

Integrating Patriotic Education and Physical Preparedness in Georgian Schools: Implications for National Resilience

Ia KHASAIA^{1*}, Nani MAMULADZE¹, Nana MAKARADZE¹, Didar DIDMANIDZE²

¹Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Exact Sciences and Education, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, 32/35 Rustaveli/Ninoshvili st. Batumi, 6010, Georgia

²Center of languages and information technologies, Faculty of Exact Sciences and Education, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, 32/35 Rustaveli/Ninoshvili st. Batumi, 6010, Georgia

Correspondence: * ia.khasaia@bsu.edu.ge

Abstract

The study examines the integration of patriotic education and physical preparedness within the Georgian educational system through a combined curricular, comparative, and empirical analysis. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and classroom observations, the research investigates the extent to which civic-patriotic values are systematically integrated into physical education practices. The findings reveal a significant discrepancy between declarative curricular objectives and their practical implementation. Although stakeholders widely recognize the importance of integrating civic responsibility, patriotism, and physical preparedness, instructional practices remain fragmented and insufficiently institutionalized. Comparative analysis with international models further demonstrates the limited presence of coherent implementation mechanisms within the Georgian context. The study concludes that strengthening national resilience requires clearer curricular frameworks, methodological support, teacher professional development, and stronger institutional coordination to achieve effective integration of civic-patriotic and physical education components.

KEY WORDS: *physical education; patriotic education; policy implementation; civic responsibility; national resilience*

Citation: Khasaia, I.; Mamuladze, N.; Makaradze, N.; Didmanidze, D. Integrating Patriotic Education and Physical Preparedness in Georgian Schools: Implications for National Resilience. In Proceedings of the Challenges to National Defence in Contemporary Geopolitical Situation, Brno, Czech Republic, 7-10 September 2026. ISSN 2538-8959, <https://doi.org/10.47459/cndcgs.2026.134>

1. Introduction

The relevance of the present study is grounded in the intersection of geopolitical, educational, and social dynamics, which collectively generate complex and interrelated challenges for contemporary Georgia. These dimensions form an integrated socio-institutional framework in which physical preparedness, civic responsibility, and national identity function as mutually reinforcing components of national resilience. In this regard, resilience should be understood not merely as a military or strategic concept, but as a multidimensional societal capacity encompassing institutional robustness, civic cohesion, adaptive capacity, and human capital development [1], [2].

From a geopolitical perspective, Georgia operates within a strategically sensitive and unstable security environment shaped by unresolved territorial conflicts and persistent external pressures. In small and geopolitically exposed states, resilience increasingly depends not only on formal defence institutions, but also on the capacity of society as a whole to anticipate, withstand, and adapt to security challenges [1], [3]. The continued presence of occupied territories reinforces the importance of strengthening national identity, civic responsibility, and societal preparedness as foundational elements of comprehensive national defence. In such contexts, the development of a cohesive civic-political nation and a shared civic culture represents a critical yet ongoing challenge, particularly in societies undergoing democratic transition and identity reconfiguration.

Simultaneously, Georgia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, including NATO and the European Union, introduces normative expectations that extend beyond institutional reforms to encompass societal preparedness, democratic culture, and active citizenship. Euro-Atlantic integration frameworks emphasize not only governance standards but also the cultivation of resilient societies characterized by civic competence, social trust, and cohesion [4],

[5]. Empirical and theoretical scholarship in civic education further suggests that democratic resilience is closely linked to citizens' capacity for participation, critical thinking, and engagement in public life [6]. Consequently, the alignment between geopolitical orientation and societal development becomes a central issue in the Georgian context.

From an educational perspective, these challenges acquire particular urgency. Education systems are increasingly recognized as key mechanisms for cultivating civic values, national identity, and social cohesion, while also preparing individuals to respond to complex and uncertain environments [4]. At the same time, a substantial body of international research points to a systematic decline in the physical fitness and activity levels of young people, raising concerns not only about public health outcomes but also about long-term societal preparedness and workforce sustainability [7], [8]. In this sense, physical preparedness extends beyond health-related indicators and becomes directly relevant to psychological resilience, discipline, and the capacity to fulfil civic and, where necessary, defence-related responsibilities.

This dual challenge - declining physical readiness alongside evolving civic expectations - necessitates a critical reassessment of educational priorities. In particular, the fragmentation between physical education and civic-patriotic education within school systems limits their potential integrative impact. Contemporary educational theory emphasizes that effective civic education is not confined to formal instruction alone, but requires experiential, embodied, and value-oriented learning processes that connect knowledge with practice [6], [9]. From this perspective, physical education may serve as a strategic platform for fostering cooperation, responsibility, resilience, and collective identity within a practical and socially meaningful context.

From a broader social perspective, patriotic and civic education, together with physical preparedness, should not be conceptualized as isolated domains. Rather, they constitute interdependent components of a comprehensive societal framework aimed at reconciling democratic values with national security and societal stability considerations. The cultivation of civic responsibility, social cohesion, and attachment to the state among young people represents a foundational condition for strengthening societies capable of responding effectively to both internal and external challenges. This approach aligns with contemporary resilience theory, which emphasizes the role of social capital, trust, and collective identity as critical resources during periods of crisis [10], [11].

Despite this, a significant research gap persists. Within the Georgian academic context, the interrelationship between physical education and civic-patriotic education has not been sufficiently conceptualized or examined as an integrated field of inquiry. Existing studies tend to address these domains separately, thereby overlooking their potential synergies and combined contribution to resilience formation. As a result, it remains unclear to what extent - and through which mechanisms - values such as patriotism, civic responsibility, and defence awareness are embedded within educational practices, including physical education and extracurricular activities. This fragmentation limits both theoretical development and the formulation of evidence-based educational policy.

Equally important is the limited systematic engagement with international experience. Countries such as Finland, the Baltic states, and Israel have developed relatively coherent models integrating civic education, physical preparedness, and elements of defence awareness within their educational systems. However, the transferability of these models to the Georgian context remains insufficiently explored, particularly in light of differing institutional capacities, historical trajectories, and socio-political conditions. Consequently, policy development in this field often lacks a sufficiently robust comparative and analytical foundation.

It is precisely this dual gap - namely, the scarcity of context-specific integrative research and the limited critical adaptation of international experience - that underpins the scientific and practical significance of the present study. Against this background, the paper seeks to develop an evidence-based and context-sensitive framework for strengthening the alignment between physical education, civic development, and national resilience in Georgia, with particular attention to the relationship between declared curricular objectives and their implementation in educational practice.

1.1 Research Aim

The aim of the present study is to provide a comprehensive and analytically grounded assessment of the current state of integration between patriotic education and physical preparedness within the educational system of Georgia, and to identify viable pathways for strengthening national defence capacity and civic responsibility within the contemporary socio-educational context. To operationalize this aim, the study integrates curricular, comparative, and empirical analysis within a unified analytical framework. This multidimensional approach enables not only the identification of the structural characteristics of the existing system, but also the evaluation of its practical functioning and alignment with broader educational and policy objectives.

First, the study undertakes a document and curriculum analysis focused on the systematic examination of national education standards and school-based physical education curricula. The purpose of this component is to identify the presence, scope, and structural coherence of embedded civic-patriotic elements, as well as to assess the extent to which these components are explicitly defined and pedagogically operationalized.

Second, a comparative analysis is conducted to situate the Georgian experience within a broader international context. This component examines selected international models integrating physical education with defence-oriented civic development, with particular attention to institutional frameworks, policy alignment, and implementation mechanisms. The

comparative perspective enables the identification of structural patterns and potentially transferable practices relevant to the Georgian context.

Third, the study incorporates an empirical assessment based on the perspectives of key stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents. This component aims to investigate attitudes and perceptions regarding the role of physical education in fostering civic responsibility and defence-related preparedness, while also evaluating the extent to which existing educational practices effectively support these objectives in everyday instructional settings.

Finally, building on the findings of the preceding analytical components, the study formulates policy implications through targeted, evidence-based, and context-sensitive recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at strengthening the alignment between curricular design, instructional practice, and institutional coordination, thereby supporting a more coherent and sustainable integration of civic-patriotic and physical preparedness dimensions within the national education system.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Existing Research and International Experience

The issue of patriotic education has received increasing attention within international scholarly discourse. A review of more than 110 academic studies conducted over the past two decades indicates that patriotism is widely regarded as an important component of civic responsibility within educational practice. At the same time, the orientation, scope, and analytical focus of research in this field vary considerably across national contexts, reflecting differences in historical experience, political culture, and institutional arrangements [12].

A notable limitation of the existing literature lies in its predominant emphasis on participants' attitudes, perceptions, and value orientations, while comparatively limited attention has been devoted to the structural and curricular dimensions of implementation. Consequently, although the normative importance of patriotic education is broadly acknowledged, the mechanisms through which it is institutionally embedded, pedagogically operationalized, and sustained within educational systems remain insufficiently examined, particularly from a comparative perspective [13].

In this regard, the present study adopts a distinct analytical position. Unlike approaches that primarily prioritize attitudinal dimensions, it focuses on the structural and curricular mechanisms through which patriotic and civic components are integrated into educational systems and translated into instructional practice. This shift in analytical focus enables a more systematic assessment of the relationship between policy design and implementation outcomes.

The literature also reveals a degree of conceptual ambiguity. Within pedagogical discourse, the concept of "patriotism" is frequently used interchangeably with "citizenship," reflecting the close relationship between state identification and civic belonging. However, the moral, socio-cultural, and political dimensions of these concepts are not always clearly differentiated. The lack of conceptual precision complicates efforts to operationalize patriotic education within formal curricula and to evaluate its outcomes in a systematic and comparable manner.

At the level of international practice, substantial experience has been accumulated across the Baltic region and several European countries. Comparative analyses of Sweden, Germany, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland demonstrate that, within these contexts, the transmission of patriotic and civic values is not treated as an isolated educational objective. Rather, it is embedded within broader frameworks of civic and defence-oriented education and supported by formal legislative and institutional structures [14].

The Baltic states provide particularly illustrative examples of institutionalized integration. In Latvia, the National Defence Education programme is designed to promote civic awareness, develop basic military competencies, and cultivate a strong sense of responsibility toward the state. The programme is formally established by legislation, spans multiple years of schooling, and constitutes an integral component of the national curriculum. Similarly, in Lithuania and Estonia, civic preparedness and physical readiness are compulsory at the upper secondary level and are incorporated into the educational system through structured and continuous programmes [15].

Finland represents a model in which educational practice is closely aligned with broader societal norms of national responsibility. Its system of compulsory military or alternative civilian service reflects a widely shared societal understanding that individual preparedness constitutes a core component of national security. This alignment between education, public policy, and societal expectations reinforces the coherence and effectiveness of defence-oriented civic development [15], [17].

Israel offers one of the most comprehensive examples of integrating education with defence preparedness. The Gadna programme, a pre-military training initiative formalized in 1949, engages approximately 19,000 young people annually. Beyond basic military training, it promotes engagement with national history, attachment to the state, and commitment to public service. Importantly, the Israeli approach is not based on militarization as an end in itself, but on a holistic strategy that combines physical preparedness, civic competence, and collective responsibility within a unified educational framework [16].

Within the broader European context, Germany and the United Kingdom represent two distinct yet equally deliberate models of integration. In Germany, physical education is a compulsory component of the curriculum across all

educational levels, while initiatives such as *Bewegte Schule* (“Moving School”) promote the integration of physical activity throughout the broader school environment [17].

Civil-military interaction is facilitated through the activities of Bundeswehr youth officers, who engage students in discussions on security and defence policy. However, this model remains subject to ongoing public debate, particularly regarding the appropriate boundaries between education and military influence in democratic societies [18].

In contrast, the United Kingdom adopts a more practice-oriented and voluntary approach. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF), implemented in more than 500 secondary schools, operates as a structured partnership between educational institutions and the Ministry of Defence. The programme emphasizes leadership, resilience, teamwork, and civic responsibility through experiential learning activities. Participation is voluntary, and the primary objective is the development of personal and civic competencies rather than direct preparation for military service [19].

Taken together, these models differ not in their recognition of patriotic education as an important objective, but in the degree of institutionalization, continuity, and practical operationalization. The comparison demonstrates that the effective integration of physical education with defence-oriented civic development depends on several interrelated structural conditions:

- (1) formal institutionalization within national curricula;
- (2) alignment with broader national security and civic policy frameworks;
- (3) the presence of implementation mechanisms capable of translating normative objectives into consistent and coherent educational practice.

The absence or underdevelopment of these conditions contributes directly to the gap between declarative educational goals and their practical realization.

From the perspective of physical education, existing research further indicates that defence-oriented and value-integrated activities contribute not only to improved physical fitness, but also to the development of civic responsibility, social cohesion, and awareness of national security. At the same time, studies suggest that health-oriented and knowledge-based physical education programmes tend to be more effective than traditional approaches in fostering sustained long-term engagement in physical activity, thereby reinforcing both individual well-being and broader societal resilience [20].

2.2 Curricular Analysis: Georgia

The study includes a systematic content analysis of current state standards and school-based physical education curricula, with particular attention devoted to identifying the presence, scope, and structural coherence of embedded patriotic and civic components. This analysis is guided by a conceptual distinction between declarative and operational forms of integration, which serves as the primary analytical framework for evaluating the extent to which normative educational objectives are translated into structured pedagogical practice [21].

In the Georgian context, physical education is regulated by the National Curriculum, approved in 2016 and implemented during the 2018–2024 academic cycle. Within this framework, the core objectives of physical education include the development of motor skills, the promotion of health, the encouragement of healthy lifestyle practices, and the cultivation of a safety-oriented mindset. These objectives are pedagogically well-founded and broadly aligned with international educational standards. However, a critical issue emerges regarding the extent to which patriotic, civic, and national defence-related dimensions are explicitly defined and coherently embedded within the curricular structure.

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to distinguish between two interrelated concepts. “Fragmentation” refers to the absence of a vertically and horizontally coordinated curricular structure capable of ensuring continuity and progression across grade levels and subject areas. “Declarative integration,” by contrast, denotes the presence of normative or policy-level statements that are not supported by clearly defined learning outcomes, instructional strategies, or assessment mechanisms. This distinction provides a structured analytical framework for assessing both the depth and effectiveness of integration within the Georgian curriculum.

The analysis of the National Curriculum indicates that, in grades I–IV, issues related to civil defence and safety are incorporated into both natural sciences and physical education. In grade IV, for example, a module on “movement safety” is allocated 12 instructional hours over the course of one semester. In grades V–VI, these themes are further distributed across natural sciences, social sciences, and physical education programmes. Although this approach reflects a degree of interdisciplinary alignment, it lacks structural coherence and continuity. The development of national defence awareness and patriotic values is not organized as a sequential, cumulative, and purpose-oriented educational process; rather, it appears as a set of dispersed and weakly connected elements.

This structural limitation is further reinforced by the fact that patriotic and civic values are addressed primarily at the level of general policy declarations. According to the conceptual framework of the national education system, general education aims to develop a “competitive citizen” characterized by national-state, patriotic, and moral awareness. Although this formulation reflects a clear normative orientation, its translation into curriculum design — particularly within physical education — remains insufficiently specified. In practice, this results in the absence of clearly articulated learning outcomes, pedagogical models, and assessment criteria capable of supporting the consistent incorporation of these values into

instructional processes. Consequently, the integration of patriotic and civic components remains predominantly declarative rather than operational [22].

An additional structural dimension emerges in relation to the role of higher education institutions responsible for teacher preparation. The Georgian State Academy of Physical Education and Sport, established in 1938, is formally authorized to prepare specialists in areas including “initial military training and physical education.” However, the limited observable impact of this institutional capacity on school-level practice suggests a disconnect between teacher education systems and the practical implementation of curricular objectives within general education. This gap further contributes to the inconsistency and variability observed in instructional practice [23].

Overall, the analysis indicates that while the current physical education standards are clearly articulated in relation to physical development, health promotion, safety awareness, and fair play, the incorporation of patriotism, national self-awareness, civic responsibility, and defence preparedness remains insufficiently specified and structurally underdeveloped. This results in a systemic imbalance whereby well-defined physical objectives coexist with weakly articulated civic and value-oriented dimensions. In analytical terms, the Georgian model may therefore be characterized as normatively aligned but structurally under-institutionalized — a condition that significantly constrains the effective realization of its broader educational and societal objectives.

2.3 Comparative Analysis: Georgia and International Practice

A comparative analysis of Georgia’s educational framework in relation to international practice reveals clear structural asymmetries in the integration of physical education with patriotic and defence-oriented components. While a number of European and security-sensitive states have developed institutionally grounded and coherently implemented models, the Georgian approach remains partial, weakly coordinated, and structurally under-institutionalized. This disparity is particularly significant given the broadly comparable geopolitical conditions within which many of these systems operate.

The contrast is especially evident in comparison with the Baltic states. In Latvia, the National Defence Education programme is formally institutionalized within the national curriculum, extends across multiple years of schooling, and integrates civic awareness, basic military competencies, and value-oriented education within a unified and sequential framework. Lithuania and Estonia similarly incorporate civic preparedness and defence education as compulsory components at the upper secondary level, supported by clearly defined curricular structures and implementation mechanisms. In these systems, integration is characterized by continuity, legal grounding, and a high degree of alignment between policy objectives and educational practice.

By contrast, the Georgian curriculum incorporates elements related to civil defence and safety only partially and primarily at the primary education level. As demonstrated in the preceding curricular analysis, these elements remain fragmented and lack vertical progression, resulting in the absence of a coherent developmental trajectory for civic and defence-related competencies. In analytical terms, this reflects a model in which normative recognition is not matched by adequate structural articulation.

A comparison with Israel highlights an additional dimension of divergence. The Israeli model integrates national security considerations into education through a comprehensive, system-wide strategy that combines physical preparedness, civic competence, and collective responsibility. This integration is not confined to isolated programmes, but is embedded across institutional, curricular, and societal levels. Despite operating within similarly complex geopolitical conditions, the Georgian system does not exhibit a comparable degree of coordination or systemic coherence. The difference lies not in the recognition of national defence as a strategic priority, but in the extent to which this priority is translated into structured and sustainable educational processes.

The case of the United Kingdom further illustrates the importance of institutional partnerships in operationalizing defence-oriented civic development. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) functions as a formalized collaboration between schools and the Ministry of Defence, supported by stable funding, organizational clarity, and clearly defined programme structures. Through experiential learning activities, the programme promotes leadership, resilience, teamwork, and civic responsibility. In the Georgian context, however, comparable mechanisms of interinstitutional cooperation remain insufficiently developed, thereby limiting the capacity for consistent and scalable implementation.

Germany provides an additional perspective through a model based on informational and dialogical engagement. The involvement of Bundeswehr youth officers in educational settings reflects an approach that prioritizes awareness, critical reflection, and informed discussion of security-related issues. Importantly, the ongoing public debate surrounding these practices highlights the role of democratic deliberation in defining the boundaries of civil-military interaction within education. This dimension — namely, the institutionalization of public discourse as part of policy development — remains largely absent in the Georgian context.

Taken together, these comparative cases demonstrate that the effective integration of physical education with defence-oriented civic development does not depend solely on the formal recognition of relevant objectives, but rather on the presence of specific structural conditions. These include:

- (1) formal institutionalization within the curriculum;
- (2) alignment with broader national security and civic policy frameworks;

(3) the existence of implementation mechanisms capable of ensuring continuity, coherence, and accountability in educational practice.

In the absence of these conditions, integration tends to remain declarative rather than operational, thereby limiting its practical effectiveness.

In the Georgian case, the analysis indicates that, despite the formal recognition of civic and patriotic objectives at the policy level, their realization remains constrained by the absence of a comprehensive legal framework, limited institutional coordination, and insufficient translation into structured pedagogical practice. As a result, the system exhibits a persistent misalignment between declared goals and their practical implementation.

This comparative perspective provides an essential foundation for the empirical component of the study. While documentary and comparative analyses illuminate the formal characteristics and structural limitations of the system, they do not fully capture how these objectives are enacted within everyday educational settings. Accordingly, the study incorporates a mixed-methods empirical investigation aimed at assessing the extent to which curriculum-defined goals are realized within instructional practice. This approach enables a more precise identification of discrepancies between normative frameworks and practical implementation, thereby contributing to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the problem.

3. Methodology

In accordance with the objectives of the study, a mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches within a unified analytical framework. This design enables a comprehensive examination of the research problem by combining the identification of broader patterns with an in-depth analysis of context-specific practices. Through the triangulation of multiple data sources, the study enhances both the analytical depth and the interpretive validity of its findings. At the same time, the research follows an exploratory-descriptive logic and does not aim at statistical generalization beyond the immediate study context.

The study is guided by the following hypothesis: the integration of physical education and patriotic components within Georgian schools remains predominantly declarative in nature and lacks consistent and structured implementation within instructional practice. This hypothesis directs the analytical focus toward identifying discrepancies between formally articulated curricular objectives and their realization in everyday educational processes.

The target population comprises three principal stakeholder groups: students, physical education teachers, and parents, whose perspectives collectively provide a multidimensional understanding of the research problem. A total of 486 respondents participated in the study, including 312 students, 78 teachers, and 96 parents. Although the sample does not support broad statistical generalization, it enables the identification of meaningful patterns, convergences, and divergences across stakeholder groups, thereby contributing to a more nuanced interpretation of the findings.

Data collection was conducted through a combined approach integrating electronic and face-to-face survey methods. This strategy ensured broader accessibility and facilitated participation across different respondent categories. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small sample in order to improve clarity, internal consistency, and interpretability. Based on the results of the pilot phase, minor revisions were introduced, thereby strengthening the face validity and overall reliability of the instrument.

The quantitative component of the study was based on a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended and semi-open items designed to capture respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and reported practices. These data provide insight into general trends and patterns related to the perceived role and implementation of physical education and patriotic components within the educational process.

The qualitative component included in-depth interviews and classroom observations, enabling a more detailed and context-sensitive examination of how curricular objectives are interpreted and enacted in practice. This component plays a critical role in complementing the quantitative findings by revealing underlying mechanisms, interpretive variations, and contextual constraints that cannot be fully captured through survey data alone.

The observational component was exploratory in nature and focused on identifying recurring patterns in lesson structure, instructional priorities, and the incorporation of value-oriented and civic elements within physical education classes. Although limited in scale, these observations provide important contextual insights that support the interpretation of both survey and interview data.

Throughout the research process, established ethical standards were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, while anonymity and confidentiality were ensured for all respondents. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and all data were processed in accordance with ethical principles governing educational research.

The study is subject to several limitations. In particular, the sample size and the partial reliance on self-reported data may affect the generalizability and objectivity of the findings. Additionally, the observational component remains limited in scope and should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. Nevertheless, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data provides a sufficiently robust basis for identifying key trends, validating findings through triangulation, and formulating analytically grounded conclusions.

4. Results

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency distributions and percentage-based analysis, while the qualitative data were processed through thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns across interview responses and observational findings. The integration of these methods allows not only for the identification of broader trends, but also for a deeper and more context-sensitive interpretation of how curricular objectives are translated into instructional practice.

The findings indicate a high level of consensus among respondents regarding the importance of physical education. Specifically, 71% of students (N=222), 84% of teachers (N=65), and 76% of parents (N=73) consider physical education to play a significant role not only in maintaining health, but also in fostering discipline, responsibility, and teamwork. This convergence across stakeholder groups suggests that physical education is widely perceived as a meaningful and multidimensional component of students' overall development.

A similarly strong consensus is observed with regard to patriotic and civic education. Overall, 78% of respondents (N=379) report that schools should actively support the development of patriotic and civic values, with this proportion rising to 88% (N=69) among teachers. These findings indicate that, at the level of normative expectations, both physical education and civic-patriotic development are perceived as essential and complementary elements of the educational process.

However, one of the central findings of the study lies in the discrepancy between these normative expectations and their practical realization. Only 39% of respondents (N=190) indicate that patriotic components are systematically incorporated into physical education lessons, while 44% (N=214) report that such incorporation occurs in a fragmented or inconsistent manner, and 17% (N=82) do not observe it at all. This distribution suggests that the dominant pattern is characterized neither by full integration nor by complete absence, but rather by partial and uneven implementation. Overall, the findings point to a structural gap between normative curricular objectives and their operational realization within instructional practice.

Students' responses further reinforce this pattern. Only 36% (N=112) associate physical education lessons with patriotic or civic values, whereas 49% (N=153) perceive these lessons as focused primarily on physical activity. This indicates that, for a substantial proportion of students, physical education is cognitively framed as a predominantly physical domain rather than as a space for the development of civic and value-oriented competencies. Such perceptions highlight a significant misalignment between curricular intentions and learner experience.

The qualitative findings provide additional explanatory depth and corroborate the trends identified in the quantitative data. A majority of teachers (67%, N=12) report the absence of a clearly defined methodological framework to support the incorporation of patriotic and civic elements within physical education. In the absence of structured guidance, the inclusion of such components becomes dependent on individual initiative, resulting in considerable variability in instructional practices and further reinforcing the lack of systemic coherence.

Classroom observations further substantiate these findings. In 75% of the observed lessons (N=9), instructional activities were focused exclusively on the development of physical skills, with no deliberate incorporation of civic or value-oriented elements. Only 25% of lessons (N=3) included attempts to integrate aspects such as teamwork, shared responsibility, mutual respect, or collective coordination within a broader civic context. Even in these cases, the incorporation appeared implicit and situational rather than explicitly structured or pedagogically guided.

The convergence of survey data, interview responses, and observational findings strengthens the internal validity of the study through methodological triangulation. Across all data sources, a consistent pattern emerges: while the normative importance of integrating physical education with patriotic and civic components is widely recognized, its practical implementation remains limited, uneven, and largely dependent on individual teaching practices rather than on institutionalized frameworks.

Overall, the findings confirm that the relationship between physical education and patriotic components in the Georgian context is characterized by a persistent discrepancy between declarative policy objectives and their operational implementation. This gap reflects not only limitations within the curriculum itself, but also the absence of methodological support, institutional coordination, and clearly defined implementation mechanisms — factors that are essential for achieving coherent, sustained, and effective integration.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study provide consistent evidence that the integration of physical education and patriotic components within the Georgian educational system is characterized by a structural imbalance between normative articulation and practical implementation. While both domains are widely recognized as important at the level of policy and stakeholder perception, their incorporation into instructional practice remains limited, uneven, and largely dependent on individual initiative. This pattern confirms the central analytical proposition of the study and may be conceptualized through the distinction between declarative and operational integration.

From a theoretical perspective, this distinction provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of educational policy implementation. Declarative integration refers to the formal articulation of objectives, values, and

policy intentions, whereas operational integration denotes their translation into structured curricular design, pedagogical practice, and assessment mechanisms. The findings suggest that, in the Georgian case, these two dimensions remain insufficiently aligned. As a result, policy intentions do not systematically materialize in educational practice, leading to a persistent gap between what is formally prescribed and what is actually enacted.

This pattern is consistent with broader findings in policy implementation research, which emphasize that the effectiveness of educational reform depends not only on the clarity of normative goals, but also on the presence of institutional capacity, organizational coherence, and implementation mechanisms [24] - [25]. In the absence of these conditions, even well-formulated policies tend to remain symbolic rather than transformative, reflecting the decoupling between formal structures and actual practices identified in institutional theory [26]. The Georgian case illustrates this dynamic by demonstrating how the absence of clearly defined curricular structures, methodological support, and institutional coordination constrains the realization of policy objectives in practice.

The comparative analysis further reinforces this interpretation. International models examined in the study — particularly those of the Baltic states, Israel, and the United Kingdom — demonstrate that effective integration of physical education with defence-oriented civic development is associated with a high degree of institutionalization, continuity, and policy alignment. In these contexts, integration is not confined to declarative statements, but is embedded within legally grounded frameworks, supported by structured programmes, and reinforced through interinstitutional cooperation [27] - [28]. By contrast, the Georgian model remains normatively aligned but structurally under-institutionalized, lacking the mechanisms necessary to ensure consistent and scalable implementation.

At the level of educational practice, the empirical findings reveal an additional layer of complexity. While teachers and other stakeholders express strong support for the integration of civic and patriotic values, the absence of methodological guidance leads to considerable variability in how these elements are incorporated into lessons. In many cases, integration occurs implicitly — through general references to teamwork, discipline, or responsibility — rather than as part of a clearly defined pedagogical strategy. This suggests that the central issue is not resistance or lack of awareness among educators, but rather the absence of a coherent framework capable of enabling the structured and pedagogically meaningful operationalization of these objectives.

Students' perceptions provide further insight into this misalignment. The tendency to perceive physical education primarily as a domain of physical activity, rather than as a space for civic and value-oriented development, indicates that curricular intentions are not being effectively communicated or experienced at the level of learning. This disconnect highlights the importance of aligning not only policy and practice, but also pedagogical design and learner experience.

Beyond the Georgian context, the findings of the study have broader implications for the analysis of socio-educational systems operating under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty. The identified pattern — namely, strong normative recognition combined with weak operationalization — may be characteristic of systems in which policy ambitions outpace institutional capacity. In such contexts, the challenge lies not in defining objectives, but in constructing the mechanisms through which these objectives can be consistently realized in practice, a problem widely discussed in the literature on resilience and crisis governance [3], [11].

In this regard, the conceptual framework proposed in the study contributes to the literature by offering an analytical tool for assessing the effectiveness of educational integration processes. By distinguishing between declarative and operational dimensions, it becomes possible to identify not only whether integration is formally recognized, but also whether it is functionally implemented. This distinction is particularly relevant for policy domains involving complex value-oriented objectives, such as civic education, national identity formation, and defence-related preparedness.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of viewing educational systems as components of broader socio-institutional structures. The integration of physical education and patriotic education cannot be understood solely as a pedagogical issue; rather, it reflects the interaction between educational policy, institutional capacity, and societal expectations. Addressing the identified gaps therefore requires not only curricular reform, but also coordinated action across multiple institutional levels, including teacher education, policy development, and intersectoral cooperation [10].

Overall, the findings indicate that effective integration depends upon the alignment of normative goals, structural frameworks, and pedagogical practice. In the absence of such alignment, educational systems risk reproducing formal commitments without achieving substantive outcomes, thereby limiting their contribution to broader societal resilience and national development.

6. Conclusions

The findings of the present study, derived from the integrated analysis of theoretical perspectives, international experience, and empirical data, indicate that the integration of physical education and patriotic education within the Georgian educational system constitutes a strategically significant yet structurally underdeveloped domain.

The analysis demonstrates that the central challenge is not conceptual, but structural in nature. While both physical education and patriotic development are consistently recognized — at the levels of policy, curriculum design, and stakeholder perception — as important components of the educational process, their incorporation into instructional practice remains limited in both scope and coherence. In analytical terms, the Georgian model may be characterized as normatively aligned but operationally under-institutionalized, reflecting a persistent misalignment between policy intentions, curricular specification, and implementation mechanisms.

Empirical evidence further substantiates this conclusion by revealing a persistent discrepancy between normative expectations and instructional practice. Although a clear majority of respondents acknowledge the importance of integrating civic and patriotic values within physical education, only a relatively small proportion observe their structured and consistent implementation within classroom settings. This pattern confirms the existence of a structural gap between declarative curricular objectives and their operational realization within the educational process.

Against this background, the study highlights the necessity of transitioning from declarative recognition to systematic implementation. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated, system-level interventions aimed at establishing greater coherence across curriculum design, pedagogical practice, and institutional frameworks. In this context, the study proposes the following recommendations:

a) Curricular specification – to explicitly define patriotic and civic components within the physical education curriculum, ensuring their alignment with clearly articulated learning outcomes, content structures, and assessment criteria. Such specification should support vertical progression across grade levels and provide a coherent developmental trajectory for civic and defence-related competencies;

b) Methodological support – to develop structured instructional guidelines, pedagogical models, and teaching resources capable of supporting the consistent incorporation of value-oriented and civic elements into physical education. This measure directly addresses the identified absence of practical frameworks at the level of classroom implementation;

c) Teacher professional development – to strengthen this domain within both pre-service teacher education and in-service training programmes, with particular emphasis on developing competencies for integrating physical, civic, and value-oriented dimensions within a unified pedagogical approach;

d) Instructional integration – to design and implement learning activities that systematically combine physical, social, and civic components, thereby moving beyond implicit or incidental approaches toward clearly structured and pedagogically intentional models of instruction;

e) Institutional coordination – to enhance cooperation between the education system and relevant state and societal institutions, including defence, civic, and community organizations, through the establishment of formalized partnerships and implementation mechanisms;

f) Further research – to expand empirical investigations in this field, particularly through longitudinal and comparative studies, in order to strengthen the evidence base, improve data reliability, and support more robust generalization of findings.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the effective integration of physical education and patriotic education requires not only conceptual recognition, but also a comprehensive structural transformation encompassing curriculum design, instructional practice, and institutional coordination. In this regard, the development of a coherent and operationally grounded model of integration represents a critical priority for educational policy. More broadly, such transformation contributes to the strengthening of socio-institutional resilience and supports the long-term development of civic responsibility and national security capacity within the Georgian context.

References

1. NATO. *Commitment to Enhance Resilience: Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, 8–9 July 2016* [online]. Brussels: NATO, 2016. Available from: <https://www.nato.int>
2. OECD. *Building a Resilient Recovery: How OECD Countries Are Responding to COVID-19* [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/fd7e8148-en>
3. **Boin A., Ekengren M., Rhinard M.** *Understanding the Creeping Crisis*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70692-0>
4. OECD. *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030* [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/>
5. European Commission. *Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025* [online]. Brussels: European Commission, 2020. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu>
6. **Westheimer J., Kahne J.** What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 2004, 41(2), p. 237–269. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041002237>
7. **Guthold R., Stevens G.A., Riley L.M., Bull F.C.** Global trends in insufficient physical activity among adolescents: A pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 2020, 4(1), p. 23–35. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(19\)30323-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(19)30323-2)
8. World Health Organization (WHO). *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More Active People for a Healthier World* [online]. Geneva: WHO, 2019. Available from: <https://www.who.int>
9. **Biesta G.** What is education for? On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, 2015, 50(1), p. 75–87. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109>
10. **Putnam R.D.** *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

11. **Norris F.H., Stevens S.P., Pfefferbaum B., Wyche K.F., Pfefferbaum R.L.** Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2008, 41(1–2), p. 127–150. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-007-9156-6>
12. **Balinskaite V. et al.** Preparing youth for defence: Socialisation, education, and training of young people in Europe for national security. *Security and Defence Quarterly*, 2022.
13. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *Europe's Conscription Challenge: Lessons from Nordic and Baltic States* [online]. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024.
14. DIIS. *Strengthening Civil Preparedness in the Baltic Sea Region* [online]. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2025.
15. Latvia Ministry of Defence. *National Defence Education Programme* [online]. Riga: Ministry of Defence of Latvia, 2024.
16. PMC / NCBI. *Conceptual Physical Education: A Course for the Future* [online]. 2020.
17. European Commission / EACEA. *Sport, Youth Fitness and Physical Activity – Germany* [online]. Youth Wiki, 2026. Available from: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/germany/73-sport-youth-fitness-and-physical-activity>
18. **Schall M.** From the end of compulsory military service to school strikes: The new debate on the Bundeswehr and education [online]. 2026. Available from: <https://www.markus-schall.de/en/2026/03/from-the-end-of-compulsory-military-service-to-school-strikes-the-new-debate-on-the-german-armed-forces-and-education/>
19. UK Government, Ministry of Defence. *The Cadet Forces and MOD's Youth Work* [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-cadet-forces-and-mods-youth-work>
20. Brooke-Holland L. Funding for the Cadet Expansion Programme [online]. *House of Commons Library*, 3 December 2024. Available from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/funding-for-the-cadet-expansion-programme/>
21. Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. *National Curriculum* [online]. 2018–2024. Available from: <https://ncp.ge>
22. Parliament of Georgia. Document of National Goals of General Education [online]. Tbilisi: Parliament of Georgia. Available from: <https://eqe.ge/en/page/static/115/zogadi-ganatileba>
23. Parliament of Georgia. *Law of Georgia on General Education* [online]. Tbilisi: Parliament of Georgia, 2016. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/116008?publication=0>
24. **Fullan M.** *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. 4th ed. New York: Teachers College Press, 2007.
25. **Honig M.I.** *New Directions in Education Policy Implementation: Confronting Complexity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2006.
26. **Meyer J.W.** Rowan B. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 1977, 83(2), p. 340–363. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>
27. **Kissane B.** Education and the military: The role of schools in national security. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2017, 40(1–2), p. 1–23. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1237890>
28. **Krueger A.B., Malečková J.** Education, poverty and terrorism: Is there a causal connection? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2003, 17(4), p. 119–144. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533003772034925>

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of CNDCGS 2026 and/or the editor(s). CNDCGS 2026 and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.