks have improved, for example, less attention is paid to the history of Mexican Americans, as well as other Latin Americans, such as Cubans or Puerto Ricans [UnidosUS and Johns Hopkins, 2023:16]. In addition, as I mentioned above, problems also apply to the history of blacks. I think this is what led to the development of alternative curricula in the United States.” (N.D. Dasakh. work, p.8).

The USA was multicultural from the beginning, and the state itself was formed by different cultures. We think that multiculturalism in America today is a controversial topic. That is why it is not adequately covered in textbooks. According to the work, the best example of a multicultural state today is the United States of America. Here, representatives of different nations with different cultures live side by side, exhibit the characteristics of their own culture, share them with each other, and thus coexist. It should also be said that American multiculturalism is understood in two ways: one is, symbolically speaking, a “salad bowl”, in which different cultures are represented in more or less equal proportions. They do not lose their own characteristic elements and are preserved in their original form. According to the second opinion, American multiculturalism is considered as a “cauldron”, where different cultures come together, mix with each other, boil into one mass, lose their distinctive features and create a completely new one – “American culture”. In this case, the identity of different cultures is lost. It is mixed and “melted” into other cultures.

Today, there is a lot of talk about cultural diversity, and this problem has recently engulfed the entire world. The process of globalization has closely connected individual regions of the world with each other and made this diversity more noticeable. As is often said, the world is getting “smaller”. The more diverse a society is, the higher the level of cultural diversity. Today’s societies, no matter where we look and no matter which country we look at, are becoming more and more diverse. Cultural diversity implies various manifestations of moods and attitudes existing both in a particular society and throughout the world. The main question of today’s society lies precisely in this: to what extent is cultural diversity “essential” to the social order and how tolerant should society be towards modern cultural diversity? Cultural diversity is a reality of modern life and we cannot escape it. The degree of problematic nature of this issue is different for different countries (it is different).

As for tolerance, its conscious manifestation is possible only when, instead of allowing and permitting what is different, the ruler can also prohibit it. Historically, tolerance was mainly used in the context of views opposing the state religion and denoted the acceptance, tolerance, and endurance of other religions by representatives of the dominant religion, despite the fact that the latter were viewed negatively as inferior, erroneous (heresy), or even harmful. Since the twentieth century, the understanding of tolerance has expanded, combining the interdependence of different political worldviews, as well as the traditions of ethnic groups, religious and other categories of minorities.

The paradox of tolerance is summarized in Karl Popper’s book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, where Popper writes: “Unlimited tolerance leads to the disappearance of tolerance. If we treat the intolerant with unlimited tolerance, if we are not prepared to defend the tolerant society from the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant and with him tolerance will be destroyed.”

The doctoral candidate notes: “A broader picture of religious intolerance in educational institutions

is provided by a study conducted in 2016 within the framework of the project “Tolerance, Promotion of Freedom of Religion and Human Rights in Georgia”, according to which cases of discrimination and violations of religious neutrality in public schools are systematic [Mikeladze et al., 2016:134].” (n.d. paper, p.9).

The model of religious education depends on the religious landscape of a particular country, the role and value of religion in its society, as well as on the country’s history, politics, and the structure of the educational system. In Western countries, freedom of religion is protected at the level of legislation, but in reality, sometimes discriminatory situations of various types and degrees are still noticeable. For example, if a certain denomination holds a dominant position in a country, public life, culture in general, and religious education in particular, are subject to this same. It may not be free from the influence of the dominant denomination. (N.C., “Tolerance and Religious Education in the United States”).

The chronological framework of the research is very broad, both in the case of American history and in the case of Georgian history. While working on the work, our attention was drawn to the most important issues that should be included, but in fact do not appear in it at all. From the collapse of the Soviet Union until 1997, when the work mentions the “Georgian Law on Education”, nothing is said at all about the first Georgian history textbooks in world history. Unlike the Soviet ones, they were built on a different conceptual model, specifically a civilizational one. This innovation changed the students’ perception of the dynamics and values of history in history teaching and brought to the forefront the vision of Western historiography and the principle of historicism. Another important issue that is striking. The work presents American history education on a state-by-state basis (it should be noted that education legislation in different states is different, in some places sharply conservative and in others liberal), and in this regard, examples of individual states are also given, including examples of modern US domestic policy, which may not be entirely justified when we are orienting ourselves with values. As for the teaching of history in Georgia, it is not mentioned at all. Examples of teaching history from textbooks in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, which are radically different from historical teaching in Georgia.

If we discuss values in school textbooks, first of all, national and state values should be brought to the forefront, of course, along with universal democratic values. In this regard, there is a big difference between the United States of America and Georgia, which is reflected in the formation and development of these states and their current situation: one is a superpower, and the other is a developing state in a transition period. Therefore, it would be better to focus on comparing these states from the period when the education reform in Georgia actually began (from 1998 to the present. The American analogue of the education reform) and to discuss the establishment of democratic values in America and Georgia through the teaching of history. We should also discuss its successes or failures, certain hindering circumstances, which are actually still the subject of heated debate today.

The work generally does not focus on the reasons that arose after the collapse of the USSR and which prevented the newly born democratic state of Georgia from forming a national doctrine of education that would spell out the goals, objectives, functions, and value orientations of each subject, including history. Unfortunately, this work has not been done to date.

As for the topic of patriotism in American history, it is extensively described with examples, what specific goals the US leaders had and were motivated by to form a sense of patriotism in the American population. Sources are provided from a political, ideological or military perspective. The difference is that America has been a sovereign state since its founding. That is why the American authorities and ideologists cared about the development of state patriotism. In the case of Georgia, unfortunately, we had a break in statehood for a long time. Therefore, the main starting point of historical education in us was the awakening, formation and development of a partisan feeling towards the homeland, towards

the country, and not towards the state. This is precisely the fundamental difference between these two states. The work also highlights the need to educate in the spirit of equality and the awakening of religious tolerance. Of course, the political realities existing in the state affect the formation of these values, and this is directly reflected in the formation of social norms.

Equality implies the principle according to which every citizen of a state, regardless of his ethnic group or religious affiliation, is not limited in his values and worldview and enjoys equal political rights.

But a person, no matter what faith he adheres to, must tolerate another person with his confessional beliefs, which he may not share, oppose, or even reject at the root. If intolerance of another faith is a personal matter for a person, tolerance of a person of another faith is a public matter. This is supported by the country's constitution.

The final part of the work presents theoretical discussions and the practical experience of the doctoral candidate. He tells us that his practical experience is related to the process of educating a world citizen. Here we are dealing with some inaccuracy, since in Georgia historical education and values serve and should inevitably serve the upbringing and formation of a loyal and responsible citizen of the Georgian state. Here we also consider it appropriate to care about the upbringing of the category of world citizen, such as Vazha Pshavela formulated more than 100 years ago in his publicistic work "Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism".

The dissertation has done a lot of work, which is clearly visible in the chapters of the dissertation and the diverse literature used. However, there are specific inaccuracies in the development of the topic. The mentioned work is really very interesting and contains many controversial issues. We think that in the future the author will continue to work on the mentioned work and will offer more convincing conclusions when publishing the work as a book.

Finally, in terms of evaluation, we can conclude that the main results of the work are:

- History teaching in the USA still plays an important role in establishing values, although it needs to focus more on equality and multiculturalism;
  - In Georgia, curricula and textbooks need to be revised by including more diverse tasks and knowledge-awareness, skills-oriented activities;
  - The transfer of values in teaching is crucial not only for textbooks, but also for teacher training;
- The strengths of the work are:
- The novelty of the topic, the richness of sources and the depth of comparative analysis;
  - Small remarks on the issue of values and views in America and Georgia, the differences between them; the need for a more detailed presentation of history teaching materials in Georgia and the concretization of recommendations.

Finally, we would like to conclude that the establishment of values in any society depends on a specific period and the development perspective of a particular society. Of course, traditions and customs are of great importance in this regard, which fundamentally influence the establishment of values. It is difficult to find common features between such a large and developed country as the USA and Georgia in terms of both history education and the observation of values. One thing is clear: in history teaching, it is possible to copy the best achievements of the USA.