

Georgia/Géorgie

(722)

UNITWIN / UNESCO Chairs Programme

Progress Report

Period of activity: 2006 - 2007

UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue

Report established by: Prof.Nino Chikovani, Chairholder, Ivane Javakhishvili State University

I. Activities

1. Academic activities

Education

- Courses / Academic program

- *Culture and Identity*

The course provides undergraduate students with the knowledge of many concepts such as culture, identity, identity crisis, identity transformation. The particular emphasis is put on the notion of cultural identity and its levels as it becomes bigger subject of academic and practical interest in modern world.

Duration : 1 semester

Target group: BA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national.

- *Perception and representation of the History, the policy of Memory*

The course mainly deals with the phenomenon of history organization and representation in various cultures, trying to understand and analyze the differences within the framework of relevant theories. Specifically, the program evolves around the subject from the perspective of social and cultural determination. The essential practical character is explained and stress on the question such as – how history /memory /past is addressed during the conflict situations as a political factor.

Duration: 1 semester

Target group: MA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

- *Problems of Cultural Identity in Modern World*

The undergraduate course discusses the problems related to the cultural identity and recent /current trends and problems of self-identification of the cultural groups in contemporary world. The main subject of interest here is the formation and re-emergence of cultural identities in post-colonial era, including non-western *alternative identities*.

Duration: 1 semester

Target group: BA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

- *Intercultural Studies*

The course provides a foundation for BA level students competence for understanding the essence of intercultural studies as a special area of academic study. The lecture provides audience with the compact information about the significance and role of intercultural dialogue in security and stability issues. The class participation and discussion is highly essential.

Duration: 1 semester

Target group: BA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

- *Culture and Religion in the Caucasus*

This course is designed to facilitate investigation and critique in a relatively newer direction of regional studies like Caucasus area. The goal is to gain an overview of main religious and ethnic/cultural groups existing in the region and to analyze ongoing processes. Students are expected to master in theories and relevant methodologies in order to define the study problem, gather information and conduct research.

Duration: 1 semester

Target group: MA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

- *Globalization and Local Cultures*

The program focuses on developing knowledge and analytical skills regarding the process of Globalization in modern world, putting main emphasis on the understanding of cultural factors/aspect. The course aims to overview the experience and perceptions of the representatives of western and non-western world.

Duration: 1 semester

Target group: BA level

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

Research

- *Case Study of Facilitating Intercultural Dialogue and Learning (Tools, Methods and Approaches), Georgia.*

Duration: April 2006-January 2007.

Target groups: minority groups of ethnic Azeri and Armenian communities in Kvemo Kartli region and Tbilisi.

Geographical coverage for partners and participants: national

Intended use of results: Two five-page case studies with multimedia support (DVD CDs).

2. Conferences / Congress / Meetings

- Conference

- Round Table Caucasus – *Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue*

Dates and place: 21-22 June 2007, Tbilisi, Georgia

Number of participants: 23.

Geographical coverage of partners and participants: international (countries : Georgia, France, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan).

3. Partnerships / Inter-university Exchanges

- Exchanges and partnerships with several universities and institutions, such as:
 - Chair in Intercultural Dialogue (Tbilisi State University, Georgia)
 - Chair in South-East European Studies (Moldova State University, Moldova)
 - Chair in Comparative Studies of Spiritual Traditions, Specific Cultures and inter religious Dialogue (Russian Institute for Cultural Research)
 - Chair for the Study of Intercultural and Interreligious Relations (Bucharest University, Romania).
 - Chair in Sciences and Spirituality (the Institute for Oriental Studies, Almaty, Kazakhstan).

4. Publication and multimedia materials

- Books (written by professors of the Chair) :
 - Malkhaz Toria, *The Role of Perception of Past and Politics of Memory in the Formation of Conflicting Identities (The Case of Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict)*
 - Maia Kvrivishvili, *Processes and Structures of Georgians' Identity on the edge of the 19-20th Centuries.*
 - Shota Khinchagashvili, *Understanding the modern Islamist movements in the North Caucasus: a question of Legitimacy of Violence.*
- Periodical
 - Annual: Interdisciplinary academic journal *Civilization Researches*, #4, 2007. Languages: Georgian with summaries in English, Russian and French.
- Multimedia material
 - PowerPoint presentations and purchased documentary / fictional films.

II. Outcomes

The international Round Table «*Caucasus – Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue*» could be regarded as the most important and explicit success of the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue (Tbilisi).

As the Chair was established in 2006, the first stage of activities implied the continuation of the establishment of contacts between other UNESCO Chairs, such as, Moldova, Russian Federation, Armenia and other organizations on regional and interregional levels.

There also should be mentioned the project entitled “*the Case Study of Facilitating Intercultural Dialogue and Learning (Tools, Methods and Approaches) in Georgia*” initiated in April, 2006.

The Chair has outlined a plan of action and a schedule which should result in the two 5-page case studies with multimedia support. The Chair has already prepared the methodology and the questionnaires for the project. The questionnaires are bilingual (Georgian and Russian) and cover the following topics: attitude toward state and relevant symbols, local, ethnic traditions and their sustainability, how everyday situations or special occasions (even taken place within the ethnic or religious group) involve intercultural interaction. Special interest is devoted to the mixed marriages; it is interesting not only the statistical data but the attitudes and perception of “crossing ethno-cultural boundaries”. There is also considered the objective of revealing the feelings, opinions of the representatives of the ethnic minorities related to the issues of language, education and history. The mentioned project is underway; the fieldwork has not yet been initiated so far.

III. Forthcoming activities

- Action plan of the Chair for 2007-08:

Intensification of the cooperation among UNESCO Chairs in following directions:

- Elaboration of the training programs for students and experts developing skills and methods for intercultural dialogue, conflict resolution and conflict prevention.
- Working on the ideas and projects aiming at applying Technologies in Support of Intercultural Dialogue. Preparation and initiation of the project of virtual library.
- Publishing articles in already existing editions (e.g. “*Civilization Researches*” (Tbilisi State University) and /or “*Pontes*” (Moldova State University). The principle agreement was reached on the final session of the Round Table “*Caucasus – Perspective of the Intercultural Dialogue*” about internationalization of Editorial Board of “*Civilization Studies*”. Call for papers for the next publications were sent to the partners in June, 2007.
- On the mentioned session the agreement has been reached regarding the cooperation in peer-reviewing (at the first stage, within the framework of the journal “*Civilization Researches*” and “*Pontes*” (Moldova State University).
- Developing joint academic programs on BA/MA levels regarding the sphere of intercultural dialogue (among them, short courses and workshops), e.g. “*Promoting the knowledge of cultural policy and strategies of the UNESCO*”.
- Encouraging staff mobility of the Chairs by elaborating specific exchange programs among students of the universities (among them – summer schools).
- Possible projects:
 - Anthology of Caucasian poetry of XIX century – (in three languages).
 - Urban Subcultures: cities as focal points for intercultural dialogue
 - Urban spirituality

IV. Development Prospects

The Chair plans to enhance cooperation with local governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the sphere of intercultural dialogue. It is also essential to encourage interrelations with structures of South Caucasian countries as well as European colleagues. This could be realized in two directions: research and teaching activities.

Within the framework of integration of the higher education system of Georgia in Bologna Process, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University plans to develop PhD programs. Accordingly, the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue plans to prepare concrete research programs regarding the problems of intercultural dialogue problems for the mentioned level. Such programs would encourage to study theoretical issues as well as to conduct case studies which will contribute tremendously to the intercultural dialogue.