

USAID Basic Education Program and its Implementation in Tesau

USAID Basic Education Program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is implemented in Georgia by RTI in direct cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia in partnership with the University of Georgia and seven regional universities. Tesau has been involved in the mentioned program as a partner university since the very first stage of the program, in 2020.

During this time, within the framework of the USAID Basic Education Program, a number of activities aimed at implementing student-centered sustainable reform in the elementary grades were implemented. The program is large-scale, it literally covers the entire sector of primary education in Georgia, mainly in the direction of reading and mathematics. In the Kakheti region, 184 public schools are involved in this program. The activities that are planned within the framework of the USAID Basic Education Program for the mentioned schools are implemented by the USAID Basic Education Program Team of Tesau, which was created by the academic staff of the Faculty of Education Sciences. With the involvement of the staff, the Kakheti region manager of the USAID Basic Education Program – Professor N. Nakhutsrishvili.

From the beginning of the program until today, within the framework of the USAID Basic Education Program, a number of activities have been carried out by the team aimed at strengthening school-university cooperation, including establishing student-centered learning in public schools at the elementary level, raising reading and mathematics learning outcomes for elementary students, teaching them critical thinking and facilitation of mastering of problem solving skills, professional development of elementary level teachers of reading and mathematics, professional training of future teachers, development of educational program for teacher training. These activities included conducting multi-faceted trainings, coachings, creating different types of educational resources, attending and evaluating classes and implementing mechanisms supporting teachers in order to conduct classes in accordance with modern requirements, modifying the educational program by introducing new training courses, carrying out practice research, extracurricular activities, where with the members of the Tesau team students of teacher training programs and school teachers were involved together with (consultants). With the implementation of these and many other supporting activities, the relationship between the university and the schools of the Kakheti region has increased dramatically. With the implementation of these and many other supporting activities, the relationship between the university and the schools of the Kakheti region has increased dramatically.

At this stage, within the USAID Basic Education Program, the Tesau team is carrying out **two types of activities:**

Extracurricular activities, implementation period - from November 1, 2023 to June 30 of the current year, are being implemented in the Kakheti region for the third year. At this stage, it included the work of four clubs in 35 public schools of four districts of Kakheti region (Telavi, Akhmeta, Kvareli, Gurjaani).

These clubs are:

- Ideator Clubs – implemented in five public schools;
- STEM Club – in ten public schools
- Reading clubs – in ten public schools
- Book Buddies – in ten public schools

8 members of the Tesau team advised the activities of the mentioned clubs, 28 students of teacher training programs and 411 students of primary level (4th-6th grades) were involved in the activities.

The activities of all clubs were aimed at the development of students. Through the work of the ideators' clubs, students strengthened and acquired subject skills using research, strategic planning and teamwork. For students involved in STEM clubs, these were interesting projects and activities implemented using discoveries, research, science, technology, mathematics, and engineering. Through the work of reading and book friend clubs, students were involved in various activities related to familiarization with interesting works of art, reading, discussion, etc.

On June 14 and 15 of this year, a summary event of extracurricular activities was organized in Tessau, where all the participating teams made a presentation about the activities they carried out during the reporting period. At the same time, the students of the Ideator's Club and the STEM Club presented to the audience the items and resources they created within the scope of the project.

The representatives of the USAID Basic Education Program attended the closing event together with the members of the Tesau team, who presented souvenirs to the members of the Ideators' Club on behalf of the project. The summing event was attended by many guests: representatives of schools, principals, parents, representatives of Tesau.

The projects presented by the ideators' clubs were very interesting. The activities of the clubs were led by 10 students of the Integrated Bachelor's and Master's Educational Program of Tesau elementary level teacher training, 2 students per school. And, this activity was somehow coordinated by the program consultants;

Every stage of the club's work was interesting and productive, because it was a pure, extracurricular activity based on student initiatives and activity, based on the high principle

of teamwork and mutual cooperation. "Mini studies" were carried out within the framework of various projects.

All five school clubs presented an interesting project: "Let's revive old Georgian games", "The bee and its goodness", "Ikalto, Kakheti's business card", "Traditions of bread baking in Kakheti", "The history of Kalauri village told by grandparents" Within the scope of each club's activities, a certain "product", resources, item, visibility, etc., were created. What was presented at the summary event; Special mention should be made of a kind of educational resource-crossword created within the framework of the 8th public school of Telavi: "Puzzle on ancient Georgian games", which aroused the great interest of the participants.

One of the main strategies of the activity of the ideators' clubs is the "research" activity, which adds important competences to the students in this direction, the promotion of the development of basic skills and the development of the mastery of social skills; Forming a positive attitude towards the school environment and learning among students, arousing interest and raising motivation is facilitated. That is why it is very valuable to develop these types of clubs in schools.

No less productive were the presentations presented by the STEAM clubs with the presentation of devices and resources created within the club.

In general, it should be noted that the implementation of STEAM clubs was interesting for students, in addition to mastering the skills of knowledge transfer, they also acquired new knowledge, for example, they studied the principle of operation of analog pins and digital pins of Arduino, the principle of operation of servo motors and their Modeling of the working principle, using a servo motor to build an electronic circuit in a virtual and physical environment, programming it; Connecting two servo motors in one circuit and programming them for synchronous operation. Collection of necessary information and problem analysis for the "Smart Bin" project, etc.; Students who are members of the STEAM club were able to make various "devices" by transferring the acquired knowledge. The activities carried out within the framework of the STEM clubs were educational as well as fun, and as a result, the students developed various necessary skills. The implementation of STEM clubs brought a different charge and interest to school life.

As for the activities of book friends or reading clubs, the main goal was to instill a love of books and reading among students, to strengthen their cognitive interests, to acquire and strengthen the skills of creativity, reasoning, the culture of expressing one's own opinion in an orderly manner, the culture of listening, the ability to analyze the text heard or read, etc. As a result of the meetings and activities carried out within the clubs, the students' interest and motivation towards reading and their activity increased;

In the conditions of technology, when it has become important to clarify the importance of books and the value of reading books to students, the implementation of such fun extracurricular activities that will "return" the student to the book, to see and feel the charm of reading a book, is gaining a lot of weight. From this point of view, the activity of both book friend and reading clubs in all schools turned out to be quite effective. These students were also actively involved in the activities of the mentioned clubs, and with the support of the school and teachers, they carried out a number of interesting events and activities within the club. Reading, discussion, reasoning, different kinds of activities encouraged the children to go to school each day. They mastered the skills of thoughtful reading, conveying the meaning of what they read, analyzing, identifying essential, primary and secondary information, which is a valuable competence and creates an important basis for successful learning;

At the closing event, the members of the clubs, students and consultants gave full presentations about the conducted activities.

It should be noted that extracurricular activities of a similar content are very important both for students and those students who strive for professional growth and development. With the help of the club, students learn to communicate with children, plan and implement extracurricular activities, and acquire professional skills.

2. As for the activity planned for the current reporting period, it refers to the **creation of a new training course** for the teacher training educational program. The period of implementation of the activity is December 8, 2023 - August 30, 2024. And its progress is in an active phase. Within the framework of the mentioned activity, the creation of an innovative training course "**Effective use of technologies in the primary class**" is planned and implemented with the appropriate package: syllabus, video-lectures, reader, attached student work with "cases", exercises and implementation in the integrated educational program of primary level teacher training, thereby contributing We ensure the successful development of the program; The purpose of creating the mentioned course is to modernize the integrated bachelor-master educational program of primary level teacher training, supplement it with a new training course, which will significantly raise the quality of future teacher training.

The initial topics of the training course include questions about the relevance of the use of technology, the organization of teaching goals, tasks, questions related to ESS, requirements of subject standards, etc.

The training course includes the discussion of separate effective platforms, which will significantly help not only the teaching of mathematics and Georgian at the elementary level, but also the teaching of other school subjects, and students will acquire basic knowledge and skills in the use of electronic technologies.

The syllabus includes topics related to the prospects of using computer technologies for a specific purpose,

by creating and implementing a training course:

- Will promote the modification of integrated educational programs of teacher training in accordance with modern requirements;
- Students will acquire the knowledge and skills that will be one of the main factors of their future professional success;
- The involvement of school and community representatives in the creation and implementation of the training course will contribute to the strengthening of mutual cooperation between the university and the school;
- There will be a timely identification of the relevant issues of the necessary participation of these institutions in the process of education and development of the student and the planning and implementation of relevant effective activities.
- It will help to increase the motivation of students to be concentrated in this cooperative direction and to carry out more activities in this regard.

Thus, with the ongoing activities implemented within the framework of the USAID basic education program, the mutual cooperation between the school and the university has been further strengthened and strengthened, prospects for further cooperation have been set, which is important for the development and strengthening of both institutions, the students involved in the activities have acquired a number of professional skills, teacher training is facilitated modifying the educational program and reflecting the changes in the program in accordance with modern requirements, and what is also valuable is the development of schools with the support of the university.

USAID Basic Education Program manager in Kakheti region:

Professor Nino Nakhutsrishvili

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